



Women in Citizen Media – The Image of the Modern Female Journalist

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At the turn of the 1970's and 1980's the law then effective in Poland reinforced the traditional model of Polish family. It was assumed that numerous privileges of the archetypal Polish Mother, as a children-raising home-maker, would limit the activities of women to the areas in question. The period of transformation of the socio-economic and political system brought about a reduction of the privileges related to performance of home and family tasks. Since 22 June 2001 the Polish law¹ includes a rule providing for equal rights of men and women, prohibiting discrimination of job-seekers by employers-to-be, also for gender reasons².

As far as the professional situation of women' is concerned, „a considerable impact on the growth of professional employment of women had the expiration of the retirement schemes allowing massive retirement of women of 55 years of age who could claim 30 years of pensionable service”³. In 2010 the economic activity rate of women equaled 49% (65% in case of men)⁴.

As research shows, the „glass ceiling effect” forcing women to start a business of their own for fear that – if employed – they would not be promoted to higher and better paid positions owing to their gender, has been gradually declining. 37% of Poland's small firms are owned by women, the ratio being one of the highest among EU Member States. In addition, ever greater numbers of women take up professional employment, not only to earn a living, but – even to a greater extent – to satisfy their own professional ambitions”⁵. Women are present in all fields of

1 Art 12 par. 3a of the Act to Amend the Act on Employment and Prevention of Unemployment of 22 June, 2001 (Journal of Laws No. 89, item 973).

2 The Act also mentions other criteria, such as age, race, nationality, political or religious beliefs and trade union membership. Cf. more broadly: Journal of Laws No. 89, item 973.

3 J.K. Kowalski, *Kobiety brylują w biznesie* [Female-Owned Businesses Shine], “Dziennik. Gazeta Prawna”, vol. 74/ 2011, p.6.

4 Report by Sedlak&Sedlak, *Sytuacja kobiet na rynku pracy* [Women in the Labour Market]. For a broader discussion see D.Kaniewska, *Raport na temat aktywności zawodowej z okazji Dnia Kobiet* [A Report on Women's Economic Activity Occasioned by Women's Day] http://www.wiadomosci24.pl/arttykul/raport_na_temat_aktywnosci_zawodowej_z_okazji_dnia_kobiet_185505.html, [accessed on 18.05.11]

5 J.K. Kowalski, *op.cit.*, p.6.

business life, their activity being particularly conspicuous in the sector of services. For the purpose of this paper, the author shall explore the area of mass media as the field of professional activity of women.

Profession: Journalist – the Case of Poland’s Market

Present-day mass media have been experiencing a dynamic development. It consists in a far-going transformation involving new technologies which facilitate mass communication and thus exert impact not only on social dialogue, but also on journalists and the modes of their operation.

As the research on the image of the Polish journalist in 2010, carried out by the Institute of Public Affairs shows, “a journalist in Poland is a TV presenter, a middle-aged man, not guided by any particular sense of a mission, but rather doing a job as anyone else does”⁶. Men make up a majority of the people in the trade (57.5%), women accounting for the remaining portion of 42.5%⁷. Such is the image of a journalist, as viewed by the respondents (1,002 adults, ranging from 15 to 75 years of age) whose views were, undoubtedly, shaped by messages coming from mass media. The respondents would talk about “middle-aged men getting paid over the national average”⁸, the journalists being perceived mostly as „people conducting interviews and hosting discussions on the TV or radio, reporters or TV/radio presenters”⁹. Every third informant recognised, as journalists, authors of press articles, only 3% of the respondents mentioning the category of Internet journalists.

Journalists are persons enjoying high public trust (they are trusted by 75% of the society). In judgment of the respondents it is, first of all, the speed of news communication that the journalists should take care of. Every second respondent expects them to convey absolute truth to the public. The informants think, however, that it is mostly politics that journalists are interested in, which politics veils to them „the problems of people in the street. The said is the proof of a loss of contact between mass media and the society, an alienation, as it were, of journalists from their readers/viewers/listeners.”¹⁰

Meanwhile, for the journalists themselves, their „job is both passion and vocation. More than three-fourths of those enjoy their profession, half of the journalist community not even thinking of changing it. At the same time great part of the journalists point out to adverse changes having taken place in the journalist’s job. These include:

6 J.Kucharczyk (ed.), *Kto pilnuje strażników. Odpowiedzialne dziennikarstwo w demokratycznej Polsce*, [Whom Are the Guards Guarded By? Reliable Journalism in Democratic Poland], Warszawa 2011, p.56.

7 M. Palczewski, *Obraz polskiego dziennikarza na podstawie Raportu SDP. Krótka analiza* [The Image of a Polish Journalist as Based on a Report by the Association of Polish Journalists. A Brief Analysis] <http://www.sdp.pl/obraz-polskiego-dziennikarza>, [accessed on 17.05.11]

8 J.Kucharczyk (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.56.

9 *Ididem*, s.56

10 *Ibidem*, 56,57.

a growing power of the Web,
 declining standards of journalism,
 pursuit of sensation and growing tabloidization of mass media,
 casual persons in the trade,
 too easy access to „journalism” by persons lacking due professional background
 and skills,

ever greater commercialization of the profession: dependence on publishers, opinion poll results, advertising, demand for information of a specific kind,
 heavy time pressure the journalists have to work under¹¹.

