

# **Media, Religion and Public Sphere: International Trends and Hungarian Researches**

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## **Abstract**

Over the last two decades, research concerning religion and the media, religion and the Internet has been revived and repositioned within communication and media research. This is especially true in post soviet Central and Eastern European countries (Khroul 2013, Kołodziejaska 2014, Rončáková 2017, Tudor & Bratosin, 2018). This article provides a summary of the international and Hungarian-related research history of the area, highlighting the turning points that originate from the change of the media technology, the media history or followed the rearrangement of general media research. For the first point, mentioning the initial radio, cinema, and television research, and then the current examination of the Internet. For the second point, the acceptance media studies replacing the early media effect researches, the so-called cultural or interpretative turn in media studies and the uses and gratifications approach starting in the 1970s are classified. Following this, the aim of the article is to present and compare the different religious media research typologies and finally, the descriptive presentation of contemporary research directions in international and Hungarian science. The study mentions not only theoretical, but research methodological possibilities as well.

**Keywords:** lived religion, public religion, public sphere, Religious-Social Shaping of Technology, social media

## **Research History of Religion and Media Relations**

After the beginning of the new millennium the research of religion and media, religion and the Internet became more and more intense, several journals appeared on the subject and numerous new research groups were established. We can look back to the oldest in the science of the United States, even in the 1930s, film-related researches were conducted (Payne Found Studies), from the 1970s on also television-related researches (Stout 2012, Hoover 1988) and today in the Internet era, too (Campbell 2012, Cheong 2012). In Europe, the French school, Hervieu-Leger has looked at the field from the aspect of lived religion, a Spanish research team with EU support (Religion in the “Shaping of European Culture of Identity” 2007-2013), and in Germany, the University of Heidelberg can be mentioned. In South America religious media research has been embedded in public religion and connected

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to public theology. In Africa, the question of religious media research has been put into political context (Scharnick-Udemans, 2017) And the list is far from complete.

In recent years, several comprehensive monographs and scientific articles have emerged about how churches, especially Catholic and reformed churches were linked to the media of communication in their history. Among them, there are critical and descriptive ones as well. (Kittler, 2002, Horsfield 2015, Copeland, 2012, Flory, 2012, Mason, 2012). Heidi Campbell, US media scholar sums up the Christian tradition of communication from the beginning of early oral speech. „The early Christian church negotiated between the oral tradition of the day and the written literate traditions also presented in that society” (Campbell – Garner, 2016: 24). She also covers the appearance of printing and the consequences of new technology: „Printing allowed bureaucracies to develop through the social and institutional standardization brought about by using text” (Campbell – Garner, 2016: 28). Concentrating on the States: „... cable and satellite television in the United States in the 1970s made it possible for religion to be broadcast to niche audiences” (Campbell – Garner, 2016: 29) .

In the Hungarian scientific life, the relationship between religion and print media was first dealt with in 1985, from a press historical point of view. The three-volume publication was a significant, comprehensive presentation of the era of Hungarian press history, in which the religious press was also mentioned (Kosáry D. & Németh G. 1985). In the same historical context, some publications have been published since then (Buzinkay & Kókay 2005, Buzinkay 2016). A monograph was published about the relationship between the Hungarian Catholic Church and the printed press, which elaborates the period between 1896 and 1932 (Klestenitz 2013).

The research and analysis of electronic media contents and effects go back to World War I, and most of the studies consider Walter Lippmann's work *Public Opinion* and Harold Lasswell's book *Propaganda Technique in the World War* as the first milestones (Lippmann 1922, Lasswell 1927). Early media studies focused on the use of mass media in propaganda and persuasion. The period from the 1920s to about the 1960s is called ‘media effect age’ within media studies because the focus of investigation was on the presumed or real effect of media content. Between the two world wars, scholars were thinking of a homogenous audience and a powerful, irresistible media effect. Loosely connected to religion but rather associated with the moral decline, Payne Fund Studies were carried out in this period. „Between 1929-1932, a series of research studies was performed to examine movies and their effects on children. There were a total of 13 studies financially supported by The Payne Fund, a private foundation. Each study fell into one of three main categories of research: film content, audience composition, and effects on children. ... Children, who regularly attended the movies unsupervised during the Saturday matinee, were seen at risk from the influences of this powerful medium” (Ash 1999).

