

# Trust in local media and information they share during the Covid-19 pandemic: Belgrade example

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## Abstract

The analysis of the relevant literature, especially earlier empirical research of serious pandemics (not including the forces of nature and the processes they create), refers to the assumption that man is (directly or indirectly) guilty of them. Given that the media transmits information related to the intensity of the spread of the pandemic, the death rate of the sick, etc., a survey of citizens' trust in the local media and the information they convey was conducted in order to find out how much the media contribute to the intensity of the spread of the negative effects of the Covid 19 pandemic. Four assumptions were defined as questions to which respondents' answers were requested: *frequency of information through different types of media; assessment of the extent to which different types of media offer the possibility of objective information; the existence of free, independent and impartial media in Serbia, and finding the truth in the media.* The research is of a quantitative type, conducted on a sample of 600 respondents in the city of Belgrade. For the collection and processing of data used the desk method, using interviews and via electronic questionnaires, in which the questions in the first part related to the socio-demographic variables of the respondents, while in the second part the group of dependent variables was operationalized through the statements, which were evaluated on a Likert scale. More sub-questions are offered within the four main questions. Descriptive statistical analysis (percentages, arithmetic mean), T-test, One-factor analysis of variance, Standard deviation, Multiple regression analysis and Pearson's correlation coefficient were used for data analysis. The level of statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ , and all obtained data were processed in the SPSS program, version 23.

**Keywords:** *information and media, Covid-19 pandemic, state*

## Rezumat. Încrederea în mass-media locală și în informațiile pe care le împărtășesc în timpul pandemiei de Covid-19: exemplul Belgradului

Analiza literaturii interne și străine, în special cercetările empirice anterioare referitoare la pandemii (fără a include forțele naturii și procesele pe care le creează), indică ipoteza că oamenii sunt (direct sau indirect) vinovați pentru ele. Având în vedere că mass-media transmite informații legate de intensitatea răspândirii pandemiei, rata mortalității bolnavilor etc., a fost realizat un sondaj privind încrederea cetățenilor în mass-media locală și informațiile pe care le transmit pentru a afla cât de mult contribuie mass-media la intensitatea răspândirii efectelor negative ale pandemiei de Covid 19. Au fost definite patru ipoteze ca întrebări la care au fost solicitate răspunsuri ale respondenților: frecvența informației prin diferite tipuri de media; evaluarea măsurii în care diferitele tipuri de mass-media oferă posibilitatea informării obiective; existența unei mass-media libere, independente și imparțiale în Serbia și găsirea adevărului în mass-media. Cercetarea este de tip cantitativ, realizată pe un eșantion de 600 de respondenți din orașul Belgrad folosind metoda biroului, interviuri și prin chestionare electronice, în care întrebările din prima parte au vizat variabilele socio-demografice ale respondenților, în timp ce în partea a doua grupul de variabile dependente a fost operaționalizat prin enunțuri, care au fost evaluate pe o scară Likert. Au fost oferite mai multe subîntrebări în cadrul celor patru întrebări principale. Analiza statistică descriptivă (procente, medie aritmetică), testul T, analiza varianței cu un singur factor, abaterea standard, analiza regresiei multiple și coeficientul de corelație Pearson au fost utilizate pentru analiza datelor. Nivelul de semnificație statistică a fost stabilit la  $p < 0,05$ , iar toate datele obținute au fost procesate în programul SPSS, versiunea 23.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *informație și mass-media, pandemie de Covid-19, stat*

## Introduction

Since the outburst of the coronavirus, the following burning issues: occurrence of the virus (where, how and when), spread of the virus (manner and speed), prevention and treatment of the coronavirus, and especially knowledge about the death toll, have been conditioned by the media and information they share ([https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200121-sitrep-1-2019-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=20a99c10\\_4](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200121-sitrep-1-2019-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=20a99c10_4)). Some

religious leaders consider the epidemic to be God's message to the people (Tervanotko, 2020).