Journalists recognize both advantages and drawbacks of the Internet. They do realize the new opportunities it provides – unlimited access to materials, readers/viewers/listeners, interaction with the latter. But there are many unfavourable phenomena as well, affecting the job they do and their community as a whole. Modern information techniques allow anybody that has access to the Web to publish all kinds of information, the quality of it at times leaving much to be desired. Many people lacking professional background and experience have directly and uncritically adopted the „we the media”¹² slogan and considered them „journalists” from that time on. This results in the Internet getting crammed with masses of absolutely worthless content. The condition of journalist circles is being found the weak point by the journalists themselves. Declining educational standards of the journalists are being pointed out to, just as are their biased political opinions, pressure exerted by the editors heavily monitoring viewing/listening/reading rates. That monitoring further translates into pressure on the journalists by their bosses, the fact being stressed by 92%¹³ of respondents. It is mostly the way of presentation and the final shape of the presented material that is the contested matter.

Despite drawbacks of the job, 76% of the polled journalists admit that they draw satisfaction from doing it, only 14%¹⁴ expressing unequivocal dissatisfaction. Hence being a journalist is a source of pleasure to an overwhelming majority of the professionals.

In view of the presented results of research and discussions, a question can be asked: what, in fact, is modern journalism? According to Teresa Sasińska-Klas¹⁵, at least the following options can be considered: those of a job, mission, passion or simply trade. In the ever changing social, political and cultural environment it is perhaps impossible to give an ultimate answer. The volatile environment makes journalism evolve, leaving it no chance to resist to the happening changes.

11 M. Grabarczyk-Tokaj, *Zawód ambiwalentny dziennikarze 2010* [An Ambivalent Job – Journalists of 2010] IMM, Warszawa 2010, p.8. http://www.instytut.com.pl/raporty/IMM/o_firmie/DZIENNIKARZE_2010_IMM_media.pdf, [accessed on 19.05.11].

12 Title of a well-know book by D.Gillmor marking a meaningful beginning of the citizen journalism.

13 M. Grabarczyk-Tokaj, *op.cit.*, p.14

14 *Ibidem*, p. 15.

15 T. Sasińska-Klas, *Dziennikarstwo-zawód czy wyzwanie?w: Dziennikarstwo i świat mediów* [Journalism – A Job or Challenge? [in:] Journalism and the World of Media], Kraków 2004.

New Mass Media

The era of communication, characterised by development of mass communication techniques, makes mass media part and parcel of the contemporary world. Their omnipresence translates into changes of life of both individuals and whole societies. The transformation of attitudes, views and institutions – whether favourable or adverse - results in human communication becoming unthinkable without mass media involvement.

What are mass media then? Mass media¹⁶, also referred to as means of mass communication, are “institutions and technical facilities used to convey information to large, diversified and anonymous groups of people in a comprehensive and quick way. They can be roughly divided into traditional media, such as books, press, radio, TV; alternative media which include direct satellite and cable TV, VCRs, compact discs, teletext, videotext, multimedia computers.”¹⁷ The facilities have immediate influence on the increase of volume and speed of transmission of information. Despite the great role played by them they cannot be regarded as sole and sufficient means of mass communication. In order to make the picture of the realities of mass communication complete, social institutions pooling both technical means related to development and distribution of content and teams of people developing it for the use of a mass reader/listener/viewer have to be mentioned as well. The addressees of their messages are countless, socially diversified and spatially dispersed people who can include virtually anybody interested in the issued/broadcast matter at a specific time.¹⁸ Yet the meaning of the public nature of a mass transmission has to be broader. As Maciej Mrozowski puts it: “the transmission is a vital component of the public sphere, i.e. the social space where reasonable discussion on public affairs between political/business élites and citizen communities is possible. The public sphere should be open and accessible to anybody willing to take the floor to discuss public matters (and being able to do so) while respecting basic rules of a political discourse”¹⁹. And thus the features of mass communication, i.e. its periodical nature, conventionality and continuity help create social reality by intensification of communication flows in three areas: the public area, the area of institutions and the private one.

Nor can the meaning of mass media to the life of individuals and entire societies be neglected. With the advent of modern information technologies and the appear-

16 The notion of mass media comes from a combination of Latin *media* (media or means) and the word of *mass* alluding to mass publishing/broadcasting and reception. For a broader discussion cf. T. Goban-Klas: *Media i komunikowanie masowe. Teorie i analizy prasy, radia, telewizji i Internetu* [Media and Mass Communication. Theories and Analyses of the Press, Radio, TV and Internet], Warszawa- Kraków 1999, p. 112.

17 J. Skrzypczak (ed.): *Aktualizacje Encyklopedyczne. Suplement do Wielkiej Ilustrowanej Encyklopedii Powszechnej Wydawnictwa Gutenberga. Media, tom 11* [Encyclopaedical Updates. A Supplement to the Gutenberg Great Illustrated Encyclopaedia, vol. 11], Poznań 1998, p. 130.

18 M. Łosiewicz, *Kreowanie obywatelskiej rzeczywistości przez organizacje pozarządowe na przykładzie Mediów Obywatelskich z Elbląga*, [w:] J. Krefl, J. Majewski, *Media, Biznes, Kultura 2010 (w druku)* [Creation of Citizen Reality by NGOs – the Case of Citizen Media of Elbląg (in:) W. Krefl, J. Majewski, *Media, Business, Culture 2010 (in print)*].

19 M. Mrozowski, *Media masowe. Władza, rozrywka i biznes* [Mass Media. Power, Entertainment and Business], Warszawa 2001, p. 45.

ance of new media, additional and earlier non-existent opportunities were offered to the readers/listeners/viewers. The transfer of content became a two-way process and, consequently, a revolution was started within the current communication order involving media. Those hitherto making up the audience were provided with tools for development and in the past, media users could only play a passive role, not being in a position to act as senders themselves, much less to provide any on-line feedback. That opportunity was brought to them by the advent of the said new media that can be roughly defined as “communication, usually computer-based technologies allowing or facilitating interactions among their users or between the users and the information. Full interactivity means that those sending the information and those receiving it can exchange places, the sender reacting to a recipient’s statement which is itself a reaction to the sender’s earlier statement. The notion of interactivity can be extended to include coupling of the media with a computer so as to increase their usefulness and widen their application. Connecting a computer to means of telecommunications or a transmission system allows interactivity between system components and gives one full control of the pace, structure and contents of communication. The new media, understood as all the techniques of acquisition, recording, processing and transmission of data/sound/image make creators and recipients of the content equal parts of the process of communication”²⁰. The one-way exchange of information, with the recipient playing only a passive role, as characteristic for Web 1.0 operation (the first stage of the Internet) proved to be of little functionality to the users. It was thanks to their expectations that new opportunities appeared, making interaction possible on an unprecedented scale.

