

ENTERTAINMENT AS A STANCE OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: *Entertainment is a particular area of public communication, due to the aesthetic component of the messages. Artistic expression is primarily about emotionality, not rationality, and the originality of creation gives artistic value. Entertainment nowadays tends to contaminate the other functions of communication, namely information and persuasion. In contemporary society, the production of entertainment is industrialized. Contemporary culture is dominated by entertainment industry, especially in the fields of publishing, music, film and games. In this article, we shall summarize the content and specifics of entertainment as premises of the creative industries' social impact.*

Keywords: *functions of mass communication; entertainment; contemporary culture.*

Introduction

Entertainment is an activity that produces satisfaction and pleasure (Entertainment n.d.), a diverting behaviour, a pleasant way to spend free time, synonymous with: fun, amusement, enjoyment.

Etymologically, entertainment refers to the set of activities that human beings perform to distract themselves from the tasks they perform during daily routine (entretenimiento n.d.). The playful connotation (entertainment is a game without serious stakes in real life, which is practiced by non-professionals in their free time) and the hedonistic connotation (entertainment is fun and designed specifically to create a good mood) have been added later. Thus, nowadays entertainment is synonymous with fun, amusement, partying, relaxation.

Scientifically, physiologically and psychologically, entertainment is motivated by the body's natural need to recover from physical or intellectual exertion. Relaxation means re-creating one's energy resources, restoring strength and the ability to focus.

Ethologically (*i.e.* from the perspective of behavioral sciences), it is considered that variation of activity for relaxing purposes is "as old as time". Some ethologists believe that animals sometimes have fun when pampering themselves. From ancient times, organized entertainment has been a trick of the powerful to maintain public order. From the Romans we have the expression "bread and circuses" and it seems that things have not changed much since then.

In common language, entertainment refers to the activities we do willingly, because we enjoy and like: parties, games, hobbies, tourism, sports. The meaning excludes the professionalization component of the activity. Entertainment, as an activity with exclusively recreational purposes, also includes the practice of some art forms: literature, painting, music, dance, drama, etc. at amateur level.

In public discourse on contemporary culture, the meaning has become specialized. Thus, entertainment refers to the professional offer of products and services, targeting a wide audience for a pleasant pastime. In the context of mass society, the public is the passive consumer who benefits from the production of the entertainment industry.

Economic sciences distinguish between cultural and leisure industries (vgl. golitsyno.ru/ro/ n.d.) and restrict the field of entertainment to culture, based on the artistic element. The entertainment industry includes publishing and media production, music, film and shows, but does not include tourism, sporting events, gambling or online social networking platforms. Advertising and video games have an ambiguous position in this classification, because the artistic aspect is present, but their main purpose is not expression through art.

In what follows, we shall approach entertainment as cultural production, created for enjoyment, industrialized and pursuing economic profit, to the detriment of artistic value. However, we shall focus on the communicative role of entertainment.

Communication sciences view entertainment as a functional form of communication, which seeks neither to inform, nor to persuade the interlocutor, but only to delight him, and is usually achieved by subjective relation to reality, as a story or as a joke, using rhetorical mechanisms, like fiction or humour. Entertainment messages do not aim at telling the truth, but at playfully transfiguring reality for amusement. As a result, they differ from misinformation, which distorts reality in order to inoculate false beliefs. Messages intended to amuse are often subsumed to artistic communication, in its verbal and nonverbal hypostases. Cultural entertainment production is considered a form of public communication with aesthetic intentions.

Contemporary entertainment can include a wide variety of cultural live events – literature, film, music, games, shows, contests, or events accessible via technology: through traditional media – print, radio and television, or through digital media, mainly online. The main source of contemporary entertainment are the products of creative industries.

An insight into the philosophy of culture shows that the idea of considering entertainment an industry is not that recent. After World War II, scholars were concerned that the phenomenon of massification, typical of industrial society, contaminated entertainment and, especially, art. Representatives of the Frankfurt School have pointed out since the 1950s that the cultural offer has been industrialized, in an attempt to connect with other areas of modern social life.

