

<https://doi.org/10.17721/2312-5160.2018.23.23-34>

UDC 007: 304: 001

Escape and Entertainment as Key Motives for Viewing TV News in the Light of Ritualistic Use of Television

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ABSTRACT

In this study, a scientific interpretation of escape and entertainment TV viewing motives is considered in the view of Uses and Gratifications Theory. More specifically, it is analysed how the TV viewing motives, initially elaborated for general TV use, are important to the TV news consumption. How strong are the motivations to escape and seek for entertainment in TV newscasts?

Given that primary goal of TV news viewing is obtaining information about the society and the world, TV news largely perform the instrumental role. However, in digital era, TV news are a combination of hard news (serious newsworthy topics, with analytical approach) and soft news (entertaining news items that rely mainly on attracting viewers' attention, and relief after watching hard news). After TV viewers return home, there is usually no matter what to watch, but it is important just to relax. Though the amount of soft news is relatively small, it was studied how strong viewers' motive is to watch an average TV newscast as a means to escape or being entertained.

Our study indicates that TV news has to be considered within two motivational patterns elaborated by U&G scholars for general TV use: instrumental and ritualistic viewing. Escape and entertainment motives are indisputable attributes of ritualistic use, whereas informational or surveillance motive leads to instrumental use.

Within Uses and Gratifications Theory, the concepts of escapism and entertainment occupy central positions in the row of TV viewing motives. However, they are often considered as a motivation to watch entertainment TV – fictional or reality-based programmes. But specific motivational structure that drives viewers to watch TV news remain largely meagre and divergent. In this study there was analysed the evidence that indicate various extents of strength of escapism and entertainment motives towards TV news viewing.

Notwithstanding some criticisms, U&G proved to be an enduring scientific approach. In U&G research, watching TV news is regarded as a process, aimed at obtaining messages about the world and neighbourhood, as well as information necessary for everyday decision making by the viewer and her/his relatives. In recent decades, the infotainment genre or soft news has been becoming more popular, and more and more tabloid TV stations tend to consider that TV news should entertain the viewers not less than to inform, or even more.

KEYWORDS: escape; entertainment; TV viewing motive; Uses and Gratifications Theory; TV news.

Втеча та розвага як ключові мотиви для перегляду телевізійних новин у контексті ритуального використання телебачення

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Резюме

У цьому дослідженні розглядається наукова інтерпретація мотивів втечі та розваги до сприйняття телебачення з погляду теорії використання та задоволення. Зокрема, наскільки ці мотиви перегляду ТБ, спочатку сформульовані загалом щодо будь-яких телевізійних програм, є сильними для телевізійних новин.

Зважаючи на те, що метою перегляду теленовин є отримання інформації про суспільство та світ, ці медіаповідомлення відіграють значною мірою інструментальну роль. Проте в цифрову епоху телевізійні новини – це поєднання hard (складні, тверді) news, тобто повідомлень на серйозні, суспільно важливі теми з аналітичним підходом, та soft news – розважальних новин, що покладаються головним чином на залучення уваги глядачів та є «розрядкою» глядачів після перегляду hard news. Після того, як потенційний телеглядач повертається додому, для нього звичай не так важливо, що саме переглянути по телевізору, як просто відпочити. Хоча кількість легких новин є відносно невеликою, ми прагнемо з'ясувати, наскільки сильним є мотив глядачів дивитися середньостатистичний телевізійну випуск новин як засіб втечі або розваги.

Ключові слова: втеча; розвага; мотив перегляду ТБ; теорія використання та задоволення; телевізійні новини.

Гаврилец Ю.Д., Ризун В.В., Хилько М.Н., Тукаев С.В. Побег и развлечение как ключевые мотивы для просмотра телевизионных новостей в контексте ритуального использования телевидения.