The practically unlimited access to various content without intermediation and control of mass distribution systems has resulted in the “emergence of blogs and portals, while the hitherto passive recipients, supplied with relevant tools, start extending websites and become creators of the presented information. One of the first websites of that kind was Flickr allowing Internet surfers to publish their photos on-line and comment on those. In such a way a community embracing photo equipment/photography fans was formed. Other similar websites include YouTube operating thanks to short films put by the network users or Digg website allowing people vote stories up or down. It is on a similar principle that social news websites (Facebook) or encyclopaedias (Wikipedia) are operated”²¹.

Following the idea of Tomasz Goban-Klas, a new suppressed by contacts via media. That type of a society is characterized by media/information techniques supporting almost each field of human activity, the said being true about global and

20 B. Kijewska, *Internet jako przykład nowych mediów a emancypacja kobiet* [The Internet as an Example of New Media and the Emancipation of Women] <http://www.masscomm.pl/start.asp?id11=info&id22=brief&id3=1>, [accessed on 19.05.11]. Cf. Dizard W. Jr., *Old Media New Media. Mass Communication in the Information Age*, New York 2000.

21 M. Łosiewicz, B. Kłusek-Wojciszko, *Media obywatelskie jako platforma komunikacji międzyludzkiej*, [w:] G.E. Kwiatkowska, K. Markiewicz, *Komunikowanie się. Nowe wyzwania* [Citizen Media as a Platform of Interpersonal Communication (in:) Communication. New Challenges], Lublin 2010, p.54.

local dimension, individual and organizational contacts alike²². A group of media using and combining technology, telecommunications, text, image, sound and social interactions with the involvement of the Internet, is social media²³. Hardly can the notion be easily explained, as there has been no commonly adopted (and accepted) definition in the literature so far, owing to permanent development of the concept, referred to using different – and not properly sorted out – terminology. When making a review of the existing definitions, it is reasonable to start from that provided by Wikipedia being a social medium scheme itself. Presented in it is an explanation starting from the commonly used, global-wise English definition of the social media, recognized as the “media available, first of all, on the Web and via mobile equipment, allowing users exchange information between one another. (...) The mode of interacting and presenting information depends on the viewpoint of the users and the contents exchanged by the communities (stories and experiences). For companies social media is a valuable source of content created by the users, referred to as UGC (User-Generated Content) or Consumer Generated Media (CGM))”²⁴. As the above definition reveals, from the social media’s point of view their users are divided into two sectors, the private and the business one. Considering the users, or communities, T. Smektała has defined e-community as a “community of the Internet users who actively use that communication platform for exchange of information and messages related to their common interests, beliefs or attitudes.”²⁵. In his presentation of the notion the author has not taken into account an essential aspect of the social media, though, viz. technical solutions. This is why it is the definition by Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein that should come next in our review of definitions. The authors have encapsulated the technical aspect in their considerations by stating that “social media is a group of on-line applications based on Web 2.0 ideology and technology, allowing the users to create and exchange content.”²⁶ Delimitation between the notions of social media and Web. 2 was attained by the definition, which notions are, for the most part, used interchangeably and thus erroneously, since each of the notions has its specific meaning. Differences between them are presented by Dominik Kazanowski. As the latter claims, “as far as Web 2.0 is concerned, there exists a main sender of the message who, using tools of Internet communication, directs a material or material/emotional message to a wider or narrower group of recipients aiming to evoke interaction. Meanwhile communities are based on participation and creation of a context rather than content. Messages

22 T. Goban-Klas, *Media i komunikowanie masowe* [Media and Mass Communication], Warszawa 2005, pp. 293-295

23 *Media społecznościowe* [Social Media] <http://www.kursusability.pl/slownik-interactive/media-spolecznosciowe--ang-social-media>, [accessed on 17.05.11].

24 *Media społecznościowe* [Social Media] <http://www.kursusability.pl/slownik-interactive/media-spolecznosciowe--ang-social-media>, [accessed on 17.05.11]

25 T. Smektała, *Public Relations w Internecie* [Public Relations on the Web], Wrocław 2006, p. 148.

26 A. Kaplan, M. Haenlein, Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media, <http://www.slideshare.net/guestef2b2f/social-media-definition-and-classification> [accessed on 16.05.11]

provided via social media are also aimed at soliciting interaction, but of a much wider scope and in a way that is less expansive in terms of ideology and emotions”²⁷.

When it comes to definitions concerning the other sector of social media users, i.e. the business, the author finds the following definition by D. Trzeciak appropriate. According to him, social media is “a set of relations, behaviour patterns, emotions, empirical knowledge and interactions between consumers and brands, with multi-directional communication to exchange experience using advanced tools of communication”²⁸. In that presentation important are relationships between the organization and consumer, which relations – thanks to communication flows – lead towards a better recognition of mutual needs and expectations. Social media make up an arena here, to allow exchange of experience, standpoints and impressions in the field directly or indirectly related to the commercial offer.