From the 1960s, media research has gone beyond the effect paradigm and has taken a new direction, which is identified as an interpretive turn or a cultural turn, and is described with a reception paradigm. Reception theory moves the focus of media research from the media content to the recipient and examines how different (gender, age, cultural background) audiences create different meanings related to the media content. A decisive work of this era is Stuart Hall’s *Encoding/Decoding* (Hall, 1980). In the research of religious media, the cultural turn can be connected to Stewart Hoover’s researches (Hoover 1988). Religion can be also said to exist at a kind of boundary between the <social> and the <cultural>... it is my purpose here to argue for the utility of such culturalist approaches to the study of media and religion” (Hoover 2002:25). But Hoover is primarily concerned with the American and not the British critical cultural research. „...the British and American culturalist traditions intersect, although the American school is less influenced by Marxist and more by

anthropological and liberal pragmatist traditions” (Schofield Clark – Hoover 1997:26). Reception analyses related to religious and also non-religious programs are still present in the research of religious media, and these studies give not only a theoretical but also detailed methodological description (Linderman 1997, Hoover – Park 2005). At the same time, we find researches and journals following the British critics in the international scientific arena, including *Critical Research on Religion* or *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, which are primarily concerned with feminist critiques and social movement analysis connecting religion.

In the Hungarian scientific life, we can also find religious reception researches, but these are not related to television but to reading. Their scientific background is provided by the sociology of reading within the sociology of culture (Kamarás 2013).

The fact that the research on television and the relationship between religion and television has gained momentum since the 1980s is led back to historical reasons by the American media researcher: „... the Islamic Revolution in Iran, where a once-secular majority Muslim state, fell to a revolution based in religion, resulting in a theocracy. ... Neither our journalists nor our foreign-affairs experts anticipated that religion could play such a role.” (Hoover 2012:28) In fact, religion as a relevant theme, as one of the possible factors in social and/or political changes and movements, has returned to the public sphere and the mediated public sphere research. Also the analysis of post-secularity has started in social communication research in the Western world. (Martin 1978, 2005, Casanova 2003, Taylor 2007) This process strengthened by the nine eleven terrorist attacks. (Joas, 2017:8) This period of American religious media research is characterized by thematic diversity, which was later dealt with in six major categories. The focuses of research at this time were the following: (1) religion and the news, (2) televangelism, (3) interplay between religious thought and popular culture, (4) new modes of spirituality, (5) mediated therapeutic discourse, (6) examination of the effectiveness (Schofield Clark – Hoover 1997:31). Studies that reflect on the representation of religion in different news, news magazines mostly concluded that they were bias which means that various religions and churches were not properly represented in the news. Because following media logic usually negative, norm-breaking events, scandals are reported into the news, the positive ones are not. (see Hoover 2012: 29)

In Hungary, the proportion of religious, ecclesiastical news was investigated mostly within news programs. These data appear under the supervision of the Hungarian media supervisory authority every year mainly providing a description and little analysis. (Jelentés 1997, Mádl – Szabó 2000, <http://nmhh.hu/kutatasok> ).

To examine televangelization programs, researchers mostly chose James Carey's ritual model as a theoretical background. “As we will see, as ritual, televangelism has the capacity and potential to contribute to the efforts of viewers to overturn their marginalized or peripheral social standing within American society” (Alexander, 1997: 194).

The relationship between popular culture and religion is dealt with by several monographs and separate scientific journals like *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*. The journal is in the 30th year, and in its special edition of 2018, Marcus Moberg and Martin Rademacher describe their science field as follows: “This scholarship has typically been based on a broad and inclusive understanding of culture that strives to avoid binary and hierarchical–typological understandings that differentiate between, for example, “high,” “low,” “folk,” “popular,” or “mass” types of culture. Focusing, in particular, on mass-mediated popular cultural forms such as film, television, popular music, comic books, computer games, and so on.” (Moberg –Rademacher, 2018: 1).

The relationship between popular culture and implicit religious content, religious meaning was also studied by Hungarian media researchers. Based on the ritual theory of the

media Lajos Császi published a separate volume and several studies on the subject (Császi, 2001, 2002). But also some analyses related to popular television series can be found (Laborczi, 2010). Among the media researches, we also find some in which the traditional spiritual concepts are re-interpreted through the media and mediatised therapist discourses are analyzed. And of course, as a tradition of effect research, they question the effectiveness of religious media as well.