Creative industries

Creative industries are those economic fields which deal with artistic products, manufactured and distributed en masse, and in which the essential positions are remunerated based on the copyright of the original artistic creations (Creative industries n.d.). Traditionally, the components of the cultural industrial sector are: 1. The book industry (which favours pulp fiction); 2. The film industry (in which the production of commercial films prevails, released in cinemas, and popular soap operas, broadcast by commercial channels or online cultural platforms); 3. The music industry (in which pop style prevails and where shocking fashions and ephemeral celebrities are promoted in mass shows, concerts or festivals with thousands of spectators); 4. Television, (especially the entertainment sector, with series and shows whose content derives mostly from the "fine arts", but would be impossible without sophisticated production and broadcasting technology) and, last but not least, 5. Video game industry (which turned a pleasant way of spending free time into a harmful addiction, especially for young people).

The areas of actual art are not considered creative industries, nor the creative fields, adjacent to industry and commerce, which involve an artistic component. 1. In a philosophical sense, art itself includes the cultural result of human creativity, with aesthetic value. Creative manifestations that cultivate the category of beauty are also called "fine arts" and belong to cultured, intellectual creation (or, in a discriminatory way, to high culture). In high arts,

unique creations and originality are valued, which further justifies the belief that authentic art cannot be industrialized. 2. Industrial fields with an artistic touch are industrial design, architecture, fashion industry and advertising. Technically speaking, advertising does not focus on art, but on promoting products; for advertising, art is only the main tool for achieving the primary function of selling and making profit. Therefore, creative industries have an intermediate position, between art and industry, and represent the commercial version of fine arts.

Fine arts include creations for purely aesthetic purposes, as opposed to decorative or applied art, which must also fulfill a certain practical function, such as pottery (Kernbach 1995)¹. Fine arts or the 7 arts are: painting, sculpture, architecture, music, literature, theatre and film. Of these, 6 categories of artistic manifestations have been known ever since antiquity, when they were considered "Fine Arts". Later on, cinematography was added, so we say that film is the "seventh art". *Visual arts* include all the practices that result in an artistic, aesthetic or poetic representation, two – or three-dimensional. Visual arts add two new means of artistic expression to plastic arts: photography and film. *Music* includes instrumental and vocal compositions, interpretations and performances of all kinds: symphonic, folk and light music with a lot of subcategories: pop, rock, rap, etc. *Dance* also includes a variety of manifestations: ballet, folk dance, modern dance, ballroom dancing. Usually, *literature* includes not only prose stories, but also poetry and drama. Today, specialists distinguish between visual and performing arts.

Performing arts (wiki/Performing_arts n.d.) include the artistic interpretation of scores, librettos, authorial compositions and differ from visual arts because they involve live performance; art occurs instantaneously, during interpretation and not from exhibiting previously made works of art. All manifestations that involve the presence of performers or actors and an ephemeral, unique, unrepeatable representation are included in performing arts. (Of course, we can record and later broadcast performances, as in issuing book copies.)

They involve "staging", "show" and less "creation of artwork". Performing arts include many forms of artistic expression, both "classical" and modern, contemporary arts. The main categories are 1. Acting performances, 2. Music performances, 3. Dance performances and 4. Media performances.

1. Acting performances include theater, opera, operetta, musical, puppet theater, cabaret, vaudeville, comedy, trick, revue, circus, reciting (public reading), storytelling, pantomime, etc. 2. Music performances include various instrumental and vocal genres: symphony orchestras, folk music ensembles, brass, pop, rock bands, vocal soloists, etc.) 3. Dance performances include ballet, modern dance, contemporary dance, ballroom dancing, eurythmics, etc. 4. Media shows are at the confluence of arts and include unconventional technologies: laser projections, light and water shows, etc.

Entertainment typology

The main forms of contemporary entertainment are stories, shows and games, classic entertainment, adapted to each civilization and era. We all like to listen to stories, to imagine fantasy scenarios, as alternatives to harsh reality. We all like to watch shows on the open stage or in front of the TV, and to admire the mastery of theater or music performers.

¹ Ancient Greeks acknowledged 9 arts, somewhat different from what we consider today to be art, because they also regarded *history*, *astronomy* and *rhetoric* to be arts. Nine sister muses impersonated arts in Greek mythology, entertaining the gods of Olympus with their songs, at festivities and parties: 1. *Calliope* - the muse of epic poetry and eloquence; 2. *Clio* – the muse of history; 3. *Erato* – the muse of elegy and erotic poetry; 4. *Euterpe* – the muse of music and lyric poetry; 5. *Melpomene* – the muse of tragedy; 6. *Polymnia* – the muse of rhetoric and religious hymns; 7. *Terpsihora* – the muse of dance; 8. *Thalia* – the muse of comedy and *Urania* – the muse of astronomy. We learn from Homer that the mother of the 9 sisters was *Mnemosyne*, the goddess of memory.