Are women participants of social media? If so, do they rather participate in the business or non-business area of the media? If they do not participate, however, what are the reasons? In order to answer the questions, the author has carried a research on a group of full-time and weekend students aged 20-43 years. The activity of women proved to be more intense, as 87% of female respondents declared their active participation in social news websites²⁹. They also make up the bulk of participants of Facebook (63%) and the Polish website of *Nasza Klasa* [*Our Class*] (69%). As the “2009 Women and Social Media Study” report states, the only „masculinised” social news website is Digg (with men accounting for 64% of the users)³⁰. Coming back to the research done by the author, as regards time spent on social news websites, women declared staying for 4 hours a day there, as opposed to 2.5 hours spent by men. The difference is thus considerable and amounts to 30% in favour of women, who log in more frequently and stay longer. 72% of the polled women declared that they would log in daily. Women make acquaintances, discuss products and services, share opinions and experience, put photos or short films on the Web and comment on entries by other people. Men search for information, first of all.

Such animation of the society has been a result of the media’s stimulating role, allowing interaction of communications flows between various subjects of the process occur. At first media raise interest in social affairs, thus contributing to free and public expression of views. Next stage consists in the society getting inspired to participate

27 Magdalena Lis, *Social media, portale społecznościowe, Web 2.0* [Social Media, Social Networking Portals, Web 2.0], http://www.europae.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=338:social-media-portale-spoecznościowe-web-20&catid=79:artykuły&Itemid=120, [accessed on 10.05.11], after D. Kaznowski, *Nowy marketing* [New Marketing], VFP Communication Sp. z o.o., Warszawa 2008, p. 50.

28 D. Trzeciak, *Czym są Social Media - Era Social Media* [What Are Social Media?. The Era of Social Media] <http://interaktywnie.com/biznes/blog-ekspercki/social-media/czym-sa-social-media-era-social-media-7956>, [accessed on 18.05.11].

29 As opposed to 64% of men making such a declaration.

30 N. Dołżycka, *Kobiety w mediach społecznościowych* [Women in Social Media] <http://socjomania.pl/kobiety-w-mediach-spoecznościowych-cz-1/>. Data based on the research covered by “2009 Women and Social Media Study” report developed by BlogHer, iVillage and Compass Partners, [accessed on 18.05.11].

in civic undertakings and initiatives. It is in these considerations that the notion of a citizen society appears.³¹

Citizen Journalism

Citizen society is a term denoting „various forms of social self-organisation, as stemming from the sense of responsibility of a specific community for their fortunes. The self-organisation is implemented within the limits of law and aims at identification of social goals being of importance for the community”³². Through the examination of a citizen society as composed of actively committed members dealing with vital citizen issues, and assisted by the new media, the phenomenon of citizen journalism can be arrived at.

Polish press law does not include the notion of a “citizen journalism” or “citizen journalist”. Instead, there exists in it a rather broad legal term of a “journalist”. “A journalist is a person dealing with editing, development or preparation of press materials, employed by the medium under a contract of employment or involved in the aforementioned activities on behalf and under authorization of the medium”³³. Article 10 provides the definition with a supplement stating that: „The journalist’s task consists in service to the society and the state. In his/her activities the journalist is expected to observe professional ethics and rules of community life, and stay within the limits set by law”³⁴. The definition in question is a comprehensive one and clearly determines activities related to the profession. Putting it in a somewhat simplified way: if a citizen journalist writes for a citizen journalism website and edits, develops or prepares press materials on behalf and under authorization of the medium, the said means that he/she has the same rights (e.g. the right of access to information) and duties (e.g. the duty to observe professional ethics and show particular diligence and honesty when collecting and using press materials)³⁵ as professional journalists do.

The said is seemingly logical, but when referring to the Polish-language edition of Wikipedia, the following statements can be found there: “Citizen journalism is a kind of journalism practiced by a non-professional journalist in the public interest. Its origins and development are related to the Internet, since that very medium, as opposed to the press, radio or TV allows anybody to interactively co-create the contributed content and distribute it on a massive scale. The Web makes it possible to develop and publish articles in real time and maintain virtual worldwide cooperation of journalists.”³⁶ Elements of the definition put stress on the fact that citizen journalists

31 M. Mrozowski, *op.cit.*, p. 125-126.

32 *Ibidem*, p.126.

33 Art. 7 par. 2 item 5 of the Act of 26 January, 1984 – Press Law (Journal of Laws of 1984, No. 5, item 24).

34 Art.10 of the Act of 26 January, 1984 – Press Law (Journal of Laws of 1984, No. 5, item 24).

35 Art. 12 par. 1. item 1 of the Act of 26 January, 1984 – Press Law (Journal of Laws of 1984, No. 5, item 24).

36 *Dziennikarstwo obywatelskie* [Citizen Journalism] http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dziennikarstwo_obywatelskie, [accessed on 18.05.11].

do not have journalist background but are professionals in other fields. They make use of the opportunities provided to them by the Internet and Web 2.0 philosophy, with the sender becoming, at the same time, the recipient, with double perspective achieved as a result. Also the importance of the medium with its unique features has been rather clearly emphasized in the definition. And the public interest has been specified as the objective differentiating citizen journalists from other ones. Citizen journalists themselves make attempts to define the term denoting them. A group of authors attached to a local *Obywatelski.slupsk.pl* web portal have defined a citizen journalist as the “person perceiving his/her job as a mission. The mission’s objective lies in reconstruction of social infrastructure. Citizen editing teams describe the reality, yet are not satisfied with mere recording of facts. By suggesting solutions and instigating public debate they become a core of the debate, not the objective.”³⁷

The multitude of discussions and definitions results from the fact that citizen journalism is a fresh phenomenon in Poland. The first citizen journalism websites are about to celebrate their fifth anniversaries. For the situation to crystallize it is necessary to discuss what the essence of the phenomenon should be like. The following postulates seem, however, to be of utmost importance: “all journalists, whether professional or citizen, should observe the same rules of impartiality, accuracy and honesty, as well as ethical rules ascribed to the job done by them”³⁸.

