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**INFOTAINMENT IS A GENRE  
ON VERGE OF INFORMATION  
AND ENTERTAINMENT**

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The aim of the research is to consider the modern television programs that use infotainment; to identify the advantages and disadvantages of this genre; to analyse the use of information and games in the process of creating television programs; to find out the historical conditions that led to the emergence of a new format; to analyse how the changes affected not only the principle of selection of information, but also the method of its presentation. The research methodology consists in application analytical, historical, and comparative methods. One of main methods that helps to study the phenomenon of infotainment and its features is analytical. Comparative method allows considering the range of problems of origin of new genre, watching modern telecasts, and educing its advantages and disadvantages. To find out the historical aspects of development of television, that entailed the origin of new format, there is a historical method. Scientific novelty of the research consists in study of technologies of TV performance creation and features of infotainment as signs of modern medias and new format of information presentation, and also, the analysis of the use of the phenomenon of infotainment in modern telecasts. Its advantages and disadvantages are considered. Practical knowledge is organized with scientific approach. Conclusions. The TV programs of modern television, in which the infotainment is used, are studied, the peculiarities of its implementation are investigated, and the use of entertainment and game techniques in the process of creating TV programs is analyzed. The main trends in the use of infotainment, the advantages and disadvantages of this genre are revealed, and the historical conditions that have led to the emergence of a new format have been clarified.

*Keywords:* infotainment; television genres; television programs.

### Introduction

Competition between TV channels and the struggle for ratings encouraged television companies to come up with something new, non-traditional: interesting, unlike classical, programs, creative techniques of shooting and montage have appeared, TV technologies came to a qualitatively new stage of development. Increasing the interest of viewers by non-standard TV programs has led to the emergence of a new format infotainment (a portmanteau of information and entertainment). The introduction of this concept into scientific use belongs to Neil Postman, a professor at the University of Chicago, a famous researcher in media culture and an outrageous critic of television. Postman refers to the concept of “infotainment” in his book, “Amusing Ourselves to Death” (Neil Postman, 1985).

Scientific attention to infotainment has been observed since the second half of the 1980s. On British and American TV shows, British professor D. Toussin conducted a study on “News as Entertaining: The Rise of Global Infotainment” in which the scientist analyses the evolution of infotainment and some of its features. The issue of the influence and interaction of infotainment and culture in general raise the Lithuanian professor A. Augustinaitis in the article “Infotainment: cultural hypertext of dual virtuality”. Italian researcher P. Franch also addresses this problem in a thesis “Infotainment Origins and Influence on British Broadcasting”.

Foreign researchers (journalists, sociologists, and political scientists) – P. Eliot, P. Golding, D. Habermas – were thinking about infotainment and the prospect of its development. M. Alexandrov, A. Bystrytsky, L. Vasiliev, J. Zasursky, N. Shabalin, Y. Nazarov, E. Makeevko, Y. Uzhovskaya, as well as Ukrainian scientists and experts – S. Bezklubenko, V. Hoyan, M. Nedopitansky, B. Potayatynik. Yu. Shapoval, M. Kartoza, L. Downey, R. Kaiser and others. A. Moskalenko, V. Rizun, V. Zdoroveha, V. Lizanchuk, Y. Shapoval, I. Sachenko, V. Yegorov, G. Kuznetsov, A. Zernetska, G. Pocheptsov, A. Chichanovsky, V. Shklyar, E. Bagirov, Y. Habermas, R. Hacquet, M. Price, D. Lall, R. Gakett, A. Toffler, and E. Fichtelius developed the general theoretical conception on this topic. However, despite some developments, infotainment was not the subject

of integrated scientific research, but only some aspects. As television increasingly intensifies performance and offers viewers products where entertainment is increasingly dominated by information and journalism, it was decided to explore infotainment as a new format for information presentation, its features of television programs, and to identify the advantages and disadvantages of using it.

### **The purpose of the article**

The purpose of the study is to consider TV programs that use infotainment; to identify the advantages and disadvantages of this genre; to analyse the use of infotainment and games in the process of creating television programs; to find out the historical conditions that caused the emergence of a new format; to analyse how the changes affected not only the principle of selection of information, but also the method of its presentation; to determine, why editorial teams began to use all methods to create non-standard informational materials, to connect inconsistent things and phenomena, to represent information programs.

### **Presentation of the main material**

The introduction of infotainment is based on the historical conditions of TV development, social and political practices, socio-economic and political changes in the state, the unceasing growth of competition and the increased influence of corporate and economic interests. The rapid progress of the latest technologies, the transformation of the main communicative changes led to an increase in media products entertainment and the emergence of new genre formations. Modern television began to intensify performance and offer viewers products where entertainment is increasingly dominated by information and journalism, and the search for topics has been removed from the category of priority media strategies in the so-called category of human curiosity, the reflection of events, and the phenomena of social processes.