Between the 1980s and the late 1990s the television was the primarily researched medium. The scholars at first concentrated on media contents, how these contents represented religions or churches in general, how television built a frame around them. As Stout and Buddenbaum wrote: “What is the nature of the process by which journalists present religion to their audiences? ... one approach is framing” (Stout – Buddenbaum 2003:2). Framing theory is well known and often applied in the media research (Entman, 1993). In the Hungarian media research, the framing of Buddhism-related news has been studied by American, English-language Chinese and English papers (Sükösd 2017).

Social media is used in revealing religious identities and religious communication. There is also an interesting comparative study that summarizes the usage patterns of Egyptian, Quatarian and American students, and also addresses the differences in the representation of religion. “The purpose of the current study is to comparatively analyze college student Facebook pages in the U.S., Egypt, and Qatar to determine the similarities and differences in how students use Facebook to stay connected with their various groups of ‘friends,’ and engage in identity construction. ... Students in the majority-Muslim societies were more likely to write religious status updates than the American students.” (Elmasry & Auter & Peuchaud 2014:42-43).

### **The Uses and Gratification Approach**

Within the general media research, the uses and gratifications school started in the 1970s. In this model the focus of attention is not the media content but the user. The user who is (1) active and organizes the use of media for some purpose (2) and what kind of content can satisfy the needs is also decided by the recipient. In addition, there is a competition between options for satisfying the recipients’ needs. Allowing the possibility to include other types of action, social actions, not just media use. In the 1970s, several surveys were carried out on the use of media by the recipients, precisely defining and grouping the needs that can be satisfied by the recipient’s media use. The literature clearly regards Elihu Katz, Michael Gurevits and Hadassah Haas's 1973 article as a basic work, in which researchers grouped around 35 needs into five major categories (Katz, E. - Gurevitch, M. - Haas, H. 1973):

- cognitive: acquiring information, learning
- affective: emotional, joyful or aesthetic experience
- personal integrative needs: credibility, self-confidence, stability, status strengthening
- social integrative needs: to strengthen the relationship families, friends, etc.
- stress reliever: escape from reality, diversion

Use and gratification research is particularly fruitful because it can be adapted to the Computer Mediated Communication and social media as well. In their research in 2011, Papacharissi and Mendelson found nine distinct motives for using Facebook: habitual pass time, relaxing entertainment, expressive information sharing, escapism, cool and new trend, companionship, professional advancement, social interaction, and meeting new people. (Papacharissi – Mendelson 2011) In the religious content, scholars found people engage with religious websites for (1) religious entertainment and information, (2) to donate money and

(3) be involved, and (4) to explore and reinforce faith (Laney, 2005). Brubacker and Haigh also carried out uses and gratification examination related to religious content. „Facebook use for religious purposes is primarily motivated by the need to minister to others. Users do this by sharing faith-based beliefs and providing those who are both of their faith and those who are not with spiritual and emotional guidance and support. The three other motivations driving engagement with faith-based content reflect personal benefits gained, including spiritual enlightenment, religious information, and relaxing entertainment.” (Brubacker - Haigh 2017: 8) Riezu investigated the topic with Spanish content, while Ratcliff and his colleagues for US users (Riezu 2014, Ratcliff – McCarthy – Ritter 2017).

Since the 1980s after four decades of research we can see a progression from a focus on the general phenomena of media representation of religion to more specific and detailed investigations. Meanwhile the media itself has changed from traditional mass communication – such as printed press, radio and television – and has turned to the computer mediated communication. The present period is widely recognized as the Age of Internet, the Age of Social Media. Nowadays – Hoover writes – “I want to argue that it is no longer possible to think of religion and media as separate spheres. The two are now converging on one another. This convergence is being brought about by important changes in “religion” and in “media”. The question is more complex than only how the media frame religion or how religions and religious people use media (Hoover 2012: 30).” In one of his public lectures he uses a good metaphor connecting with this process that he calls: cultural Rubicon cross.