В этом исследовании рассматривается научная интерпретация мотивов бегства и развлечения в восприятии телевидения с точки зрения теории использования и удовлетворения. В частности, насколько эти мотивы просмотра ТВ, сначала сформулированные в общем по отношению к любым телевизионным программам, являются сильными для телевизионных новостей.

Несмотря на то, что целью просмотра теленовостей является получение информации об обществе и мире, эти медиа-сообщения играют в значительной мере инструментальную роль. Однако в цифровую эпоху телевизионные новости – это сочетание hard (сложные, твердые) news, то есть сообщения на серьезные, общественно важные темы с аналитическим подходом, и soft news – развлекательных новостей, которые полагаются главным образом на привлечение

внимания зрителей и являются «разрядкой» зрителей после просмотра hard news. После того, как потенциальный телезритель возвращается домой, для него обычно не так важно, что именно посмотреть по телевизору, как просто отдохнуть. Хотя количество легких новостей является относительно небольшой, мы стремимся определить, насколько сильным является мотив зрителей смотреть среднестатистический телевизионный выпуск новостей как средство побега или развлечения.

Ключевые слова: бегство; развлечение; мотив просмотра ТВ; теория использования и удовлетворения; телевизионные новости.

1. Introduction

Why do people use media? And how they use media? These are the key questions that direct scholarly efforts within Uses and Gratifications tradition, or as Windahl (1979) put it, uses and effects tradition, integrating two contradictory approaches: (a) Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G), that seeks to detect real motives why people use different media, and what satisfactions (“gratifications”) consumers obtain afterwards, and (b) Media Effects paradigm, based on “Stimulus-Response” Model (Bryant & Thompson, 2002). Within the latter approach, the scholars primarily worked in the laboratory conditions that caused a lot of criticism regarding habitual or nearly habitual for viewers situation and environment for watching TV. U&G research were criticised due to its general nature, dubious tenet about active and purposefully motivated audience, and due to neglecting the media content.

There is a significant difference between methodological pillars used by scholars in both approaches. On one hand, U&G considers commonly not content but media in general. And Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) used Experience Sampling Method that did not envisaged high extent of certainty about the content consumed during TV viewing (after the signal of “pager”, viewers just indicated in general what they were doing and where they were at the moment; and if participants were consuming media programming at the moment, then what feeling were they experiencing about media in general). Besides, the questionnaire evaluated viewers’ mood and affect in each separate point in time (Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Thus, one may infer that the majority of content features and nuances slip out of researchers’ attention while using this and other similar methodologies.

On the other hand, the major advantage of the media effects paradigm is taking into account certain sets of media content to find out its impact on viewers. However, while concentrating on the media content and applying experimental laboratory conditions, this paradigm often does not consider general perspective of media use, e.g. situation in which participants act in their habitual environment. Considering the latter is an indisputable advantage of the method, proposed by Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi.

Although media effects paradigm regards media content use as a predictor, traditionally in U&G research media content use is an outcome. Predictor within this latter approach is a motivation, attitude, need or another impetus that drives people to consume media programming. Therefore, among other things, in this study we wanted to explore what is known in the media studies about psychological variables that lead to escape and entertainment motives to watching TV news. E.g., anxiety or mood worsening after viewing TV news leads to some escapism and entertainment motives (Bryant, Carveth, & Brown, 1981).

U&G scholars mainly focus on media genres, without special attention to the content; in 1970s, the first fundamental studies within this approach were dedicated to television,

newspapers, and radio (e.g., Katz et al., 1973; Rubin, 1984) On the contrary, the media effects paradigm is more case-specific, more oriented on certain pieces of media content.

Generally, surveillance and informational needs are the most significant motives to watch TV news. However, with the advent of infotainment and soft news entertainment and escape motives become stronger. Accordingly, the key interest in this article is to answer the following question.

RQ1: Do contemporary scholars consider escape and entertainment motives as prevailing in the motivational structure that engages recipients to view TV news?