At the same time, the problem of improving the tools for influencing social consciousness through television has blown up recently. Competition between TV channels and the struggle for ratings encouraged TV companies to come up with something new, non-traditional. There were interesting, non-classic, programs, creative techniques of shooting and montage, television technologies came to a qualitatively new stage of development. Using the long-standing principle of “bread and games”, at first a variety of entertainment shows appeared on foreign channels, and later on Ukrainian TV channels. Subsequently, the so-called entertaining format took over also informational programs, in particular news releases. The non-stop growth of competition, coupled with the increased influence of corporate economic interests, which led to the search for themes of the category of priority strategies for the media in the so-called category of human curiosity and the illusion of sensational facts, led to the emergence of a new genre of “infotainment” (a portmanteau of information and entertainment) in the United States in the 1980s. It was a new kind of information programs, where the news was presented in the most fun form, which helped to present an objective picture of reality via entertainment, added the brightness and performance to programs. There was an interpenetration (diffusion, hybridization, transformation) of genres, types and forms of television production.

The genre of infotainment has become a standard of novelty and purposefulness, has gained ferocious popularity on television and markedly distinguished from other well-known information television genres. By the time, infotainment was used in numerous entertainment programs about the stars, where the information about the lives of celebrities was presented to the viewer in a simple way. Such entertaining, easy to perceive, show began to exceed the ratings of traditional programs, lowered the ratings of information releases. Therefore, news editors began to emulate this genre, to feed news within the infotainment easily, dynamically, without overloading the brain of the viewer with mental effort.

The desire of viewers to observe the performance on the screen and enjoy the TV product, and not just to perceive dry information, has forced media professionals to look for new tools and techniques for attracting the audience. “Reorganization of speech, along with many fundamental changes in mass media, highlighted the important characteristic of a new audience – entertainment-oriented. This tendency was especially noticeable on television” (Smirnov, 2002). Faced with the problem of attracting the audience to their product, TV companies began to use various tricks, use new methods and techniques for providing information, and the main criterion of production programs was human curiosity. Therefore, they began to use actively the interpretation – “simple and interesting, it appeals to the ready-made formulas that are in the minds of the audience. The wording that lies on the surface, well-known judgments, folk wisdom, stamps from songs and cinema often take up the main resistance of the text, and the reporter’s speech is oversupplied with quotations and quotes. The rich visuals is

a harmonious combination of notes with a set of pictures filled with action, makes the plot more meaningful and interesting” (Bespamyatnova, 2005, p. 33).

Another researcher S. Smetanin believes that “today, in the journalistic text, there is a shift in emphasis on what is being said about how this is being said” (Smetanina, 2002, p. 382), because the non-standard form of information presentation makes it easier to keep an event in memory. Therefore, news producers intensify their efforts changing the concept of the main channel program, facilitating the format and style of the information presentation. Increasingly, information programs have a taste for infotainment – entertainment information, presentation of news in the form of entertainment programs or with a touch of entertainment (Zorkov, 2005). Infotainment in the professional hands of TV companies has become an incredible tool for creating a performance; it gave programs that represent events of the day or week, bright colours. The content of the picture during the interview is neither informative nor reportage. The sports hero presence, cropped on one side by a waist-high plan on the background of treadmills and football fields, is unacceptable for infotainment, since it is too stamped, characterized by purely informational genres (usually such pictures appear in reports about sports competitions). A similar interview with the same hero, recorded, for example, sitting on the grandstand, in a more natural pose, is more appropriate for infotainment (Symonina). The rich visuals is a harmonious combination of voiceover with a set of pictures filled with action, makes the plotting more meaningful.