Sometimes we try to reproduce the artistic representations that we liked or were impressed by, humming a song, repeating a famous quote in different life situations or cheering up the atmosphere with a funny joke. Many young people want to work in showbiz, but few discover their artistic talents and become creators or show performers themselves. We all like to play and experience strong sensations without risk, whether we socialize during a card or football game, or escape reality by plunging into the captivating scenario of a video game. Most of the time, however, we prefer to watch games and support our favourites in sports or art competitions.

Fiction

The artistic concretization of fiction is found, especially, in literature and film, and less often in visual arts and music. As regards painting, we can recall the fantastic visions of Hieronimus Bosch or Salvador Dali, and in music, the electronic genre, represented, for example, by the compositions of Jean-Michel Jarre. We can find fiction in both high art and consumer culture. Great literature masterpieces and entertainment productions involve fiction, even if their artistic cannot be compared.

Man's need for fiction can be derived from Maslow's Pyramid and covers all levels, from the basal - survival and control of the environment, to the social-identitary and spiritual. Fiction can function as knowledge surrogate and provide a coherent and accessible way of explaining reality (as in religions where divinity is usually invoked to explain the incomprehensible) or a pleasant way of accepting reality (as in literature and art, especially when they have a therapeutic function). Fiction can satisfy the individual's need for identity when readers identify with positive characters. Fiction unquestionably satisfies the individual's need for entertainment, offering him ideal alternatives to the dull, harsh daily life. In game theory, fiction is a pleasant and risk-free way to escape from ordinary reality. Sociologists have theorized the escape function of artistic communication.

Fiction is the result of imagination and recreates a coherent alternative reality, in which different recognizable elements of the reality are inserted in various proportions. Fiction has an aesthetic, not practical purpose, therefore it is a particular type of communication.

Artistic communication differs from functional communication by its social role, especially by its hedonistic intention, opposed to the cognitive one. In other words, artistic communication aims to produce pleasure, not knowledge, to entertain, not to inform. Artistic communication appeals to emotion, not reason. Since ancient philosophy people have dealt with the opposition between *docere* and *delectare* .

The subjectivity of fictional universe results from the transfiguration of reality through the author's creative filter. Fiction is an invention which involves imagination, creativity, but also communication and storytelling skills, often accompanied by public speaking talent.

Performances

Performances are public acts of entertainment culture, taking place through asymmetric and unidirectional communication processes. These require the existence of two complementary roles: performer and audience. The protagonist has the active role of transmitting messages and emotions from the stage to an audience motivated by the desire to enjoy the artistic act. (Even though there are many protagonists on stage, the audience is much more numerous than the artists.)

Performances are the oldest form of mass communication, preceding mass-media for millennia, but continue to fascinate audiences with the same success and strong social impact.

In the context of creative industries, the industry of live shows, intended for a mass audience is usually called showbiz, to be differentiated from audio-visual media productions.

Showbiz is the abbreviation for the English "*show business*" and it refers internationally, to the field of entertainment shows.

The term includes performance halls, event organizers (who provide the logistics and equipment needed for the shows), artistic impresario companies and, especially artists, engaged in mass performances: music performers, dancers, but also comedians (sketch performers) and circus artists: magicians, jugglers, acrobats, clowns, ventriloquists, etc.

Tours and festivals are the high-light of showbiz and involve an impressive deployment of forces, managed rigorously. Showbiz has taken advantage of mass-media facilities and developed its own broadcast formats on radio and television, but live performances remain the main form of mass entertainment.

Media entertainment derives from showbiz. Public service broadcasting was originally designed to broadcast music before it became the main source of information for its time. Radio variety shows brought together orchestras, popular performers, famous couplets, beloved choirs and actors, providing the audience with a cheap source of entertainment during the interwar period. Over the airwaves, a series of celebrities were launched in showbiz, until the advent of television.