### **Research typologies**

Due to the constantly expanding scientific literature, by the start of the new millennium media scholars tried to categorize the huge amount of religious media researches. The first typology is based on the traditional sociological classification; we can differentiate three levels among the researches: macro-, meso- and micro-level (Hoover – Lundby 1997:6). The second is connected to the users’ attitudes to the technology. Scholars identified the following categories: technological optimism, technological pessimism and technological ambiguity (Barbour 1993, McQuail 2015:108, Campbell – Garner 2017: 29-35). The third categorization was built on the media contents: Hoover separates journalistic (news) and non-journalistic (entertainment, artistic media) contents (Hoover 2012:29). The fourth offers an adaptation of the main fields of traditional media research – such as content oriented studies, institutional oriented studies, channel oriented studies and media policy oriented studies (Khroul, 2013). And the fifth typology differentiates four approaches, four distinct paradigms within the religious media research: similarity, distinction, mediatisation and articulation (van Zoonen 2011).

Following with a closer examination, as Hoover and Lundby wrote: “One framework might suggest macro-level analysis of society as a whole, meso-level analysis of institutions and their practices, and micro-level analysis of individual reception and negotiation of meaning. These spheres are interpenetrated by one another” (Hoover – Lundby1997:6). I agree with Hoover in this interpenetration, which is especially true in computer mediated communication. The digital media integrates the interpersonal communication, group communication, mass and organisational communication – public and private communication into one single device as well. Via social media we can send personal or group messages, we can watch Netflix serials or we can accept our personal income tax returns. We call this synergy the convergence of different communication levels. (Andok 2016a)

Science and religion scholar Ian Barbour offers a helpful threefold typology that sums up the most common responses to technology (Barbour 1993: 3-23).

- The technological optimism sees media and technology as making the world a better place for humanity. It contributes to the maintenance of democracy and different churches can promote themselves and their aims to a wider public.
- According to the technological pessimism, mass media dehumanize people and their relationships. I would like to mention here a very interesting research conducted by Neriya and Shahar in 2016. It was a comparative research among Old Order Amish community and Jewish ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) community. Both communities can be understood as interpretive communities that negatively interpret not only the television content, but also the medium itself. “Their various negative interpretive strategies ... are part of an <us-versus-them> attitude created to mark the boundaries and walls that enclave cultures built around them.” (Neriya – Shahar 2017:27).
- The viewpoint of the technological ambiguity emphasizes the social context of technology. We can use technology sometimes for good sometimes for bad purposes. For example, Catholic Church accepts this bifocal view of technology.

The third categorization was built on the media contents: Hoover separates journalistic (news) and non-journalistic (entertainment, artistic media) contents. A journalistic genre like news covers rather negative events, unexpected events than positive ones – this phenomenon scholars sometimes call media bias. „And it unfortunately often means journalism uses religious conflict, and the potential for conflict, as a way of attracting viewers and selling newspapers.” (Hoover, 2012:30) The other type according to Hoover is the non-journalistic media, entertainment media such as telenovelas, artistic films, popular music which includes a lot of religion and it is often what sociologists call “implicit” religion.

How could we rate this approach? According to social network sites media scholars don't use such expressions like journalist-generated content but they use user-generated content (UGC). This expression indicates two significant changes. One of them is: who creates social media contents? The journalist-generated contents give a very little part of social media because mostly the everyday people share their ideas, photos or circulate marketing oriented contents made by professionals. The users create and recreate shared cultural and spiritual experiences. So social media can work as a medium for religious expression. The second change connects rather to the media technology than media content. Because the people's main attitude to social media isn't the consuming of media content – like traditional mass media – but the using of this device (mostly smart phone). We are able to do a lot of different actions, real actions with real consequences via social media, digital media. As I previously mentioned – we can book our holiday accommodation, we can order our flight tickets. So in sum in CMC, SNSs media usage is more important than media content; and these media contents were created by everyday people.

Regarding the fourth opportunity, the fourth opportunity, the Russian media researcher Viktor Khroul's typology is based on the traditional fields of media research – such as

- content oriented studies – how media covers the religious topics
- institutional oriented studies means which religion (as social institution) is represented in the media - Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, etc.
- channel oriented studies can be focused on press, radio, TV, Internet – so the channel of the medium

- media policy oriented studies concentrates on media regulation or co-regulation, ethical issues, scandals, etc. (Khroul, 2013:200).