In addition to all the doubts and fears caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (Batool et. al, 2020), special attention has been paid to the incompetence of developed countries. The mass media is the main source of information about the virus (Anwar et.al, 2020; Zhao et.al, 2020). Hundreds of thousands of people in the United States are dying from the coronavirus! What is the problem (Besser, 2021)? Is it possible that the United States cannot produce an adequate vaccine? Is it possible that the most powerful force in the world does not have an

adequate health care system (Vinelli et al., 2020)? Is it about the culmination of the liberal/neoliberal model of organizing society and the state (Dusanic, 2021)? Is the Keynesian approach to solving economic problems unavoidable (Alan and Mark, 2010)? Interventions of governments of developed countries in crises are inevitable (Draskovic, 2021). Part of the answer to the previous questions may be found in the "theory of long cycles of capitalist economic systems" by N. Kondratyev - whether the time has come to change the economic cycle (Papageorgiou & Tsoulfidis, 2006).

In retrospect, the globalization process, generated by neoliberal principles, has undoubtedly contributed to an increasing flow of goods and services at the planetary level, and faster movement of financial, especially corporate capital (Podra et. al, 2021) but also a number of social, economic and social problems (Vujović & Reljic, 2016) thanks to the media to a great extent (Pérez-Gaxiola & Amelsvoort, 2020). By researching and analyzing worldwide political and economic trends in-both developed and underdeveloped countries and economies, the conclusion may be drawn that all crises and major social problems in the world are related to the economy (Vujović and Vukosavljević, 2013). It would be an epochal endeavor to define the guidelines of economic development that could serve as a model for overcoming the economic problems of society, with the indispensable role of the media and information.

Accelerated development of techniques and technologies under the control of large corporations with the help of media houses (Vujović and Miletić, 2016; Nemethy, 2021), with Covid-19 raises the question of further control of new technological breakthroughs. Does anyone control Covid-19 (<https://www.epi-win.com/>)? "The Covid-19 pandemic will likely leave us with an economy in which larger companies play an expanded role, representing a higher share of both employment and revenue" (Orszag, 2020). Is Covid-19 a planned action for settling undiscovered China and the United States? Is Covid-19 an accidental mistake of the curious (Kesikli & Gökalp, 2021; Wang et. al, 2015)? All these questions demand an urgent answer. It should be emphasized here that the urgency of the response is under the scrutiny of media houses as much as under the scrutiny of the economy and the fact that the population is dying.

## **Research methodology**

The research was done using the desk method, direct interview and using questionnaire tests in the city of Belgrade in the period of May and June 2021. Field research, as well as data collection, processing and analysis, were done by the authors. Respondents

were selected using a random sample method from among employees in the public and private sector, to whom the questionnaires were prepared electronically via available email addresses, but part of the questionnaire was also conducted by direct interview with randomly selected respondents on the street filling out the questionnaire. The questionnaire is structured in the form of four basic questions with sub-questions within each of them: 1) frequency of information through different types of media (electronic editions of newspapers and magazines, information through TV, WEB portals, printed editions of newspapers and magazines and other places on the Internet); 2) assessment of the extent to which different types of media offer the possibility of objective information (here the possibilities of objective information through each of the mentioned six media were assessed - from "not at all" to "completely"); 3) the existence of free, independent and impartial media in Serbia (five options are offered here - "no", "not at all", "not sure", "yes", "yes of course") and 4) finding the truth in to the media (here, of the fourteen options for answers, four were selected - see the dependent variable under "d").

A total of 600 respondents of different ages and from different institutions were included, and on the basis of the processed tests, 432 tests or answers were accepted for further processing, of which 267 respondents were male and 165 female. A large number of tests (186) were not accepted due to not meeting the criteria of the answers themselves, not understanding the questions.

The level of education of the respondents was divided into categories: secondary education (46.5%), college (11.1%), university (31.3%), master's or doctorate (11.1%), with no respondents in the sample only primary school education or have not acquired full primary school education.

According to age, respondents were divided into the following categories: up to 29 years (22.9%), from 30 to 39 (21.5%), from 40 to 49 (34.0%) and over 50 years (19.4%), while 2.1% of respondents did not provide information about age.

Employment status by income shows that 72.9% of respondents an income, while 27.1% do not earn any income.

Work experience was expressed through the following categories: up to 10 years of service (31.9%), between 11 and 20 years (34.0%), between 21 and 30 years (21.0%) and over 30 years of service (11.8%). 6.3% of respondents did not have this information.

Personal income was expressed through four categories: lack of personal income (18.1%), up to EUR 500 per month (45.8%), from EUR 501 to EUR 1,000 per month (28.5%) and over EUR 1,000 per month (7.6%).

