

Recreational Function in Journalism

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the essence, theoretical foundations, and role of the recreational function in journalism and mass media. It analyzes the origin and meaning of the concept of recreation, various scientific approaches to its classification, and its socio-psychological impact on audiences. The paper also highlights the growing importance of the recreational function in modern media, its interrelation with other journalistic functions, and the main strategies for its implementation.

Keywords: - Recreational function, journalism, mass media, entertainment, relaxation, hedonism, escapism, audience, communication, media strategy.

INTRODUCTION

In many scientific publications, the cultural function of the mass media is presented alongside its cognitive function.

To date, the concept of recreation has not become widely popular, and it has been used only in literature related to fields such as physiology, medicine, socio-economics, architecture and construction, and tourism to improve a person's mental state, planning activities such as recreation in leisure facilities and the renewal of people's physiological and emotional strength.

In scientific literature, this term was first used in the USA in the 1890s and became the object of scientific research in the 1960s in Russian and Western scientific literature as a form of sociology.

“Recreation,” i.e. *recreatio*, in Latin means “renewal,” “restoration.” In Polish, *rekreacja* means “rest.”

In English, the word recreation has several

meanings: 1) renewal, restoration; 2) amusement, recreation; 3) a break; 4) recreation as a compound word, with *re* meaning “again, anew, once more” and *creation* conveying the idea of creating, making, or innovating.

The English word “creative” means “creative.” The founder of social psychology, A. H. Maslow, used the term “creativity” as a synonym for the combination of mental health.

Recreation, as a process of restoring a person's psychophysiological strength, eliminates the body's internal adverse tones. This process culminates in a recreational effect, which can be regarded as a positive outcome of the recreation process.

Recreation, in Japanese sources, is called “*goraku*” (娯楽), meaning entertainment; in the Great Dictionary of Japanese, it is defined as “relieving the human heart of its burden, comforting it, and delighting it”.

However, in Japanese media, entertainment programs are called “entertainment” or “variety” – バラエティ. Famous TV host Ohashi Kyosen says in an article for Ikonmik magazine: “Entertainment programs must have developed so extensively only in Japan worldwide”.

In Section 6 of the English-Japanese dictionary, the word “variety” is translated as “variety show” – a form of recreation that involves watching art forms such as singing, comedy skits, stage performances, and dancing. Also, in Volume 2, Section 9 of the “Random House English-Japanese Large Dictionary,” “variety show” is translated as “the highest form of art that combines several art forms,” and in the Japanese-explanatory dictionary, the word “variety” is noted as being borrowed from English, a type of show that sequentially features singing, dancing, theater, and games,” is written.

In the “Japanese Grand Dictionary,” the word is also defined as “a performance that combines art forms such as singing, dancing, and theater”.

When people hear “variety,” they think of comedy shows. In fact, these comedy shows are called “Shyouten,” and they appear as a form of entertainment programming.

The term “variety” is not defined in Japanese dictionaries because it is borrowed from English. However, the “Dictionary of Foreign Words and Abbreviations” defines this term as “a show in the form of a performance that incorporates a sequence of activities such as singing, conversation, theater, and games.”

Existing sociological, psychological, and philosophical theories require studying the concept of recreation by dividing it into five groups. This approach was founded by researcher J. Shivers. In this process, he emphasizes the need to consider the following factors:

1. When does recreation occur (time factor)?
2. Why (specific motivation)?
3. How (presence of the voluntary factor)?
4. In what way (types of activity)?
5. In what context (to determine the nature and degree of the beneficial activity)?

The first group's concept is time-based. Here, recreation is understood as the effective use of leisure time, free from work. The main purpose of recreation is “to spend time meaningfully.” The existing process can be scheduled during work hours or outside of work. The main thing is that it has positive effects on the individual, such as providing relief, boosting mood, and restoring energy. For example, a seminar or training organized during work hours can provide opportunities for self-expression, a break from work, and self-satisfaction.

The second group's concept is based on non-utilitarian and self-motivational factors. This refers to activities that a person undertakes for the purpose of cultural leisure for their own enjoyment.

The third group is considered free-activity recreation. In all recreational activities, the individual is at the center and chooses one recreational activity or another according to their own wishes. In this group, the individual's desires take precedence. The beneficial, meaningful, and uplifting effect of free-time recreation on a person's character and social existence is dependent on the individual.

In the fourth group, recreation appears as an active form of activity. The proponents of this group consider vigorous recreational activity to be the primary means of restoring the human body's strength. In their view, only active physical activity, through the resulting happiness, brings the body into a state of full regeneration and enables it to regain strength. When a person is tired, they want to spend time in a state of rest. Supporters of this group do not deny the appropriateness of passive recreation for the human body, but they believe that passive recreation lays the groundwork for a person to become accustomed to idleness.