The scholar interest in this study is to understand the following: (1) How strong are escape and entertainment motives with regard to viewing TV news, and (2) are these motives as strong as a need for surveillance? (3) Do people watch television for entertaining themselves and escaping from everyday troubles and stress? (4) Are these motives as strong with regard to watching TV news as to watching any other type of TV content?

Escape motive was considered among the most significant with the advent of television in the late 1950s and 1960s (Klimmt, 2008), and the entertainment function (Thussu, 2008) is one of the most essential and natural functions of mass media.

Anderson et al. (1996) revealed positive relations between the personal stress level and the preference for entertainment media. Henning & Vorderer (2001) considered the escape motive as desire to avoid intense thinking in leisure time – it is about the need for cognition. And the best way to avoid thinking is watching TV that permits simplistic solutions to myriad of problems in everyday life, and provides easily digestible patterns of thinking and cognition about the world. Henning and Vorderer demonstrated that the “need for cognition” trait paradoxically negatively predicted further television viewing. I.e., the more person wants to learn about the world, the more she or he is eager to reflect on different socially relevant issues, the less viewers tend to further watch television.

Comparing to “escape” motive, “entertainment” is rather a threefold term. Firstly, this term comprises several TV genres, i.e., refers to the content. Secondly, it is an aspect of any TV content (including TV news), packaging effects that attract viewers’ attention to what is featured. And the third meaning is related to this entertaining manner of delivering information – an entertainment as a motive to view TV content. This latter meaning of entertainment is in the main research focus of this study.

2. Research methods

The main research methods applied in this study included analysis and generalization, as well as the comparison method.

We took 20 academic studies as the basis for this research. An important theoretical basis for exploring the motives to media perception was the fundamental to the U&G theory work by Katz, Blumler, & Gurevich (1973). Four studies conceptualized the motives of escape and entertainment to watching television (Katz & Foulkes, 1962; Pearlin, 1959; Thussu, 2008; Vorderer, Klimmt, & Ritterfeld, 2004). We also included to the analysis seven empirical studies (Diddi & LaRose, 2006; Klite, Bardwell, & Salzman, 1997; Lee, 2013; Pavić & Rijavec, 2013; Perse, 1990; Potts & Sanchez, 1994; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985), in which motives for watching television news are studied, especially among younger adult audiences. These works were crucial for the answer to our research questions.

Compared to the first empirical group of studies regarding TV news, much more research had a theoretical focus on motivations for television viewing in general, regardless of content, in the context of the U&G theory. We included eight such works in our study (Conway & Rubin, 1991; Greenwood, 2008; Henning & Vorderer, 2001; Henningham, 1982; Kubey 1986; Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Rubin 1984; Zillmann & Bryant, 1985).

3. Results and discussion

Definitions and key views on escapism and entertainment viewing motives.

Escape and escapism are Latin-based terms, which mean “tendency to evade one’s current situation or environment”, and in a television era, it is an important motivation of largely entertainment consumption. The concept is based on assumption that many individuals in different situations desire diversion and distraction from real-life circumstances, and that entertainment media can very effectively serve the purpose of diversion (Klimmt, 2008). There are several different views on how to denote this motive to TV viewing. As a basic we will hereinafter use the one proposed by Pearlin (1959) – “escape viewing”. For another viewing motivation, considered in this article, there is generally accepted term – “entertainment viewing”. We assume that TV news, which often play the entertainment role, can also reinforce the escape motive of the viewers. In this view, we do not consider entertainment as a content, but as a function of TV news; especially it is relevant for TV news, which are largely penetrated with entertaining attributes, when it comes to infotainment.

The majority of theorists consider escape as identifying oneself with a TV-star or TV-hero to the extent of losing own identity and substitution of real life with the invented TV-world disassociating with reality. “In its core, escapism means that most people have, due to unsatisfying life circumstances, again and again cause to ‘leave’ the reality in which they live in a cognitive and emotional way” (Vorderer, 1996, p. 311).