First, the richness of visuals depends on the shooting location. At the same time, the classical standards of the picture combination (shift of close-up, medium, and wide shots) are not broken. That is why the classic standards of the shots combination are called classic not to be broken, because it is a cornerstone. Often fragments of interviews are designed with the appropriate video. This method applies only in two cases. In the first case, when the interviewee says that there are high-profile shots that clearly confirm his words, or when there are so-called “dropouts”, when the interviewee needs to be “covered” with another video (Symonina). The so-called reconstruction promote the creation of associative visuals – the event restoration that took place in the past, in real time and place. Often, the reconstruction of events resorted to plots of criminal news (note that L. Downey and R. Kaiser attributed to the priority topics of infotainment both stories about the celebrities and criminal stories) (Downey and Kaiser, 2013, p. 3). Reconstructions give an opportunity to show events from heroes’ past. For example, the story of the hero about how he met his wife on the Andriyivsky Uzviz in Kyiv can be illustrated by “reconstruction of events”. This can replace the lack of archival video or static photos. It is the similarity of the characteristics, methods and ways of creating plots in the genre of “infotainment” to the characteristic features of creating a portrait essay, gives the right to consider the latest genre in the course, which refers to classical feature journalistic broadcast. After all, one of the functions of feature journalism is the disclosure of a typical, common through an individual, separate. By reaching the completeness of the generalization, revealing characteristic, feature journalism uses a figurative reflection of reality, and this image is created from an unknowing, factual material (Kuznetsov, Zvyk and Yurovsky, 2002, 304 pp.)

As Professor G. Pocheptsov noticed precisely, “TV lives on the sale of living souls, turning them into dead ones. The top manager comes to the advertiser and says: I need women, 40-60 years old, housewives. And they answer: they are on such a show every day on weekdays at 17:00. You are welcome” (Kutievov, 2006). The tendency of information presentation in the genre of infotainment has also gained enormous popularity in television entertainment programs and realtime shows. The nature of these shows is emotional, not rational. Their task is to warm up the viewers’ emotions, to cause laughter, admiration, joy, to entertain with various jokes, action scenes, to become the witnesses of incredible adventures, events – that previously was the privilege of cinema, theatre, literature, but as an artistic design. Therefore, powerful advertising companies are being run to focus the audience on these television programs, and producers, scriptwriters and directors give even more exposure, scandalous clashes, erotization of privacy to cameras. Speaking about the pursuit of entertainment, it should be noted that there is a problem of moral and cultural degradation. People, who are ready at any cost to get on the TV, show a non-standard behaviour in the picture, resorting to various nonsense, losing human dignity. It is especially important between amusement and medias not to lose understanding of communication between culture and media. If we consider not just news infotainment on other channels, we can find Ukrainian analogies of western and Russian shows. True, often foreign franchises are tabloid and turn into primitive episodes with pseudo-educational value. Therefore, the programs that should be opened for discussion with taboo themes simply turn them into a scandal. Consequently, the question arises: is the format of infotainment good? On the other hand, long-trodden paths of documentary programs and tourist reviews often promote their own content. The first is, in fact, a classical example of infotainment: the urgent issues are presented through an interesting form for the audience; however, given the dependence of television on a narrow circle of owners,

there is always a question of the objectivity of such programs. Again, the educational function of journalism is very doubtful, is inferior to if not the propaganda, but the correction of public opinion (Kostruba).

Travel blogs or travel programs are also a classic example of infotainment, but in this case specifically in an international aspect. The lack of a political component and relative popularity among the audience raise the main issue – the quality of the content. Only local giants (with the help of a financial component) can handle this task. Media is used actively and purposefully by people for two reasons – for the sake of the need for information and entertainment needs, with a separate motivation to receive education. These two needs have been already intertwined with each other that they even show mutual claims. When a person feels the need for information, as expected, it will be presented in interesting and attractive way. It is still good, but not so true, reversal procedure when people are entertaining, they want to get information and facts, information, regardless of the presentation – through a sketch of politics or a parody of an important social event: nevertheless, such information contains a share social or personal truth (Kostruba, 2019). It is clear that the hybrid genre of infotainment lives on its own code, that is, it is trended, first, to intrigue, scare or make laugh the viewer. In this genre, the main thing is not to give the consumer a hold on, and the question of how this method is being made goes into the background. However, in the word infotainment, the first part origins from information. Therefore, it would be desirable, launching a television project, to think that this part is combined with entertainment harmoniously. Then, if it does not make the viewer think, he will be provided with useful information. Because of the mass spread of infotainment on national TV channels and even the oversupplied with it, yet this new format of information releases has remained undeveloped. There are many reasons for it, and one of them is the lack of qualified journalists who are capable of thinking non-standard, or yet unreadiness to manifest themselves in the specified direction. Despite criticism of this news format, it is worth to give proper respect to infotainment. Indeed, its development should make the Ukrainian TV interesting.

The scientific novelty of the article is to study the technologies of creating the TV performance and the features of infotainment as signs of modern media and the new format of information, as well as in the analysis of the use of the phenomenon of infotainment in modern television programs. It considers its advantages and disadvantages, systematized practical knowledge on the basis of a scientific approach.