Development and operation of citizen journalism websites in Poland

Poland’s first citizen journalism website was the Polish-language version of Wiki-news, established in 2005. The year 2006 brought about a crop of other developments, launched by professional media publishers. Next citizen journalism websites were established by big publishing groups, with *iThink.pl* site launched by Thinkmedia and *Wiadomosci24.pl* by *Polskapresse* in April 2006, whereas in June there appeared a Polish version of *EIOBA.pl*, and in October *salon24.pl* was started by Bogna and Igor Janke. July 2007 was marked by the launching of *Interia360.pl* which instilled the interest in the citizen journalism schemes among Poland’s Web portals.

At present, the biggest and most popular citizen journalism services include:

Wiadomości24.pl, an initiative most closely related to professional news websites. The texts published there are obtained from citizen journalists and from information services.

Salon24.pl, a blog service dealing with socio-political issues where any registered user is allowed to publish; many of those are professional journalists or politicians;

Interia360.pl, providing information that does not fit in news agencies but are close to the minds of inhabitants of small towns, villages or other settlements;

³⁷ *Dziennikarz obywatelski*, [Citizen Journalist]

<http://www.obywatelski.slupsk.pl/search/node/dziennikarstwo+obywatelskie>, [accessed on:20.03.10]

³⁸ M. Łosiewicz, *Dziennikarz obywatelski, czyli kto?* [Citizen Journalist, or Who?] [in] A.Ogonowska (cd.), *Oblicza nowych mediów* [The Faces of New Media], Kraków 2011, p.162.

EIOBA, a service rejecting the „news scheme” assumption in favour of various topical materials. The most interesting of the delivered texts are selected by readers through voting and published on the website’s main page;

iThink.pl, a website covering a wide range of topics (from politics or history to personal problems or successes), offering an opportunity to publish texts supplied with photos/sound or put in short video films. It puts greater emphasis on reflections and assessment of past events than on news. Independent and restriction-free, it is based on *randomcracy*, or random democracy meaning that prior to publication of the text has to be accepted by at least three randomly selected persons. Each registered user is then allowed to vote for or against the article, thus either increasing or decreasing its score reckoned towards general evaluation of the author. To publications placed on the website the Creative Commons licence rules are applied. These allow for publishing any texts from iThink in non-commercial media, the source and the author’s name being disclosed. In case of commercial-type media a consent of the text’s author is required.

A citizen journalism website for women, emerged in August 2009 at the initiative of Ewa Inn, is well-worth mentioning, too. Babski Comber.pl is „a service developed in feminine language”. As the originator claims, “the odds are in favour (of BC) becoming a cosy and safe haven to which you will always keep gladly returning”³⁹. The website responds to a demand from female Internet users. They want to have a “non-nonsense website on women’s issues”, not focusing mainly on celebrities and news from their everyday life. The website offers to women a chance to provide for their „broadly termed inner life”. Women can put their texts and commentaries there, express opinions, search for information. A friendly layout is all in claret and grey shades. The header includes nine topics (Female Feast, Female World, To Know More, Something for Your Soul, Living with Passion, The Wide, Wide World, With a Sparkle, Tasty Writing, Small Rivalries). The central part is occupied by a longitudinal screen for the latest topic. Presented in the right margin are: the ranking of texts (with scoring for the notes they receive and the frequency of the reading) and an information bloc (A Baloon Scout, or What? Where? When?), intervention bloc (Those Framed or Dishonesty Stigmatised) and a forum (Wives Talk). So far (19 May, 2011) there 132 persons registered. The poznaj nas bookmark presents 48 individual profiles and the profile of the editing team. The journalists’ activity is highly diversified (from 1 to 57 articles). Users include men as well, with 3 profiles of men writing for Babski Comber.pl [Female Feast.pl] section.

The biggest website among those present on Poland’s market is Wiadomości24.pl, created by about 40 thousand of registered citizen journalists. The Wiadomości24.pl community includes both those writing and those commenting, their input being read by over a million of active readers. Care for quality of the texts is taken by a 6-person editing team providing final proofreading. Besides materials received from citizen journalists entered in the website are Polish Press Agency wires. Subjects of the presented materials vary greatly, from hilarious issues to those annoying or sad.

39 E. Inn, *Serwis tworzony w języku kobiet* [A Website Created in Feminine Language], <http://www.babskicomber.pl/artykul/19,Serwis-tworzony-w-jezyku-kobiet.html>, [accessed on 18.05.11]

Generally speaking, touched are subjects close to the hearts of the writers, concerning their local homelands and issues related to the latter. Those writing happen to fight for cases concerning – at times – just a few people, which no media are willing to talk about, but they also get involved in national campaigns for the sake of natural environment, handicapped people or those socially excluded. World news and problems can be learned from the Agency Wires section. Lots of reviews and sporting events coverage is presented as well.

The website makes it possible to go on journalist apprenticeships either directly at the editing office or on-line. Journalist Summer Schools and winter workshops for the authors are arranged in addition.

Many apprentices starting at W24.pl continue their journalism adventure with mainstream media. Radio/ TV broadcast stations, newspapers or Web portals willingly employ the most active citizen journalists, while in various media articles are published about citizen journalists and materials developed by them. Professional journalists also enter the websites to find pieces of firsthand information which, for various reasons, are not likely to be found elsewhere. A few regional agencies avail themselves of materials developed by citizen journalists, publishing them in their pages.

Wiadomości24.pl website includes a Stylebook facility supposed to help those writing dispel their language-related doubts. Spelling, punctuation or stylistic consultation can be of use to anybody about to close his/her text and send it to the editing team. Writers can also find brief guiding remarks on specific journalism genres there. The supplied pieces of advice are categorised into the following sections: photo caption, interview, statements, dates, hours, numerals, abbreviations, use of small and capital letters, inverted commas. In addition, monitoring of the errors with which those writing most frequently meet is carried out.