Household income was divided into the following five categories: lack of familiarity with household income (8.3%), up to € 500 per month income (18.1%), € 501 to € 1,000 (41.7%), € 1001 to € 1,500 (18.8%) and over 1500 euros per month (13.2%).

The number of household members is expressed in five categories: independent living (8.3%), two-member household (15.3%), three-member household (29.9%), four-member household (31.9%) and households with five or more members (14.6%).

When it comes to the number of household members who earn income, respondents are divided into four categories: households in which none of the members earn income (2.1%), households in which only one person earns income (20.8%), households in which two members generate income (51.4%) and households in which three or more members earn income (25.7%).

## Research results

The following four variables are defined as dependent:

- a) frequency of information through different types of media;
- b) assessment of the extent to which different types of media offer the possibility of objective information;
- c) the existence of free, independent and impartial media in Serbia, and
- d) finding the truth in the media.

### a) Frequency of information through different types of media

Respondents on a five-point Likert - type scale (very rare - very common) assessed how often they were informed through each of these six media. The results showed that the respondents estimate that they are most often informed through electronic editions of newspapers and magazines, where the arithmetic mean for the estimates of this type of media is 3.45, and the standard deviation is 1.33. Also, information on TV was frequent, with an arithmetic mean of 3.28 and a standard deviation of 1.23. The arithmetic mean of the estimates for the frequency of information via the WEB portal is 3.09 with a standard deviation of 1.30, while the arithmetic mean for other places on the Internet is 2.99 with an arithmetic mean of 1.33. Finally, the arithmetic mean of the estimates for printed editions of newspapers and magazines is 2.97 with an arithmetic mean of 1.37, while for radio the arithmetic mean is 2.84 with a standard deviation of 1.33. These results indicate that respondents are most often informed through electronic editions of newspapers and magazines and through TV, while they are least often informed through radio.

### b) Assessment of the extent to which different types of media offer the possibility of objective information

Respondents assessed the possibility of objective information through each of the six media on a five-point Likert-type scale (not at all - completely). The results show that respondents have the most confidence in the objectivity of information that can be found on "other places on the Internet" ( $M=2.98$ ,  $SD=0.90$ ), followed by information from the WEB portal ( $M=2.95$ ,  $SD=0.90$ ). The arithmetic mean for assessing the objectivity of electronic editions of newspapers and magazines is 2.86 ( $SD=0.90$ ), for radio it is 2.69 ( $SD=0.87$ ), while for TV it is 2.67 ( $SD=0.99$ ). The lowest assessment of objectivity is for printed editions of newspapers and magazines ( $M=2.63$ ,  $SD=0.91$ ). From these results, it can be concluded that the respondents trust "other places on the Internet" and WEB portals the most, while they trust the printed editions of newspapers and magazines the least. However, it can be noticed that overall there is no great confidence in the objectivity of information from the media.

### c) Existence of free, independent and impartial media in Serbia

By circling one of the five offered options, the respondents answered the question of whether they think that there are free, independent and impartial media in Serbia. The option "no, not at all" was chosen by 28.5% of respondents, while the option "no" was chosen by 41.0% of respondents. The "I'm not sure" option was chosen by 18.8% of respondents. On the other hand, the option "yes" was chosen by 7.6% of respondents, while the option "yes of course" was chosen by only 1.4% of respondents. These results indicate that a very small number of respondents believe that there are free, independent and impartial media in Serbia.

### d) Finding the truth in the media

Respondents assessed the extent to which they agreed with fourteen claims about coming to the truth in the media. For each of the claims, they assessed the extent to which they agreed with it on a five-point Likert-type scale (I do not agree at all - I agree completely). The results were processed by analysis of the main components with Varimax rotation. This analysis singled out four factors that together explain 63.67% of the variance. The first factor is called "concealing the truth" and explains 29.84% of the variance. This factor is saturated with claims that the media serve to cover up the truth, as well as that even those who create information for the media do not know the truth. The second factor explains 16.01% of the variance and is called "alternative sources of truth". This factor refers to claims that the truth can only be revealed by NGOs or foreign media. The third factor is called "spiritual truth" and explains 10.59% of the variance. This factor refers to claims that the

truth can be provided by the Church or prophecies. The last factor explains 7.24% of the variance and is called "multi-media tracking". This factor refers to the claims that the truth can be reached by following more media, comparing information, critical thinking, as well as avoiding bad taste and lack of culture in the media. *This structure of the results shows that a very large part of the variance of attitudes about the truth in the media can be explained by four factors. Also, the results show that the respondents cultivate distrust towards the information coming from the media, as well as that they tend to turn to other sources of information that are separate from the media.*