And finally we can see Liesbeth van Zoonen's typology, in which she outlines four key approaches of the relationships between media and religion. The first is the similarity – religion is itself considered as a medium, as a channel. The second is the distinction – this paradigm emphasizes the deep differences between media and religion. The third is the mediatisation – according to this paradigm the media are the main actors in the context of religious activity in the post-secular public sphere. The fourth is the articulation – in this approach are the people themselves and their media experience in connection with religious experience (Zoonen, 2011). In her paper, she also enumerates examples of each approach from the pre-2010 scientific literature. This concept was developed by Danish media scholar Stig Hjarvard who claims that religion can no longer be studied separately from the media because for most people in western societies, the media have become the primary source of their religious ideas. (Hjarvard, 2008).

In Hungarian media research, Máté-Tóth and Andok published an early typology in the second half of the 1990s, mentioning the media theology and the media culture as two great test frames. For the former, suggesting the idea of media as an idol and media as a religious concept. (Máté – Tóth & Andok 1997: 125-130)

### **Contemporary research frames**

The emergence of the Internet and the community media has given a new dimension in many areas to examine religious communication. In 2006, Campbell lists nine areas where research needs to be renewed: theology/spirituality, religion, morality/ethics, practical/ministry applications, religious traditions, community, identity, authority/power and rituals (Campbell, 2006). While in his edited volume published in 2013, only six of them were drafted: ritual, identity, community, authority, authenticity and religion. (Campbell 2013) In connection with social media, the research covers a variety of areas, some are looking at Facebook (Coman & Coman 2017), others are on Twitter (Guzek, 2015), and they also deal with Instagram (Zijderveld, 2017). These examples are also varied from a methodological point of view. Coman and Coman used the method of qualitative content analysis within a five step process and tried to identify emotions as frames during the meaning making. Guzek lived with the content analysis too “Content analysis of the papal tweets was based on the codes, some of which corresponded to the different stages of analytic frame of the religious-social shaping of technology” (Guzek 2015). Some semiotic analysis based on Roland Barthes' visual codes. (Zijderveld 2017)

Research on religious memes is also commonplace (Aquilar et al., 2017, Brubacker et al 2017). Referring to Hungarian-language research, religious memes are mentioned only among meme types, they haven't been searched separately yet (Glózer 2016). Three special issues were dedicated to the research on the relationship between religion and digital toys by the Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet in 2014, 2015 and 2016. In the next chapter I intend to outline three major theoretical research frames, which nowadays define the outlines of religion and media research: public religion – public theology; lived religion and Religious Social Shaping of Technology . The first trend embeds the question of religion and media research into social communication, the second studies the perception of spiritual, religious experiences with a kind of anthropological emphasis and the role of the media in all of these. „...scholars argue that what is more common in today's culture is a “lived” form of religion focused around individuals adopting religious practices to their everyday lives,

so spiritual meaning derived from these practices is more personal and less institutionally grounded. For example, expressions of lived religion can be seen how people may modify traditional religious rituals and create new personalized versions” (Aquilar – Campbell – Stanley – Taylor 2017: 1500). The third option approaches the issue of religion from the direction of media technology.

### ***Public religion***

The public sphere is without doubt a central feature of modern society. The majority of references to public sphere theory in the media studies focus on Habermas’s normative theory. My viewpoint about it is similar to Jacobson, who wrote: “... one of the most significant revisions in Habermas’s recent thinking concerns the role of religion in modern society. A number of trends have promoted a rethinking of relationship between religion and secular society” (Jacobson, 2017). Originally, religious sociology began to evoke the scientific paradigm that questioned the universality of the secularization thesis, presenting the modern societies that were modernized without being at the same time secularized. (Martin, 1978, 2005, Casanova 1994) Meanwhile, many media researchers pointed out that - as I have already mentioned in the article - many populist cultural works contain implicit religious elements. Thus, the research frame has been developed for today, which examines the role of different religions and religious issues within the public sphere. And also how the public appearance of these issues is influenced by the media (Butler – Habermas – Taylor – West 2011). Public religion itself is defined by Jose Casanova like: „Public religion is one that has, assumes or tries to assume a public character, function or role” (Casanova 2003:111) He divides it into three areas: „various meanings of <public> one could use the analytical distinction between the three areas of the polity – the state, the political society, and civil society – to distinguish three different types of public religion that correspond to these three areas” (Casanova 2003: 111). Based on the theoretical background of public religion, many world-wide religious researches were conducted by Birgit Meyer and Annelies Moors (Meyer-Moors 2005). Within the University of Colorado, under the leadership of Stewart Hoover, the Centre for Media, Religion and Culture has launched a multiannual research project entitled Public Religion Project, which is currently in progress. The Hungarian research related to the question of post-secular publicity is very rich. On the one hand, it relies on Hungarian sociology of religion, on the other hand, on Hungarian communication research and theology (Görföl 2014). An important milestone was a global research in 2013 with the title „Seekers and Dwellers”, a complex study between 2013-2015, conducted by Zsuzsanna Bögre. The main international organiser of this research was George F. McLean. The results were published in a book *Seekers or Dwellers? Social Character of Religion in Hungary* edited by Zsuzsanna Bögre and was presented at a conference in Rome in 2015. The exploratory studies (Máté-Tóth 2016, Hidas 2016, Lázár Kovács 2016, Andok 2016b), and empirical researches (Bögre 2016, Rosta - Hegedűs 2016, Török, 2016) accurately described the situation of the 2010s in Hungary.