Rules of the website, providing for the allowed use of it, are available to the public. The roles of those writing and those using the service are specified in detail there. Considered to be the user is “the individual that uses the website to draw data from it or put information in it”⁴⁰. The Registered User is a user that has undergone either the Full Registration or the Limited Registration procedure. Having undergone the Full Registration the user agrees for his/her “image to be distributed and made publicly available by the Operator”⁴¹. A Registered User with a Photo is a Registered User having undergone the Full Registration procedure without removal of his/her image from the profile in the website. Entitled to registration are adult persons. As regards minors, consent of their parents or legal guardians is required. “When using the Service, Users have to observe law, in particular provisions of the Press Law, Civil Code, the Unfair Competition Suppression Act and the Act on Copyright and Related Rights. Users are also expected to observe the Code of Journalism Ethics and good customs.”⁴².

40 *Regulamin serwisu* [Website Rules] www.wiadomosci24.pl, <http://www.wiadomosci24.pl/regulamin/>, [accessed on 18.05.11].

41 *Ibidem*

42 *Ibidem*

Wiadomości24.pl can boast numerous prizes and distinctions. "By a decision of the Internet Academy Webstarfestival, Wiadomości24.pl, a social networking website of citizen journalism was recognized Website of the Year 2009 under "Community" category. Also in 2008 the Wiadomości24.pl website was awarded a Webstarfestival statuette by the Academy under the same category of "Community". A year earlier the website was awarded a prize under "Media" category by Internet surfers voting in the Webstarfestival, and in 2006 a statuette was awarded to the website under "News and Information" category. Wiadomości24.pl also placed first in the category of general information website in the survey launched by "Symetria" agency in November 2007."⁴³

Since 2006, on a periodical basis, Wiadomości24.pl hold a competition for best citizen journalists/bloggers and citizen activists. As the promoters of the competition declare, the competition "reflects recognition to Poland's newly emerging phenomenon of service to others by spreading information"⁴⁴. Awarded under the competition are those publishing in the Web without receiving any fee who observe copyright rules and deliver materials that are reliable and useful. They are selected by means of voting done by surfers who appoint nominees. Afterwards, from among the group of five finalists established through the surfer voting the Citizen Journalist of the Year is appointed by the Award Committee composed of professional journalists. Besides appointment done by the Committee, voting is also performed by the surfers to select those worthy of the honorable title⁴⁵. It has been three times so far that the award/distinction winners of the Competition were women (Tab.1). It should be added at that occasion that the appointment was done twice by the Committee, whereas it were surfers that selected a woman once.

Table 1. award winners of the citizen journalist competition in the years 2006-09

2006	2007	2008	2009
Appointed by the Committee			
Robert Sałata Agnieszka Kawula (special distinction)	Andrzej Pieczyrak	Marek Iwaniszyn	Jolanta Paczkowska
Selected by means of surfer voting			
Oliwia Piotrowska	Krzysztof Olejniczak Roman Stachowiak Marek Iwaniszyn	Mirosław Ogórka Marek Iwaniszyn Dawid Serafin	Paweł Rogaliński Damian Juszczyk Michał Misiorek

Source: author's own elaboration based on www.w.24.pl [accessed on 19.05.11]

43 O *Wiadomościach24.pl - garść podstawowych informacji dla prasy*, [Wiadomości24.pl – A Handful of Basic Information for the Press] http://www.wiadomosci24.pl/arttykul/informacje_dla_prasy_59474.html, [accessed on 19.05.11].

44 A. Plona, *Rok 2006. Pierwszy konkurs na Dziennikarza Obywatelskiego i Blogera Roku* [2006. The First Competition for a Citizen Journalist and Blogger of the Year] http://doroku.wiadomosci24.pl/rok-2006-pierwszy-konkurs-na-dziennikarza-obywatelskiego-i-blogera-roku,artykul.html?material_id=4d6bcf0016f1da9c40010000, [accessed on 18.05.11].

45 M. Łosiewicz, *Dziennikarz...* [Citizen Journalist ...], *op.cit.*, p.166.

Characteristic of the website is high dynamics of its activities. These include numerous campaigns, like "distribution of air tickets to any European city just before Christmas, tickets to a concert of Polish stars at Wembley, books, films on DVD or cosmetics as prizes in competitions, interviews of citizen journalists with Leach Wałęsa, Tomasz Lis, Dr. Janusz Kochanowski (the Ombudsman), patronage extended over competitions, events, seminars."⁴⁶ Journalists of w24.pl take up fight for socially important cases. They take standpoints on controversial issues, unfair solutions (like those concerning healthcare issues). A campaign like that was related to an open letter directed to the Head of the National Health Fund, Jacek Paszkiewicz, in protest against a new rule that set criteria excluding a large group of women from breast cancer prevention programme. It was assumed that health and life of many Polish women could be put at stake and a demand was made to cancel the rule in question.

The authors are, for the most part, young people, but elderly ones, retirees in particular are also active. Together they represent a most impressive range of career fields and professional backgrounds: from school students to teachers, economists, linguists, engineers to priests and models.

Women as Citizen Journalists

When analyzing the field of citizen journalism and the role played by women in that form of communications, a question has to inevitably be asked, who the women being citizen journalists are. Why did they decide to take up writing if they have other professions? What makes them devote their time to development of materials, to dealing with problems they cannot sit quietly by? Why do they reach places that have never been seen by the eye or a camera of a professional? And what are the reasons for them to listen to the people who never had a chance to talk to the microphone of a professional reporter?