### **Crossing of dependent and independent variables**

*Frequency of information through different types of media depending on demographic variables.*

One-factor analysis of variance examined the differences in the frequency of information through different types of media depending on the number of household members. This analysis showed that significant differences exist when it comes to radio,  $F(4, 421)=4.03$ ,  $p<.01$  and other places on the Internet,  $F(4, 418)=2.46$ ,  $p<.05$ . Also, it has been shown that with the increase in the number of household members, the frequency of information via radio increases, while the frequency of information via other places on the Internet decreases. This result suggests that there are significant differences in the frequency of informing respondents via radio and other places on the Internet depending on the number of household members in which they live.

Also, a one-factor analysis of variance examined the differences in the frequency of information through different types of media depending on the number of household members with income. Significant differences were found in printed editions of newspapers and magazines,  $F(3, 428)=4.09$ ,  $p<.01$ , electronic editions of newspapers and magazines,  $F(3, 425)=7.09$ ,  $p<.01$  and in TV,  $F(3, 428)= 6.70$ ,  $p<.01$ . In addition, it has been shown that with the increase in the number of household members who earn income, the frequency of information through printed and electronic editions of newspapers and magazines increases, while the frequency of information through TV decreases. The obtained results show that the frequency with which respondents are informed through printed and electronic editions of newspapers and magazines and through TV differs significantly depending on the number of members who earn income in their household.

One-factor analysis of variance examined the differences in the frequency of information through different types of media depending on the personal income of the respondents. It has been shown that

statistically significant differences exist when it comes to the frequency of information through printed editions of newspapers and magazines,  $F(3,428)=3.32$ ,  $p<.05$ , electronic editions of newspapers and magazines,  $F(3,425)=5.58$ ,  $p<.01$ , radio,  $F(3, 422)= 2.95$ ,  $p<.05$  and WEB portals,  $F(3, 419)=4.63$ ,  $p<.01$ . This analysis showed that with the increase of personal income of the respondents, the frequency of information through printed and electronic editions of newspapers and magazines and through WEB portals increases, while the frequency of information through radio decreases. The obtained results speak in favor of the fact that the frequency of informing respondents through printed and electronic editions of newspapers and magazines, as well as through radio and WEB portals differs depending on the amount of their personal income.

The T-test for independent measurements examined the differences in the frequency of information through different types of media depending on gender. Significant differences were obtained for the frequency of information through printed editions of newspapers and magazines,  $t(430)= -2.87$ ,  $p<.01$ , through the WEB portal,  $t(421)= -3.12$ ,  $p<.01$  and through other places on the Internet,  $t(421)= -2.58$ ,  $p<.05$ . It has also been shown that women use all three sources of information more often than men. These results show that men and women differ in the frequency with which they are informed through printed publications of newspapers and magazines, WEB portals and other places on the Internet.

One-factor analysis of variance compared the differences in the frequency of information through different types of media depending on household income. This analysis showed that there are significant differences in the frequency of information through printed publications of newspapers and magazines,  $F(4, 427)=2.99$ ,  $p<.05$ , radio,  $F(4, 421)=2.52$ ,  $p<.05$  and WEB portals,  $F(4, 418)=2.62$ ,  $p<.05$ . In addition, this analysis showed that with the increase in household income, the frequency of information through printed publications of newspapers and magazines and through WEB portals increases, while the frequency of information through radio decreases. The obtained results show that the respondents are informed with different frequencies through printed editions of newspapers and magazines, radio and WEB portals, depending on the income of the household in which they live.

T-tests for independent measurements compared the differences in the frequency of information through different types of media, depending on whether the respondents earn income or not. Statistically significant differences existed in printed editions of newspapers and magazines,  $t(430) = 3.99$ ,  $p <.01$ , electronic editions of newspapers and magazines,  $t(427) = 3.83$ ,  $p <.01$  and in TV,  $t(430)$

= 2.07,  $p < .05$ . It has been shown that people who earn income use printed and electronic editions of newspapers and magazines, as well as TV, more often as a source of information than people who do not earn income. This structure of the results shows that, depending on whether the respondents earn income, they differ in the frequency of obtaining information through printed and electronic editions of newspapers and magazines, as well as through TV.