In the same year the Institute of Communication and Media Studies at Pázmány Péter Catholic University organised an international conference “Media – religion and public sphere”, whose keynote speaker was Hans Joas. The papers of this conference were presented at first in the Hungarian religious scientific journal *Vigilia* and in 2017 were published in a book *Vallás – media – nyilvánosság* (Religion – Media – Public Sphere) edited by Ákos Kovács.

In addition to religious sociology, the issue of religion and communication, religion and media was also raised in Hungarian communication research. Connected with Horányi



Özséb's Participations Theory of Communication several volumes were published that analyzed sacrificial communication and pilgrimage through the participatory model. (Korpics & P. Szilczl 2007, Korpics 2014). Participation Theory conceives communication as a constituent (or often as an instance) of recognizing or solving problems. Religious communication was examined by András Máté-Tóth in the perspective of discourse analysis, but a special monograph deals with the question of religion based on the ritual theory of communication (Máté-Tóth 2013, Andok 2017).

### *Lived religion*

Research on the relationship between religion and media can be based on the theory of lived religion. (Helland 2005) The focus of this trend is the religious experiences and practices that everyday people experience in their life. From the aspect of theology, lived religion is related to an anthropological turn suggested by the theory of Karl Rahner. It appeared in religion and media research at the same time, in the 1990s both in the United States (Ammerman 2006, McGuire 2008) and in France. Ammerman reports on the start of the American trend like: „In the US, the term lived religion is widely credited to David Hall, an American religious historian who convened a conference in the 1990s at Harvard Divinity School that resulted in an edited book called *Lived Religion in America* (Hall 1997). The conference and the book called scholars to turn their attention to the everyday thinking and doing of lay men and women” (Ammerman, 2016:4). The focus of research changed and the media, mediatised religious experiences and religious practices became included in this changed focus: „...attention to laity, not clergy or elites; to practices rather than beliefs; to practices outside religious institutions rather than inside; and to individual agency and autonomy rather than collectivities or traditions.” (Ammerman 2016:1). Some researchers consider lived religion as a process:” in which people draw from religious sources to make sense of their world and experience the sacred in everyday practices” (Aquilar – Campbell – Stanley – Taylor 2017: 1500). In connection with the media and everyday religious practices, more scholars search for the creation of religious memes and their types in social media (Aquilar – Campbell – Stanley – Taylor 2017, Brubaker – Boyle – Stephan 2017). In lived religion researches, the process of individualization within religion is strongly emphasized and also the intense personalization of religious practices and religious beliefs in the Western world. There are several references to this in the literature: cafeteria religion, religious buffet, pick and mix religion. They all have the attitude, more precisely the customer attitude in common (Hoover 2012:30). In French religious sociology, Hervieu-Léger is linked to the trend of lived religion, who, because of the high degree of personalization of religious practices, mentions so-called do-it-yourself religions and religious practices. (Hervieu-Léger 2012) “Danièle Hervieu-Léger, who states that the contemporary ‘do-it-yourself approach to religious belief and practice’ does not mean a decline of conventional religious traditions, because they have ‘lost all their cultural relevance in European society. Those traditions simply began to increasingly serve as symbolic repositories of meaning, available for individuals to subjectively use and reuse in different ways” (Hervieu-Léger 2006 cited Motak 132). From Hungarian media researchers, Dóra P. Szilczl relies on Hervieu-Léger's theory and research (P. Szilczl 2017a, 2017b).