The concept of the fifth group is formed by benevolent actions and good virtues. In this, recreation is regarded as a beneficial and virtuous activity and is carried out on the basis of an individual's ethical principles.

In scientific literature, the recreation process is emphasized as being closely linked with activities such as “rest,” “entertainment,” and “play.” The mass media must determine how to use recreation, what its essence is, and what its boundaries are.

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In the theory of journalism and mass communication, Russian and Western scholars have offered different definitions of the nature of this function. Western researchers link the recreational function of the mass media to the emergence of libertarian theory, which combines information and education with entertainment.

In the 1950s and 1960s, W. Stevenson recognized entertainment and educational factors as the primary functions of mass media, arousing great interest among the majority of its audience. K. Wright, in turn, emphasized that recreation is the primary purpose of the media. The media allow people to forget their daily problems. According to researchers, the recreational function allows people to escape the intense fatigue and psychological pressure of real life and enjoy the imaginary world created by the media.

Writers such as L. Reissner, D. Furmanov, M. Bulgakov, M. Zoeshchenko, M. Koltsov, Yu. Olesha, V. Kataev, I. Ilf, and E. Petrov, who worked in genres like the feuilleton and the sketch in the journalism of this period, serve as striking examples. Through their work, they succeeded not only in fulfilling the ideological but also the recreational functions assigned to the mass media.

The development of journalism in subsequent years spurred the emergence of other functions. In 1960, G. I. Khmara proposed five main functions of mass communication. Among these, the hedonic function is of particular importance, meaning emotional satisfaction from the information received. Y.A. Sherkovin, in turn, distinguished the social and socio-psychological functions of the mass media.

The functions of journalism proposed by E. P. Prokhorov, however, were developed on the principle of the interrelationships among the consumer of mass communication, social institutions, and the mass audience.

Research and studies on the recreational function show that functions such as hedonistic, entertainment, and relaxation—which have been interpreted differently by various researchers—in fact, constitute the recreational function. The recreational function is an integral part of the media's system of functions. However, it has been presented as a secondary function.

The socio-psychological impact of the recreational function is observed in the following:

- 1) The effect of restoration and development. In this, a person feels alertness and achieves mental tranquility;
- 2) Aesthetic—a sense of pleasure, cultural enjoyment;
- 3) Distraction, redirecting the mind to another subject;
- 4) Narcotization, i.e., the formation of a permanent habit;
- 5) escapism, escaping from real life and diving into a fantasy or virtual world;
- 6) hedonism, A feeling of pleasure and enjoyment in opposition to social behavior;
- 7) catharsis, The sensation of illuminating a person's inner world by stirring their emotions.

It should be noted that the recreational function is closely linked with other journalistic functions. E.P. Prokhorov noted that while it is necessary to distinguish journalism's ideological, cultural-educational, advertising, recreational, and organizational functions, in practice they manifest as a unified whole. Furthermore, in his opinion, the recreational function and the ideological function are not only intrinsically linked, but they also complement each other.

Recreationality is connected to all journalistic functions, which manifest as follows:

The interdependence of the recreational and ideological functions. If the ideological function guides a person ideologically, the recreational function helps ensure the positive reception of that very process and the active assimilation of the idea in social life.

The interdependence of journalism's recreational and organizational functions. Journalism's organizational function, like its recreational function, has cognitive, evaluative, organizational, and communicative characteristics. For example, when a person solves an intellectual problem, they experience a sense of satisfaction and joy. This feeling is produced under the influence of

recreational journalism.

When it comes to culture and art, journalists use recreational texts in their articles. When covering the cultural sphere, the effectiveness of the journalist's style, the purity of their language, the engaging nature of the material, or the broad reach of visual effects on television all point to a harmonious balance between the recreational and cultural functions.

The interdependence of the recreational and advertising functions. Journalism often serves as a means to ensure that a creative product is popular and marketable. Based on audience needs, it should be emphasized that it is impossible to imagine advertising texts that are necessary, interesting, and memorable to the public without a recreational element.

Over the past decade, a transformation in the functions of mass media has become evident, with the recreational function taking the dominant role. The main demands of today's press are lightness, speed, and readability. In preparing and distributing press publications, brevity of text, commentary-style information, brief previews, sensational photographs, and attention-grabbing headlines take precedence. According to researchers, the number and circulation of publications based on serious analysis are decreasing day by day because a new type of reader—the "light-reader"—has emerged.