Let us have a look on results of the research done by the author, covering a group of citizen journalists of two Polish websites, w24.pl and iThink.pl. The facilities were selected considering the length of their operation in the market and popularity. iThink.pl offers to its users wider opportunities to shape and develop the medium. The main slogan of iThink.pl is: "Express yourself!" and the portal puts emphasis on independence. Its goal is to build up relationships between its users based on interest in a specific topic, which allows individual authors to develop on their own or join together to form groups for publishing common materials. Also the environment of the website, specially designed to that purpose, makes it possible to the users to communicate with one another, establish profiles and send messages. The objective of w24.pl is to provide reliable information, by allowing non-professional journalists to publish their texts

⁴⁶ P.Nowacki, *Wielka rodzina Wiadomości24.pl i... co ja w niej robię?* [The Great Family of Wiadomości 24.pl and ... What Is My Place in It?] http://www.wiadomosci24.pl/arttykul/wielka_rodzina_wiadomosci24_pl_i_co_ja_w_niej_robie_100144-4-1--d.html, [accessed on 19.05.11].

which then undergo necessary corrections done by the editing team. Authors of the best texts are awarded prizes in kind or money under the categories of: the best text, best author and the most frequently commented material.

The research was conducted using a survey launched on the Internet. 132 persons who filled in and returned survey questionnaires responded to the questions thus making it possible to the author to determine the profile of a citizen journalist. The respondents can be broken down as follows:

- W24.pl 105 persons
 - iThink.pl 27 persons
- GENDER**

Gender is one of the variables that differentiate participation in citizen journalism to but a small degree. Among citizen journalist the number of women is relatively higher (53%) than that of men - 47% (fig. 1).



figure 1. Citizen journalists by gender

Source: author's own elaboration based on empirical research

AGE

Talking about age as a differentiating factor, it can be easily noticed that differentiation within specific age intervals is considerable. The youngest group of the respondents (aged 18-24) makes up the most numerous group of citizen journalists and accounts for more than half (54.54%) of the examined population (table 2).

Table 2. Citizen journalists by age

	Women	Men	Total
18-24*	39,39%	15,15%	54,54%
25-34	4,54%	13,64%	18,18%
35-44	1,51%	3,03%	4,54%
45-54	3,03%	6,06%	9,09%
55-65	6,06%	3,03%	9,09%
Pow. 65	3,03%	1,51%	4,54%

*only adult persons were taken into account

Source: author's own elaboration based on empirical research

It is women who predominate in the group, with the percentage share of 39.39%. These usually are school and academic students, not burdened with the duties of wives

and mothers, who spend much time on personal development and practicing their hobbies. The results achieved suggest a strong probability that the older the age group, the smaller the activity of its members in citizen journalism is. In case of women, their activity markedly drops down as regards 25-34 and 35-33 intervals. A situation like that can be ascribed to the period of maternity reducing the leisure time that can be devoted to issues of personal interest or hobbies down to a minimum. Elder women (55-65 and 65+) also account for the predominating part of citizen journalists of that age.

EDUCATION

The structure of the respondents' education is presented in table 1. Participation in citizen journalism services is particularly popular among the group of persons with secondary comprehensive education confirmed by the school leaving certificate (28.78%) and with women holding master diplomas of graduate studies (19.69%). The same groups dominate as regards general ratios for men and women jointly. As opposed to those figures, numbers of female citizen journalists claiming secondary technical examination without the school-leaving certificate or secondary technical examination with the school-leaving certificate, as well as women holding a bachelor or engineer diploma of undergraduate studies are relatively small. It is men who dominate in the groups. The research shows that women contributing, as writers, to the websites in question are better educated than men are.

TABLE 3. EDUCATION

	Women	Men	Total
Secondary technical education without the school-leaving certificate	0,75%	3,79%	4,54%
Secondary technical education with the school-leaving certificate	1,51%	3,03%	4,54%
Undergraduate (bachelor or engineer level) studies	0,75%	3,79%	4,54%
Post-secondary education	7,57%	6,06%	13,63%
Graduate (master level) studies	19,69%	12,12%	31,81%
Secondary comprehensive education with the school-leaving certificate	28,78%	12,12%	40,90%

Source: author's own elaboration based on empirical research

SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROUPS

The structure of social and professional groups (table 4) reveals a majority of higher

school students, with the domination of women (34,09%). Second in turn is the managerial (executive) staff group (18.18%) with women accounting for mere 6,82%. Next come professionals claiming higher education (9.09%) with the share of women being 5.30%. As regards administration/office staff, it's women who predominate (the representation being at the level of 3.79%). Women also more active in the group of retirees (6.06%).

The biggest share of women includes the student group, where the use of Internet is almost common. Retirees, to whom the Internet is a novelty with which they got acquainted as adults, form a most interesting group. They obviously appreciate the good sides of the Web and make use of them, contributing to the websites and developing new personal interests.

Table 4. Social and professional groups

	Women	Men	Total
Technicians	1,51%	3,03%	4,54%
Administration/Office staff	3,79%	0,75%	4,54%
Running business of their own	1,51%	3,03%	4,54%
Professionals with higher education	5,30%	3,79%	9,09%
Retirees	6,06%	3,03%	9,09%
Managerial (executive) staff	6,82%	11,36%	18,18%
Higher school students	34,09%	15,91%	50%

Source: author's own elaboration based on empirical research

SIZE OF THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND DISTRIBUTION BY REGIONS

The research has shown (table 5) that female citizen journalists are mostly women living in big agglomerations with more than 500,000 inhabitants (29.54%). Rural inhabitants make up the smallest group (3.79%).

Since a majority of the respondents live in cities, their percentage in specific voivodships (provinces) depends, to a certain extent, on the urbanisation ratio of the provinces. Relatively biggest numbers of citizen journalists live in *mazowieckie* (Masovian) and *śląskie* (Silesian) voivodships. The provinces in question are highly urbanized, with the urbanisation ratio exceeding the national average.