One-factor analysis of variance compared the differences in the frequency of information through different types of media depending on the length of service (of total work experience at work) of the respondents. Statistically significant differences were not found only when it comes to the frequency of information via radio, while for all other types of media significant differences were found depending on the length of service. It has been shown that with the increase in length of service, the frequency of information through printed editions of newspapers and magazines and on TV increases, while the frequency of information through electronic editions of newspapers and magazines, WEB portals and other places on the Internet decreases. Thus the results show that depending on the length of service of the respondents, the degree of frequency in which they are informed through all media except radio differs.

One-factor analysis of variance compared the differences in the frequency of information through different types of media depending on the acquired education of the respondents. Statistically significant differences were found in the frequency of information through printed editions of newspapers and magazines,  $F(3, 428)=5.21$ ,  $p < .01$ , electronic editions of newspapers and magazines,  $F(3, 425)=3.79$ ,  $p < .05$  and over WEB portal,  $F(3, 419)=6.58$ ,  $p < .01$ . Also, the results showed that with the increase in the professional qualifications of the respondents, the frequency of information through printed and electronic editions of newspapers and magazines, as well as through the WEB portal, increased. The obtained results show that the respondents differ significantly in the frequency of information through printed and electronic editions of newspapers and magazines, as well as through the WEB portal, depending on their education.

Finally, a one-factor analysis of variance compared the differences in the frequency of information through different media depending on the age of the respondents. Statistically significant differences were obtained for all types of media except for electronic editions of newspapers and magazines. Also, it has been shown that with the increasing age of respondents, the frequency of information through printed newspapers and magazines and TV increases, while the frequency of information through radio, WEB portals and other places on the Internet decreases. These results show that, depending on

their age, the respondents differ in the frequency of information through all media except electronic editions of newspapers and magazines.

Attitude about the possibility of objective information through different types of media depending on demographic variables

One-factor analysis of variance examined differences in attitudes towards the possibility of objective information through different types of media depending on the number of household members. This analysis showed that significant differences exist when it comes to WEB portals,  $F(4, 421)=2.62$ ,  $p < .05$  and other places on the Internet,  $F(4, 418)=2.61$ ,  $p < .05$ . Also, this analysis showed that with the increase in the number of household members, there is a decline in agreement with the statement that it is possible to be objectively informed through WEB portals and other places on the Internet. The obtained results show that the level of trust in WEB portals and other places on the Internet differs significantly depending on the number of household members.

One-factor analysis of variance examined differences in attitudes towards the possibility of objective information through different types of media depending on the number of household members with income. Significant differences were found in printed editions of newspapers and magazines,  $F(3, 428)=3.56$ ,  $p < .05$ , TV,  $F(3, 428)=3.90$ ,  $p < .01$  and in other places on the Internet,  $F(3, 422)=2.66$ ,  $p < .05$ . At the same time, it has been shown that with the increase in the number of household members who earn income, the belief in the objectivity of information from printed editions of newspapers and magazines, TV and other places on the Internet decreases. These results show that the degree of trust of respondents in printed publications such as newspapers and magazines, TV and other places on the Internet differs significantly depending on the number of household members with income within the household in which the respondent lives.

One-factor analysis of variance examined differences in attitudes towards the possibility of objective information through different types of media depending on the personal income of respondents. It has been shown that statistically significant differences exist when it comes to radio,  $F(3, 422)=3.15$ ,  $p < .05$ , WEB portals,  $F(3, 422)=4.17$ ,  $p < .01$  and other places on the Internet,  $F(3, 422)=13.57$ ,  $p < .01$ . This analysis showed that with the increase in personal income of respondents, trust in radio, WEB portals and other places on the Internet decreases. This structure of results speaks for itself that the level of trust in radio, WEB portals and other places on the Internet differs significantly depending on the level of personal income of respondents.

The T-test for independent measurements examined differences in attitudes towards the possibility of objective information through different types of media depending on gender. Significant differences were found only when it comes to WEB portals,  $t(386) = -2.33$ ,  $p < .05$ , where it was shown that women have a higher degree of trust in WEB portals than men. The obtained result shows that there is a significant difference in the trust of information from the WEB portal between women and men.