Television took advantage of image and broadcast shows from the big stages, later creating its own formats of entertainment shows with extensive staging. Huge studios hosted grandiose productions with spectacular sets and choreography in the "golden age of television", in the 1960s-70s. But the diversification of the TV offer, the advent of satellite and cable television allowing the consumer to choose from a wide range of programmes, and the changing taste of the public led to a decline in the popularity of variety shows and, finally, to the abandonment of such expensive productions in the 1980s.

Clifford Christians claimed that the percentage of entertainment shows was close to 90%, referring to the commercial television in the USA during the 1980s (Christians, Clifford G., Fackler, Mark, Rotzoll, Kim B., McKee, Kathy B. 2001). Media critics claim that entertainment has contaminated all audio-visual productions and often use the pejorative term "Infotainment", which refers to the commercial hybrid of information and entertainment in TV news. In Cambridge Dictionary, *infotainment* means reporting news in an attractive style, often trivial and humorous, to the detriment of authentic journalism, designed to provide objective information (dictionary.cambridge.org n.d.).

Games

Games are the interactive side of entertainment, when the actors have a participatory role – and it is considered a form of entertainment, when there is passive audience, not involved in the game. The playful attitude means experimenting the interaction with environment and peers, in a harmless, partially instinctive manner. Psychologists claim that play has regenerative and therapeutic roles in our lives (Sigmund Freud, 1903).

The typology of games includes 1. children's games (simulacrum artifacts: toys, dolls, cars, ball, rope, motric activities: hopscotch, leapfrog, hide-and-seek, etc.), 2. role-plays – which take place according to a predetermined scenario (simulations for children and adults, strategy games), 3. logic or puzzle games – aimed at solving problems (chess, go, puzzle, riddles, construction or orientation games), 4. sports games that promote competition (team games like football, individual games, like tennis, boxing, etc., competitions such as athletics or car racing), 5. games of chance that aim at converting chance into an advantage (dice, lottery, roulette, raffle, etc.).

The French sociologist Roger Caillois considers that all games are governed by at least one of the 4 fundamental principles: Agon (Competition), Alea (Hazard), Mimikry (Mask or role) and Ilinx (Ecstasy). In 1937, The Dutch medievalist Johan Huizinga devoted a study to games, entitled: "Homo ludens. A Study of the Play-Element in Culture" in which he launches the theory that all significant cultural achievements (philosophy, poetry, art, science) are linked with play.

Video games are the most popular form of entertainment for digital natives. The typology of video games includes: 1. Logic games (tetris, maze, puzzle, chess, go, mahjong); 2. Point and click games (selection of interactive areas on the screen, construction games); 3. Trivia games (general knowledge questions); 4. Gambling (slot machines, pinball, roulette; table games: pocker, blackjack, bingo); 5. RPGs (role playing games, as an avatar or from the player's perspective, with the alternative to change the character activated during the game). RPGs are often designed as shooting and fighting games (the goal is to defeat the opponent) or as survival games (gathering resources needed to continue the game); 6. Adventure games (obstacle races against time, like Super Mario Bros or the fulfillment of increasingly complicated missions on each level); 7. Simulation games (driving cars, flying planes, ski-ing, etc.); 8. Strategy games (real or imaginary battle scenarios, war games, entrepreneurship games, Tycoon style); 9. Interactive fiction games (immersion in realistic or fantasy game universes that simulate social interaction, popular online, like Sims). The video game industry is booming. Video games are not just a fun way to spend your free time. Excessive playing generates pathological symptoms: addiction or detachment from reality.

Conclusion

Entertainment consumption is inevitable and even necessary to restore focus and re-new the energy to face everyday challenges. Nonetheless, intense exposure to the offer of entertainment industry stimulates our natural tendency to do what we enjoy. Contemporary society seems to foster a hedonistic culture, a lifestyle that cultivates pleasure.

Like it or not, we have to admit that entertainment influence on us is constant and insinuating. Undoubtedly, more cultural models and fashions are propagated through literature or music than through journalism or advertising. Even if entertainment has constantly tried to adapt and keep up with the challenges of the social environment, the logic has remained the same: its purpose is to relax, not inform, convince, educate. Entertainment aims neither to promote social values, nor to form aesthetic taste, but to please and create good mood. Despite the critical discourse that has always accompanied the phenomenon, entertainment remains the most widespread and enjoyable form of public communication, the one we accept to pervade our daily lives without too much resistance, because we simply like it.

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