Table 5. Size of the place of residence

	Women	Men	Total
	29,54%	25%	54,54%
City of 100-500 thous.	9,84%	12,88%	22,72%
City of 50-100 thous.	5,30%	3,79%	9,09%
City of 20- 50 thous.	0	0	0
City up to 20 thous.	3,03%	1,51%	4,54%
Village	3,79%	5,30%	9,09%

Source: author's own elaboration based on empirical research

JOURNALISM ACTIVITY

It is customary for Wiadomości24.pl to supply each presented article with information specifying the status of its author (the person being referred to as a Debutant, Trainee, Reporter, Journalist, Editor, Publisher) and level of his/her activity, in terms of published articles, galleries and commentaries provided to other materials. The statistics is updated on a running basis.

The philosophy of iThink.pl in that respect is somewhat different. The presented article is supplied only with a counter of positive and negative reviews by readers of the material plus a number of views. It is only from the author's profile that we can learn about his/her activity (number of publications) and the date of joining the service. Again the statistics is updated on a running basis.

The research reveals that citizen journalists are active persons (table 6). More than (9%) publish their materials daily, as many as 6,82% being women. 13.63 % do it a few times a week (9.09% of the general number being women). The bulk of the people contribute their materials a few times a month (40.90% of the respondents, 24.24% of women). Also in the group of those least active, who publish once a month (4.54%) the representation of women is the smallest (1.51% of the respondents). As the summary reveals, women make up a strong representation within the group where level of activity is the highest.

Table 6. Frequency of supplying new articles

	Women	Men	Total
	24,24%	16,66%	40,90%
Once a month	1,51%	3,03%	4,54%
Less frequently than once a month	5,30%	12,88%	18,18%
A few times a week	9,09%	4,54%	13,63%
Once a week	7,57%	6,06%	13,63%
Every day	6,82%	1,51%	9,09%

Source: author's own elaboration based on empirical research

LENGTH OF EXPERIENCE IN CITIZEN JOURNALISM

Female journalists also belong to the group of persons with the longest experience in contributing to the website (table 7). Should we adopt, as the criterion for dividing the population of the journalists into a group of those with short and those with long experience, the period of one year of the activity, then it is persons with the experience exceeding one year that predominate in the examined websites (59.08%), women accounting for as many as 37,11% of the general numbers. Many of them (6,06%) have been contributing to the portals from the very beginning of their existence.

Tabl 7. Length of experience in citizen journalism

		Men	Total
Less than a year	6,06%	7,57%	13,63%
From 6 months to 1 year	12,12%	15,15%	27,27%
From 1 to 2 years	13,63%	9,09%	22,72%
Over 2 years	17,42%	9,85%	27,27%
Since the beginning of the website's existence	6,06%	3,03%	9,09%

Source: author's own elaboration based on empirical research

Conclusions from the conducted research

A majority of citizen journalists are women.

The largest age group is formed by the youngest women (the 18-24 age interval). The older the group, the smaller the share of women in it. The 25-44 age intervals are dominated by men. This can be possibly explained by involvement of the female part of the examined population into tasks related to maternity and children raising at that stage of life.

Women are better educated and predominate in the groups of persons with secondary comprehensive education and with higher (master level) education.

The persons are working ones.

Among female citizen journalists the largest group is students. Next positions in the list are occupied by women representing the managerial (executive) staff group, professionals with secondary education and administration/office staff.

Female citizen journalists live mostly in big cities (with more than 500,000 inhabitants).

Women are more active journalists than men. A majority of them publish their articles a few times a month or more frequently.

It is women with the citizen journalist's experience longer than a year that predominate in the website.

Summary

Patryk Latacz, a journalist of w24.pl writes: "Is it possible to imagine oneself our website without women? It is often themselves that set the tone of the discussion and surprise us ever more with their professional approach to the topic. There is nothing Wiadomości24.pl could be ashamed of. It is women that are in the forefront here and I do not think anybody can be troubled by it.

Women are more active, surprise the reader as gifted writers and persons that have a keen view about the surrounding reality. And it is not the quantity, but the quality of

publications that I mean. The ranking, as made by the users, is the best proof of what I am saying. The top ten of best ranked citizen journalists includes as many as 7 women!⁴⁷. In 2010 two female journalists of w24.pl website were granted the LadyD titles⁴⁸ for their journalist output in w.24.pl.

Yet prizes and laurels happen once in a while, whereas reality shows another side of journalism, sometimes painful and sad. One of the female journalists of w24.pl contributed a story of a successful journalist intervention. The assistance rendered by the journalist became, however, the reason for grumbling by the person who received it. Instead of joy and thanks, the author met with reproach and unfriendliness. When describing the case, the author observes: “ The journalist’s work gives a lot of satisfaction but can also be bitter like strong coffee. I personally found out what it is like when a great joy momentarily turns into depression and sorrow ... I keep thinking that with that text and all that situation I adopted a baptism of fire. I tasted glory and regret. Triumph and great disappointment. And, paradoxically perhaps, I was confirmed in my belief that – yes! I do want to be a journalist⁴⁹.”

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47 Patryk Latacz, *Kobiety Wiadomości24.pl* [Women of Wiadomości24.pl], www.wiadomosci24.pl/arttykul/21309.html [accessed on 19.05.11]

48 The award in question is a nation-wide prize that is awarded, for 8 years now, to the women who – despite being handicapped – make a considerable contribution to social life of our country.

49 Ewa Podsiadły, *Smutne przypadki dziennikarki obywatelskiej* [The Sad Fortunes of a Citizen Journalist], www.wiadomosci24.pl/arttykul/79172.html [accessed on 19.05.11]

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