

The role of religion in the public sphere. A comparative study of the five Nordic countries (NOREL)

3. Religion and the media

An analysis of the role of religion in newspapers, radio, TV and internet



When does religion become news in the media? Which religious statements appear in which media? Is the public debate on religion centered on the majority churches or on religious minorities? Is the journalistic angle positive or negative? Who are the participants in the debates on religion? To what extent is religion present in the daily press, on TV and on the radio? What are the changes over the years? What about popular culture media? Is religion present in magazines and films? If so, how is religion portrayed here?

Some indicators that will be studied during 1988, 1998, and 2008 are:

- Coverage of religion in a selection of newspapers at particular points of time
 - religious columns, editorials, debates, news, and features on religion
 - religious symbols and verses in funeral announcements
 - religious authorities in the media
- Religion in the broadcast media (TV and radio)
 - number of televised services and radio services during 1988, 1998, 2008 by various religious organizations
 - number of listeners to morning devotions and religious services on radio and TV
 - time devoted to religious and spiritual programs on public channels
- Religion and spiritualities in popular culture media
 - magazines
 - films
 - books
- Religious and spiritual newspapers and magazines published

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Summary of Findings:

This study focused on religion in secular newspapers and life style magazines. These findings are related to particular features of the Nordic media systems and the major changes that have transformed them since 1980. The analysis follows Stig Hjarvard's distinctions between three forms of mediatized religion, in particular journalism on religion and religion in popular media. Journalism on religion is studied in a quantitative content analysis of major newspapers in the countries, in four selected periods in each of the years 1988, 1998 and 2008. Religion in popular media is studied through analyses of men and women's popular magazines. The findings show no simple patterns of a decline or resurgence of religion in the media, but rather increased diversity of topics and perspectives.