There are various views on whether and how escape and entertainment motives are linked. Henning and Vorderer (2001) consider escape motive as the basis for the others proposed by U&G theory: “...from a psychological point of view, also other functions like the possibility of not being alone (“companionship”) or to pass the time away can be subsumed under one and the same motive, because all these cases are attempts or intentions of recipients to apparently leave their current social situation” (p. 313). Kubey (1986) notes that the prior research “has made it clear that television is an activity likely to be chosen by people wishing to escape from negative feelings and from the demands of reality” (p. 110). Katz & Foulkes (1962) emphasize the “narcotizing” role of television due to its escape motivation; this role seems to be “so great, that is, that one is often prevented from performing any of one’s roles at all” (p. 388).

Kubey (1986) elaborated one of the most self-sufficient classification of mechanisms and contexts of escapism. This model included the following hypotheses:

1. [...]negative experiences at work would lead people to gravitate to television upon returning home;
2. [...] negative experiences while interacting with other people would be related to heavier viewing; and
3. [...] heavier viewers of television would report feeling relatively worse than light viewers during “non-activities” such as waiting, daydreaming, sitting and not doing anything, or staring out a window. (p. 111).

According to them, the first statement represents social-psychological escapism that manifests itself through the deficit in social interactions. The second context is designated as sociological escapism alienating from the exhausting working activities and routines. The third one is considered as individual-psychological escapism that is not socially determined. Importantly, Henning and Vorderer (2001) focused in their study solely on the latter aspect of escapism.

Regarding the main psychological predictors of escape motivation, Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) concluded that “subjects appear to engage in heavy viewing, in part, to escape solitude and negative experiences. The strategy may be partly successful insofar as people do feel relaxed while they view. However, the heavy immersion in television may not help

prepare the person for other more active involvement. The heavy viewing evening appears to be one in which the viewer has chosen to indulge him or herself and avoid reality demands” (p. 98-99).

Among other things, Henning and Vorderer distinguish escapism and attractionism: “Escapism means that people low in need for cognition are more strongly pushed toward television than those who are high in need for cognition, whereas attractionism means that people high in need for cognition are less attracted by television than those who are low in need for cognition”.

By using television content, one can escape from a variety of things: problems at work, fatigue, conflicts with our family, daily routines. But one of the strongest factors leading to escape to television is escape from oneself, one’s deepest identification (Greenwood, 2008), as well as one’s need for cognition (Henning & Vorderer, 2001).

Accordingly, we should distinguish superficial and inherent factors that lead to escape motivation, in other words, the short-term and long-term predictors. As in case of anxiety, on a superficial level it is a state of anxiety related to situations that a person deals with every day. But on a profound level this can be a trait anxiety elicited by intensive and frequent experiencing of state of anxiety. Trait anxiety is less marked, although more durable and less pliant to various treatment methods and coping strategies. Escape motive to television viewing is related to anxiety (Conway & Rubin, 1991), as well as to mood disorders, dysphoria, and depression (Potts & Sanchez, 1994). Although stress reduction function is generally inherent to escape viewing motive, the depressed persons indicated weak escape and entertainment motives to TV news viewing (Potts & Sanchez, 1994).

Besides, Potts and Sanchez (1994) found that TV news stories often play an entertaining role. For the depressive persons, the main motive to watch sensational news could be a proneness to alleviate negative mood states (Bryant & Zillmann, 1984). In addition, “Depressed persons may also watch TV news because it allows them to associate with other covievers in a routinized viewing situation and provides social and parasocial gratifications” (Potts & Sanchez, 1994, p. 82).

Does escape viewing motive lead to subsequent stress? While there is little evidence of correlation between escape or entertainment viewing on the one hand, and stress or depression elicited by exposure on the other hand, Pavić and Rijavec (2013) showed on the more general level that ritualistic use, contrary to instrumental use of TV content, is positively related to subsequent stress.

U&G context in research of escape and entertainment TV viewing.