One-factor analysis of variance compared differences in attitudes towards the possibility of objective information through different types of media depending on household income. It has been shown that significant differences exist when it comes to printed editions of newspapers and magazines,  $F(4, 427) = 2.86$ ,  $p < .05$ , electronic editions of newspapers and magazines,  $F(4, 427) = 5.03$ ,  $p < .01$ , WEB portals,  $F(4, 421) = 5.92$ ,  $p < .01$  and other places on the Internet,  $F(4, 421) = 4.50$ ,  $p < .01$ . In addition, it has been shown that with the increase in household income, trust in printed and electronic editions of newspapers and magazines grows, as well as in WEB portals and other places on the Internet. This result shows a significant difference in trust in information from printed and electronic editions of newspapers and magazines, as well as from WEB portals and other places on the Internet, depending on the income of the household in which the respondent lives.

T-tests for independent measurements compared differences in attitudes towards the possibility of objective information through different types of media, depending on whether respondents earn income or not. Statistically significant differences were found only when it comes to radio,  $t(424) = -2.30$ ,  $p < .05$ , where it was found that respondents who do not earn income have more confidence in the objectivity of radio than respondents who earn income. The obtained result shows that the trust in the information from the radio varies significantly depending on whether the respondents earn income or not.

One-factor analysis of variance compared the differences in attitude towards the possibility of objective information through different types of media depending on the length of service of respondents. Significant differences occurred when it comes to printed editions of newspapers and magazines,  $F(3, 401) = 5.51$ ,  $p < .01$ , TV,  $F(3, 401) = 6.22$ ,  $p < .01$  and WEB portals,  $F(3, 398) = 4.02$ ,  $p < .01$ . Also, this analysis showed that with the increase in the length of service, the degree of trust in the objectivity of printed editions of newspapers and magazines and TV grows, while the trust in WEB portals decreases. These results suggest that there are differences in trust in information from print

newspapers and magazines, TV and WEB portals depending on the length of service of respondents.

One-factor analysis of variance compared the differences in attitude towards the possibility of objective information through different types of media, depending on the level of education of the respondents. Statistically significant differences were found in all types of media except electronic editions of newspapers and magazines. Also, it has been shown that with the increase in the level of education, the level of trust in the objectivity of all types of media in which significant differences have been found decreases. These results indicate significant differences in the degree of trust in all types of media, except for electronic editions of newspapers and magazines, depending on the level of education of the respondents.

Finally, a one-factor analysis of variance identified differences in attitudes toward the possibility of objective information through different types of media depending on the age of the respondents. A statistically significant difference was obtained only when it comes to TV,  $F(3, 419) = 2.69$ ,  $p < .05$ , where it was shown that with increasing age of respondents increases the degree of confidence in the objectivity of information from TV. The obtained result shows that there is a difference in trust in information from TV depending on the age of the respondents.

Predicting attitudes about reaching the truth in the media based on demographic variables

Multiple regression analysis predicted average degrees of agreement with the claims made up of each of the four factors singled out by analyzing the main components of the questionnaire relating to attitudes about ways of reaching the truth in the media.

This analysis shows that the degree of agreement with the first factor, called "truth concealment", cannot be successfully predicted based on a set of demographic variables. This result suggests that there is no direct link between demographic variables and the extent to which respondents believe that the truth is deliberately concealed in the media.

Multiple regression analysis showed that the degree of agreement with the factor called "alternative sources of truth" can be successfully predicted based on a set of demographic variables,  $R^2 = .32$ ,  $F(9, 383) = 4.92$ ,  $p < .01$ . Also, it has been shown that the variables gender,  $\beta = .21$ ,  $t = 4.22$ ,  $p < .01$  and the acquired degree,  $\beta = -.31$ ,  $t = -$  have a significant independent contribution to predicting the degree of agreement with the statements on this factor.  $F(5, 20) = 5.20$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Multiple regression analysis showed that the degree of agreement with the factor called "spiritual truth" can be successfully predicted based on a set of demographic variables,  $R^2 = .22$ ,  $F(9, 383) = 2.25$ ,  $p < .05$ . In addition, this analysis showed that a