### **Conclusion**

On post-Soviet TV, under the influence of market relations, the struggle for ratings and the crisis of ideas led the leaders of traditional programs to change the format of television broadcasts. The changes affected, firstly, the principle of selection of information – the share of “official” has decreased, the number of reports on social and cultural issues has increased. Secondly, the ways of information presentation have changed: in the reports and plots, the “extraction” of not only facts, but also unfeatured, but interesting details to the mass viewers of the highlighted event. The editorial teams began to use all the methods for creating information materials, to combine inconsistent things and phenomena, which allowed informing recipients in a non-intrusive form, re-present information programs, and create new television projects. The rapid progress of the latest technologies, the transformation of the main communicative changes led to an increase in media products entertainment. Television increasingly intensifies performance practice and offers to viewers products where entertainment is increasingly dominated by information and journalism, used as a means of the audience’s mindset formation.

Despite the critics of this format, it is worth to give proper respect to infotainment, because its development should make the Ukrainian and especially regional television much more interesting and creative. The results obtained from the research can be used to create a competitive television product, in the television channels planning and the creation of individual programs, as well as within the educational process; the results of the study may be of interest to those who are engaged in the study of modern entertainment television.

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## ІНФОТЕЙНМЕНТ – ЖАНР НА МЕЖІ ІНФОРМАЦІЇ ТА РОЗВАГИ

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Мета дослідження – розглянути телевізійні програми, у яких використовується інфотейнмент; виявити переваги та недоліки цього жанру; проаналізувати використання інфотейнменту та гри в процесі створення телевізійних програм; з'ясувати історичні умови, що спричинили виникнення нового формату; проаналізувати, як зміни торкнулися не тільки принципу відбору інформації, а й способу її подавання. Методологія дослідження

полягає в застосуванні аналітичного, історичного та компаративного методів. Одним з головних методів, який допомагає дослідити феномен інфотейнменту та його особливості, є аналітичний. Компаративний метод дає змогу розглянути проблематику виникнення нового жанру в аспекті порівняння, відстежити сучасні телевізійні програми, виявити його переваги та недоліки. З'ясуванню історичних аспектів розвитку телебачення, що спричинили виникнення нового формату, сприяє історичний метод. Наукова новизна роботи полягає в дослідженні технологій створення екранного видовища та особливостей інфотейнменту як ознаки сучасних медіа і нового формату подавання інформації, а також у проведенні аналізу використання явища інфотейнмент у сучасних телевізійних програмах. Розглянуто його недоліки й переваги, систематизовано практичні знання на основі наукового підходу. Висновки. Розглянуто телевізійні програми сучасного телебачення, у яких використовується інфотейнмент, досліджено особливості його реалізації, проаналізовано використання прийомів розваги та гри в процесі створення телевізійних програм. Виявлено основні тенденції використання інфотейнменту, переваги та недоліки цього жанру, з'ясовано історичні умови, що спричинили виникнення нового формату.

*Ключові слова:* інфотейнмент; телевізійний жанр; телевізійні програми.

### **ИНФОТЕЙНМЕНТ – ЖАНР НА ГРАНИ ИНФОРМАЦИИ И РАЗВЛЕЧЕНИЯ**

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Цель исследования – рассмотреть современные телевизионные программы, в которых используется инфотейнмент; выявить преимущества и недостатки этого жанра; проанализировать использования инфотейнмента и игры в процессе создания телевизионных программ; выяснить исторические условия, которые повлекли возникновение нового формата; проанализировать, как изменения коснулись не только принципа отбора информации, а и способа ее подачи. Методология исследования заключается в применении аналитического, исторического, и компаративного методов. Одним из главных методов, который помогает исследовать феномен инфотейнмента и его особенности, является аналитический. Компаративный метод позволяет рассмотреть проблематику возникновения нового жанра в аспекте сравнения, отследить современные телевизионные программы, выявить его преимущества и недостатки. Выяснению исторических аспектов развития телевидения, что повлекли возникновение нового формата, способствует исторический метод. Научная новизна работы заключается в проведении исследований технологий создания экранного зрелища и особенностей инфотейнмента как качества современных медиа и нового формата подачи информации, а также в анализе использования явления инфотейнмента в современных телевизионных программах. Рассмотрены его недостатки и преимущества, систематизированы практические знания на основе научного подхода. Выводы. Рассмотрены телевизионные программы современного телевидения, в которых используется инфотейнмент, исследованы особенности его реализации, проанализировано использование приемов развлечения и игры в процессе создания телевизионных программ. Выявлены основные тенденции использования инфотейнмента, преимущества и недостатки этого жанра, выяснены исторические условия, которые повлекли возникновение нового формата.

*Ключевые слова:* инфотейнмент; телевизионный жанр; телевизионные программы.