Need to relax is another strong emotional predictor to escape viewing motive. Television prime-time is a peak period of viewing. After TV viewers return home, there is often no matter what to watch, it is important just to have a rest. Escape and entertainment TV viewing have been a subject for a variety of theoretical approaches. One of the most active approaches in this field is Uses and Gratification research tradition (U&G).

An interesting paradox lies in the ambiguity of escapism or escape viewing. On the one hand, there are stressful or boring events, routines, and problems of viewers’ everyday life, from which the audience is eager to escape by using television. On the other hand, heavy non-selective exposure to television programming, regardless of consumed content, leads to more salient loneliness and to exacerbating of personal worries. Kubey (1986) considers relation between daily stress and exposure to TV as a “chicken or egg” problem. And one of major differences between U&G and media effects traditions is in the direction of this relation. While in U&G research predictor is stress and outcome variable is exposure, a causal link in media effects tradition is aimed at the opposite direction.

One of the central ideas of U&G research is an active nature of the audience. At the first glance, this tenet contradicts basic theoretical pillars of media effects paradigm, but it really doesn't. Media effects tradition, based on "Stimulus-Response" model, concentrates on certain media stimuli and certain people, and certain type(s) of reactions. U&G, however, envisioning that media audience is "active", acknowledges chiefly audience's power to make decisions of exposure or non-exposure to television. Then, U&G takes into account different levels of motivation to perceive mediated content. Scrutinizing the viewing motives, U&G goes further to examine the destination points of each motive for media use – gratifications.

Therefore, U&G and Media Effects reflect two facets of the media perception problem. U&G focuses on motives towards perception, and Effects Paradigm focuses on the outcome(s) of perception. Bigger attention towards media content would much reinforce methodological basis of U&G research. As Henningham (1982) put it, "by regarding the news as a single unit, ... studies do not explain how or why TV news can satisfy such differing needs". In addition, Windahl (1979) suggested that the time was ripe to bring the two traditions together, and to link uses and gratifications research with consideration of the media content itself.

It is clear that escape and entertainment motives are more common for heavy TV-viewers. Are light TV viewers less prone to such motives and inclined to informational or surveillance motive or gratification? Both heavy and light TV viewers experience certain effects that are expressed through various dependency-on-the-media functions. Largely tangent to U&G research, is a Media-Dependency Theory, proposed by Ball-Rokeach and De Fleur (1976). Authors identified three major directions for viewers' dependency on media: (a) understanding the world around us; (b) determining the ways in which to act meaningfully within that world; and (c) using media as a form of fictional escape from everyday problems.

U&G and adjacent theoretical approaches provide some crucial guidelines that appear to be to some extent dubious from perspectives of other scholarly. Principle of active audience envisions the purposeful and deliberate nature of viewers' programming choice. Two main blocks of TV viewing motivations are instrumental and ritualistic use of television. Conway and Rubin (1991) explained this motivational dichotomy for media use as follows: "An instrumental orientation entails selectivity, intentionality, and involvement of media consumers. It is purposive use of media content to seek information. A ritualized or diversionary orientation is use of a medium regarded as important, such as television, in a generalized, time-consuming fashion. The emphasis is on the medium, rather than the content. These two orientations require different levels of activity by media consumers. Instrumental use is more purposive and goal-directed behaviour, whereas ritualized use is less deliberate and reflects habitual viewing, frequency of exposure, and felt importance of the medium" (p. 444).

Thus, a significant distinction between these two blocks in everyday life is impossible, because these motivations may interplay with each other, as well as very quickly switch from one to another within viewing of certain type or piece of media content, including within certain short-term viewing period. Such transitions may occur consciously or unconsciously that requires certain strong methodology to observe and detect such changes. We consider that besides contentious points in this dichotomy, this division should be taken into account while regarding TV viewing process. It is important, in this respect, to elaborate effective motivational inventories/questionnaires and regard motivational perspective in media effects research.