In Russia, between 2002 and 2005, entertainment publications accounted for 24-25% of the total press market. If we analyze the press of this period, we find that domestic issues accounted for 45%, criminal incidents for 35%, entertainment topics for 15%, and sports news for 11%. Year after year, these figures change, and the recreational function is becoming the dominant one. The earliest forms of recreation in the press include jokes, crossword puzzles, humorous stories, radio interviews with celebrities, gossip, music on television, short clips from concert programs, series, broadcasts of sports competitions, and the presentation of various contests.

In journalistic products aimed at satisfying the audience's recreational needs, information is expressed in various genres. The form in which recreation manifests itself in them is as follows:

- 1) Reviews of film and theater premieres, information on the cultural sphere, reports from the venue of a festival or exhibition, interviews with artists, and previews of new literature, music, or music videos, etc;
- 2) "The Path of a Human Life" (stories), travel essays;
- 3) Advertorials providing information about tourism and recreation, and cultural leisure destinations;
- 4) Show business news (gossip, scandals, news from the lives of celebrities);
- 5) Materials dedicated to various people's interests (such as collections, cars, pets, handicrafts, and gardening);
- 6) About people's lifestyles, new trends, and popular innovations (useful tips on fashion, sports, health, beauty, and culinary secrets);
- 7) Humorous publications (jokes, skits, fables);
- 8) Game-based pages (crossword, cross-reference, rebus, puzzle, contest, tests);
- 9) Stories about mysterious and unusual phenomena, such as feng shui, astrology, fortune-telling, and astrologers' predictions;
- 10) Information about TV programs.

According to sociologists, even intellectuals and the highly educated have today lost interest in analyzing the outside world and have increased their inclination toward recreation.

According to the famous producer A.E. Rodnyansky, entertainment television dominates the entire media market, and all TV channels are becoming increasingly similar in their entertainment offerings. According to sociologists, television today is watched primarily for entertainment. Existing media stereotypes are changing, and television is being accepted in society as an entertainment institution.

The thematic, stylistic, and economic causes and objectives of the media's fulfillment of its recreational function make it possible to distinguish three types of strategies:

1. Manipulative strategy. The types of media operating under this strategy, first, induce frustration, ecstasy, and narcotization in people. By recounting the unfulfilled dreams of various celebrities and the difficult situations they've faced in life, it stirs up feelings of anxiety, sorrow, and sympathy in people. Secondly, it pays no attention to novelty or the quality of the information it conveys. The main goal is to maintain popularity and marketability by attracting the audience's attention. In publications of this nature, we witness journalists illegally intruding into the private lives of celebrities and, depending on the events, sometimes condemning and sometimes exonerating them.

2. Humanistic strategy. We can observe changes such as modifications in genre and format in the media operating under this strategy, which conveys many important and topical issues to the public in an engaging, easily understandable way through the recreational function. They try to move away from the format typical of "yellow" media. In these media's materials, the recreational function manifests itself as follows:

- 1) Presenting materials prepared with the intent to spark curiosity and a desire to learn in an engaging way;
- 2) Using recreational elements to highlight life events that encourage reflection;
- 3) influencing people's emotions through the use of emotional coloring and recreational elements in a journalistic, literary, and artistic style.

In the media operating under this strategy, respect for human dignity, their spiritual wealth, and intellectual potential takes precedence. They refrain from interfering in people's private lives. The primary goal is development and enlightenment.

3. Pragmatic strategy. Proponents of this strategy embody elements of manipulation and the humanistic strategy. They primarily cover issues that are relevant to the public. Publishing staff and editors place the public's use of the media as an information source above all else. Journalists operating under this strategy, while intruding into celebrities' private lives, do not deviate from ethical standards.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the recreational function of journalism represents an essential and increasingly dominant component of modern mass media. As demonstrated in the article, recreation is not merely entertainment but a complex socio-psychological phenomenon that contributes to the restoration of individuals' emotional and mental balance. Its theoretical foundations, rooted in interdisciplinary studies, reveal that recreation encompasses various dimensions such as relaxation, hedonism, escapism, and aesthetic satisfaction.

The analysis shows that the recreational function is closely interconnected with other core functions of journalism, including ideological, cultural-educational, organizational, and advertising functions. Rather than functioning independently, it enhances the effectiveness of these functions by making content more engaging, accessible, and emotionally impactful for audiences.

Furthermore, the transformation of contemporary media highlights a shift toward audience-oriented content, where lightness, speed, and entertainment value are prioritized. This has led to the emergence of different media strategies—manipulative, humanistic, and pragmatic—each reflecting distinct approaches to balancing entertainment with ethical and informational responsibilities.

Ultimately, while the growing dominance of the recreational function responds to audience demands, it also raises important questions about media quality, ethics, and social responsibility. Therefore, it is crucial for modern journalism to maintain a balanced approach, ensuring that recreational content not only entertains but also contributes to intellectual development, cultural enrichment, and the overall well-being of society.

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