Within the frames of lived religion Coman and Coman carried out a new and highly innovative research concerning religious media experience and religious practices investigated in community media. (Coman – Coman 2017) The notion of framing, its phenomenon, as I have mentioned in the article, has long been a question of media research. The Comans, however, following Nabi's suggestion, do not examine the intellectual, but the

emotional framing of media content processing: „...emotions with particular ideas or events eventually shape the way in which one interprets and responds to those events that in turn affect one’s worldview” (Nabi 2003:227). Their research reveals that emotions can serve as frames for issues, as for example they make certain information more accessible and guide subsequent decision-making. Janicke and Ramasubramanian also study the connection of emotions and spirituality to different media content, primarily to popular films such as *Avatar* (2009), *Life of Pi* (2013) (Janicke – Ramasubramanian 2017).

### ***The theory of the Religious-Social Shaping of Technology (RSST)***

The theory of Religious-Social Shaping of Technology (RSST) provides the third useful analytical frame for the research. Within the Social Shaping of Technology Theory (SST) the technology is seen as a social process and the possibility is recognized that social groups may shape technologies towards their own ends, rather than the character of the technology determining use and outcomes. (MacKenzie, & Wajcman 1999, Barzilai-Nahone, & Barzilai 2004) The Religious-Social Shaping of Technology (RSST) approach to technology as Heidi Campbell argues, involves asking questions about how technologies are conceived of, as well as used, in light of the religious community’s beliefs, moral codes, and historical tradition of engagement with other forms of media technology. (Campbell 2010) The RSST emphasizes that religious communities do not outright reject new forms of technology, but rather undergo a negotiation process to determine what the technology may affect in their community. Identifying the process by which religious groups evaluate a technology’s potential benefits or hindrances is important because it helps uncover the group’s patterns of moral life and their visibility in the public sphere.

RSST, in my opinion, can also be conceptualized as developing the theory of interpretive communities to the Internet, to the community media surface. While in the classical mass media, the interpretative community - mainly due to the limited interaction – primarily focused on the media content, and built the meaning from it. In network communication the focus is not on the media content but on the usage so this way not only the creation of the meaning, but the pattern of the use also depends on the community. In addition, this community differs from the isolated audiences of television that it can not only create interactive relationships with the media, but at the same time with other users as well. This phenomenon was described by boyd as the concept of networked publics (boyd 2011). The religious-social shaping of technology offers a new research method, suggesting four distinctive areas that should be explored and questioned in order to deeply understand a religious community’s relationship towards traditional and new forms of media. These four stages of the religious-social shaping of technology approach are (1) investigating the history and tradition – setting the stage for contemporary negotiation with media, (2) social values – identifying the dominant social values of a religious community and their contemporary meanings and relevance, (3) negotiation process – during this process religious communities decide which aspects of a new technology they will accept, reject, or need to reconstruct in order for the technology to be compatible with the community’s beliefs and way of life and finally (4) communal discourse of religious communities. During the evaluation of interviews, we are using a combination of reception and ritual theories of communication and media (Carey 2009). We are interested in the process of meaning-making viewed through an interpretive cultural studies framework. We seek the intersections between individual and social creation of meaning through media usage.

The Internet is not a completely separate space; it is a part of everyday social life; it is also a central part of religious existence. Scholars have sought to investigate religious groups and their activities on the Internet, to see what aspects of traditional religious practice can be transmitted online and to what extent religion is transformed as it is adapted to new digital technologies (Campbell 2005). Now religious practice, discourse, and engagement have become embedded both in online and offline contexts in society. Campbell (2012) summarized comparative work on how Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant communities use the Internet and its impact upon religious authority and self-interpretation. By adapting the RSST theory and research methodology, a Hungarian survey was carried out that was the result of an analysis of the 777 blog, - Faith is not a private matter – digital content hub (blog, FB site, Instagram, YouTube channel) (Andok & Vigh 2018).

## Conclusion

The purpose of the article was to present in a comprehensive way the change that has taken place in the research of the relationship between religion and the media over the last decades. Embedding the question in media history context, the paper presented the major theoretical directions and researches in the television period: the interpretive turn and the uses of gratifications research. Then five of the different typologies were described and evaluated. Finally, three major contemporary theoretical frames were dealt with which are decisive in today's research: public theology, lived religion and Religious Social Shaping of Technology. The article covered the methodological questions and explored in detail the Hungarian researches related to international directions.

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