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**The Role of Media in Everyday Life of Young People.**

**Information vs. Entertainment**

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**Abstract:** The hypothesis from which we start our research forward is that the more young people choose to spend their time consuming media products, the more they will prefer to turn to the sphere of entertainment at the expense of information. Thus, we intend to bring to attention the preferences of media consumption of young people, starting from a few founding interrogations: What kind of media messages you consume most often?; What type of media channel you usually prefer to get information about the latest events?; The purpose of this research is to highlight young audience preferences for different types of information, such as to satisfy the need for catharsis or the practical ones, of immediate utility.

**Keywords:** information function; the function of entertainment; mass communication

**1. Introduction**

Currently, the media exerts a shaping force much stronger than the surrounding reality; it grows or develops innate predispositions to certain lifestyles, personal images, allowed or prohibited behaviour patterns, value systems, etc. Media space absorbs more and more scenes of collective life that they form and reflect. Media representations are recognized, interpreted, edited and used in everyday social construction of audience members.

Obtaining, developing or using even the most insignificant information requires an appeal to technology. After McLuhan, the spoken word “it was the first technology that has allowed man to get past their own environment“ (McLuhan, 2006, p. 398). In contact with audiovisual products, for example, individuals interiorize easier the messages, turn them into cultural conceptions about the world, they feel solidary with the experiences that they have witnessed such a way as to create a network of new interdependencies and solidarities in a huge, global scale.“ (Coman, 2007, p. 185)

Mass communication makes possible the existence of super technologized networks that produce huge amounts of information, of different categories, from news to entertainment, information that is transmitted to a heterogeneous mass audiences who belong to different cultures, with various lifestyles and cultural patterns, so that in this global village, people get to consume the same cultural products sometimes in real time so that the audiences can be exploited.

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## **2. The Functions of the Media in Society**

As promoters of culture, media transmits from one generation to another information, values and norms; in this way it helps to increase social cohesion by broadening the base of a common experience. The media helps integrate individuals into society by continuing socialization after finishing the official education but also by starting this education in the preschool period.

Media are active in different sectors of social life and can perform various functions, such as informational, interpretive, expressive, critical, instructive culturalizing, social binder and entertainment (Coman, 2007; McQuail, 1999; Tran, Stănciugelu, 2003).

For our research, we will focus on the function of information and entertainment. The information function is related to people's need to control the environment, assessing, through the information that they receive through the media, the importance of events that intersect with their existence. In American terminology, this dimension of media is called through the expression "the function of supervision" (Coman, 2007, p. 111). From the flow of messages that we have daily access through different media, only some provide immediate utility information (weather, stock exchange, public transportation, opening hours of different public institutions, cultural events, and various prices).

Information instruments are a category of media messages that develop more and more also in the local media landscape. Local or specialized radio stations and television communicate weather, traffic situation on major streets or locked areas, police reports, announcements of different public institutions. Similarly, newspapers and proximity magazines abound in this kind of information, so that the need of immediate utility data provides a specific audience for publications such as those dealing with real estate, automobile, housekeeping, and computer programs. All these media products have an immediate, tangible utility.

Media messages not only present what has already happened (retrospective orientation), but also what might happen (prospective vision) (Coman, 2007, p. 113). Many of the media messages are focused on the prevention function, those that transmit weather, economic and financial forecasts, information about prevention of some epidemics, prevention of traffic accidents as well as information from different officials announcing changes in the functioning of social systems.

Perhaps most media content is for entertainment (Severin, Tankard, 2004, p. 332). This appears in the written press, especially if we consider the multitude of columns, news reports aiming the human factor and filling articles. Entertainment across media serves to provide a respite from everyday problems and to fill leisure. Media exposes millions of people to a mass culture which includes art and music, and some people claim that media improve public taste and preference for beauty. There are some who argue that the media encourages escapism corrupt the refined art, reduce public taste and prevent the appreciation of beauty.

French sociologist Jean Cazeneuve claims that by entertainment, the audience "finds a picture of what he is afraid to want to be and what he confesses that he dreams to be. Thus we create a factually world that allows evasion and also provides a mild dose of information" (Cazeneuve, 1972 *apud* Coman, 2007, p. 124). By consuming entertainment, individuals assume their imaginary experiences pulse is released, frustration and dissatisfaction, projecting their sufferings or dreams in the imaginary worlds provided by the media messages and products.

### **3. Methodology of Research**

#### *a) Sample*

The population investigated is represented by the students of the second year of study at Danubius University of Galati, Faculty of Communication Sciences, specializing in Communication and Public Relations. 30 questionnaires were distributed, of which 20 were completed. Choose the number of questionnaires distributed was done taking into account the number of students present at the time of the survey. The research period was for one week (5. 05. 2011 - 12.05.2011). The sample included both males and female individuals, aged between 20 and 30 years.

#### *b) The Method*

The application of questionnaire was done through auto completion method. We resort to using this method for two reasons: lack of time for a single operator to apply all questionnaires, but also from the desire to give respondents the opportunity to reflect on the questions.