significant independent contribution to this prediction is made by the variables gender,  $\beta = .12$ ,  $t = 2.20$ ,  $p < .05$ , degree,  $\beta = -.13$ ,  $t = -2.16$ ,  $p < .05$  and the amount of personal income,  $\beta = .27$ ,  $t = 3.18$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Finally, multiple regression analysis showed that based on demographic variables, the degree of agreement with the factor called "multi-media monitoring" can be successfully predicted,  $R^2 = .33$ ,  $F(9, 383) = 5.09$ ,  $p < .01$ . This analysis also showed that the following variables have a significant independent contribution to this prediction: gender,  $\beta = .14$ ,  $t = 2.78$ ,  $p < .01$ , degree,  $\beta = .14$ ,  $t = 2.33$ ,  $p < .05$ , employment status by income,  $\beta = .19$ ,  $t = 2.84$ ,  $p < .05$ , number of household members,  $\beta = -.13$ ,  $t = -2.25$ ,  $p < .05$  and number of household members earning income  $\beta = .12$ ,  $t = 2.12$ ,  $p < .05$ .

*These results show that there is a connection between demographic variables and agreement with the existence of alternative sources of truth, spiritual truths, as well as agreement with the importance of following more media in order to reach the truth. Also, these analyzes indicate the lack of connection between demographic variables and agreement with claims about concealing the truth in the media. In addition, it was confirmed that certain demographic variables have a significant independent contribution in predicting the degree of agreement with the factors: alternative sources of truth, spiritual truth and monitoring of several media.*

## Conclusions

The results of the research confirm that there is a relationship between socio demographic variables (gender, age, level of professional education, work status, monthly personal income of the respondent and monthly personal income of the respondent's household, number of members in the household and number of household members who earn income) and their agreement with the existence of alternative sources of truth, spiritual truths, as well as agreeing with the importance of following multiple media in order to reach the truth. Also, these analyzes indicate the absence of a connection between demographic variables and agreement with claims about the concealment of the truth in the media. In addition, it has been shown that certain demographic variables have a significant independent contribution in predicting the degree of agreement with the factors alternative sources of truth, spiritual truth and

following multiple media. The results undoubtedly confirm that respondents are most commonly being informed via electronic editions of news and magazines as well as via TV programs, while they rarely adopt information broadcasted via radio channels. Furthermore, the results reveals that respondents are prone to trust "other places on the internet" and web portals the most, while there is a noticeable lack of trust when it comes to printed editions of newspapers and magazines. However, it may be noticed, generally, that there is no great confidence in the objectivity of information published in media. The established results indicate that very few respondents believe that free, independent and impartial media exist in Serbia.

The structure of the results confirms that a substantial part of the variance of attitudes about the trust in media may be explained by four extracted factors. In addition, the results reveal that respondents cultivate distrust towards the information coming from the media, and they tend to turn to other sources of information separated from the media.

One-factor analysis of variance revealed differences in the frequency of collecting information through different media, which depends on the age of respondents. Statistically, significant differences were obtained for all types of media except for electronic editions of newspapers and magazines. Furthermore, it has been determined the frequency of adopting information through printed newspapers and magazines and TV increases with the age of respondents, while the frequency of collecting information through radio, web portals and other places on the Internet decreases. It appears from these results that respondents, depending on their age, differ in the frequency of collecting the information through all media except electronic editions of newspapers and magazines.

Lastly, it has been determined by means of the one-factor analysis of variance that there are differences in the attitude towards the possibility of objective information sharing through various types of media depending on the age of the respondents. A statistically significant difference was obtained only when it comes to TV,  $F(3, 419) = 2.69$ ,  $p < .05$ , where it was presented that degree of confidence in the objectivity of information from TV grows with the age of respondents. The obtained result confirms that there is a difference in trust in information from TV depending on the age of respondents.

## Author contribution

Slavoljub Vujović made the greatest contribution to the research presented in the paper, starting from defining the concept and structure of the research, pointing out the very interesting connection between the media and the Corona virus, emphasizing the spread of fear and panic of the population through the information broadcast and thus the intensity of the virus. In addition to doubting the veracity of the information, there is doubt about the connection between pharmaceutical and media companies. Zeljko Bjeljic contributed to the work from the socio-geographical aspect, pointing to the planetary coverage of the Corona virus and media, in the sense that the Corona virus is present on all continents and in all nations, thus pointing to the planetary importance of research. Nenad Vujić contributed to the field data collection through interviews and tests, while Jovan Spajić contributed to the research through statistical data processing.

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