#### *c) Investigative Tool*

It was designed a questionnaire containing both open questions and closed, and identification. We chose to perform this research through questionnaire to discover the opinions, judgments and attitudes in relation to our subject of research (Wimmer, Dominick, 2006, p. 189). Through this method we sought to obtain information with a high explanatory value, they allowing generalizations about the relationship between social facts which establish fundamental connections between cause and effect for the entire assembly of the studied population (Marinescu, 2009, p. 28).

#### *d) Research Questions*

The questions from the applied questionnaire were aimed at finding respondents' preferences regarding their habit to consume media products of information or entertainment. By using these questions we sought to detect the importance that respondents attach to the functions of information, respectively of entertainment of the media. Their preferences in terms of time spent tracking news channels or, on the other hand, their favourite entertainment programs show us the ways in which the social class that was the subject of the sample prefer, for various reasons, to spend time in the company of media products and messages.

### **4. Data Analysis**

Information resulting after applying the questionnaire was analyzed through the theoretical concepts of the two functions of the media, of information and of entertainment. From the data collected, it appears that the young people surveyed prefer equally media messages of information and of entertainment that are perceived from the audiovisual media, but in terms of print media products a strong preference to tabloid products is being shaped, providing content easily to be perceived, those models of easy success, celebrities promoted by these types of media products. All young people who formed the sample of this research are consumers of media messages, responding with "yes" to the question on the consumption of media products, they have secondary education and there was recorded a number of 13 female and 7 male respondents.

More than half of respondents spend between 3 and 5 hours per day consuming media messages, while 13 of the 20 respondents who completed the questionnaire, answered that they watch "newscasts" most often, the next category of preferred media products is movies. From this we can conclude that

for these respondents, it is important the function of information of the media, and not just entertainment is preferred when consuming media products.

To the question “What is the type of media channel that you usually prefer to get information about the latest events?”, half of the respondents located “the Internet“ on the first place in the ranking preferences and, “TV news channel“ is the next tracked media channel. From here emerges the idea that this social category consisting of young people social prefer topical media means to get information about the latest events. Internet is preferred also for relaxation, not only for information, 15 of the 20 respondents preferring it as a way to relax after a day of activity, the next concerned category being “movie TV channel“. So here the same media channel, the Internet is preferred both to satisfy the need to keep up with the news, but also for leisure activities.

To the question “What is the frequency with which you watch TV channels that broadcast only news?“, half of the respondents answered that they watch “very often“, but also half of those surveyed answered “very often“ when they were asked about the frequency with which they watch “TV stations that broadcast only films“. Thus, for these respondents the information function is as important as the one of entertainment.

As for the surveyed young people preferences regarding print media products, most of them (5 of the 20) prefer urban containing publication “Click“ and also 5 of them replied that “Libertatea“/ “Freedom“ is their favourite newspaper. Next are the publications „Gazeta Sporturilor“/ “Sports Gazette“, „TopGear“, „Jurnalul Național“/ “National Journal“, „Evenimentul Zilei“/ “The Event of the Day “ and „Dilema Veche“/ “the Old Dilemma“. It is noticed net inclination towards print media products that broadcasts messages tabloid type, easy contents in which the main actors are different celebrities promoted by these publications, celebrities who get to become truly successful models for respondents. Also, in terms of the sector of the written press, it is obvious a preference of the respondents towards products that promote entertainment and, in audiovisual media sector, there is a balance between products having the function of information and those targeting only the function of entertainment.

Furthermore, the TV show preferred by most of the respondents is “În gura presei“/ “In the Mouth of the Press“, a show-pamphlet in which, under the front of the pamphlet, his presenter, Mircea Badea, brings in foreground the news papers taken from the next day, so it is a show where the level of information is higher than the one of entertainment. The show ranked second preferred in the top choices of the respondents is “Un show păcătos“/ “A Sin Show“, a tabloid entertainment show.

In their spare time, respondents prefer activities that are related to catharsis, to entertainment, to relaxation, social networks being first among their preferences; none of those questioned does not browse in the newspaper/ the favourite magazine nor watched the favourite TV show but they prefer to meet with friends or to go shopping.

To the question “How many hours per day you spend watching the news or reading news in news papers/ on the Internet? “, half of the young people surveyed answered “less than 1 hour per day“ and half answered “1 to 2 hours per day“, while a number of 8 respondents answered that they watch “1 to 2 hours per day“ their favourite entertainment show. From here emerges the idea that the youth surveyed prefer to watch equally the news, as well as the preferred entertainment show, both functions of the media, information and entertainment being placed in the centre stage of their preoccupation regarding their way of relating to the types of media messages.

Thus, we can conclude that the youth who answered the questionnaire equally prefer media messages of information and entertainment that are perceived from the audiovisual media, but in terms of print

media products a strong preference to products tabloid type is being shaped, which provides easily perceived contents, those easy successful models, celebrities promoted by these types of media products. The hypothesis from which we started this research has been confirmed only partially, respondents preferring information messages from the audiovisual media, but entertainment messages from the written press.

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