The concept of audience activity was confirmed by many studies (e.g., Perse, 1990; Levy & Windahl, 1984). Perse concluded "that it is useful to conceptualize involvement as audience activity during message reception" that manifests itself through "cognitive and emotional participation with the content" (p. 17). However, this stance is not sufficiently clear and pertinent. If we narrow the principle of active audience solely to cognitive and emotional reactions of the recipient, not considering them as deliberate and goal-directed efforts as was

initially proposed by U&G founding fathers, we risk to misunderstand the true nature of those imperatives.

Within U&G, the term “escape” suggests that one does not tend to face her/his difficulties and avoids more lasting adjustment. Television is used as a “mean of temporary diversion from tensions”; it performs “a day-to-day ‘safety valve’ function by diverting their audiences from an awareness of the stresses under which they might live”. And this process may deliver harmful consequences, when “such escape mechanisms are habitually and exclusively used in place of more lasting adjustments” (Pearlin, 1959, p. 259).

Escape motive is inherently related to entertainment. Even in marketing there is a strong link between both concepts (Barden, 2013), because person who wants to escape, looks for exciting and entertaining experiences. However, in communication scholarship a concept of entertainment motive is largely blurred. Henning and Vorderer (2001) proposed enjoyment concept as a basic factor for both entertainment and escape TV viewing motives. Among the key drives for both these motives, there is an alienation as the feeling of powerlessness or meaninglessness, or the feeling of ideological or social isolation. Alienation produces the desire to escape, and mass media successfully satisfy this desire. In U&G, escape viewing motive is considered within the ritualistic use of television. Among the main motives of ritualistic use, such as entertainment and relaxation, escape motive has a great alienating mark that may cause more and more loneliness (Perse & Rubin, 1990).

But not only stress occurs as a result of escape television viewing, though stress is a strong predictor of such viewing behaviour. As Pearlin (1959) put it, “Watching television, or at least watching certain types of television programs, appears to be the ... mode of response to stress”. On the other hand, Zillmann and Bryant (1985) found that watching any type of television content would reduce stress.

General outlook of TV news gratifications.

The overwhelming body of U&G research, mainly at the early stages of its evolution, considered motivations for TV use in general. Subsequent research efforts, taking into account criticisms towards the theory, focused on various types or genres of TV content. In this respect, there is still a little body of research devoted to viewing motives directed at TV news.

Henningham (1982) distinguished several blocks of gratifications that TV viewers search for. These gratifications are expressed in the following statements: General Information Seeking (1. I watch TV news to keep up with current issues and events; 2. I watch TV news so that I won't be surprised by higher prices and things like that; 3. I watch TV news because you can trust the information they provide), Decisional Utility (4. I watch TV news to find out what kind of job our government officials are doing; 5. I watch TV news to help me make up my mind about the important issues of the day; 6. I watch TV news to find out about issues affecting people like myself), Entertainment (7. I watch TV news because it's often entertaining; 8. I watch TV news because it's often dramatic; 9. I watch TV news because it's often exciting), Interpersonal Utility (10. I watch TV news to support my own viewpoints to other people; 11. I watch TV news so I can pass the information on to other people; 12. I watch TV news to give me interesting things to talk about), and Parasocial Interaction (13. I watch TV news because the newscasters give a human quality to the news; 14. I watch TV news to compare my own ideas to what the commentators say; 15. I watch TV news because the reporters are like people I know). (p. 420).

Rubin, Perse, & Powell (1985) divided the whole range of TV news viewing motives into Exciting Entertainment, Pass Time (ritualized), and Information (instrumental). However, it is not totally clear why the first motive was separated from the second. After all, not much studies examined such a distinction. Many scholars regard entertainment motive within the structure of pass time, or ritualistic use. In addition, Rubin (1983) indicated five general common motives for TV use including habitual passing of time, information, entertainment, companionship, and

escape. Perse (1990) identified strong tendency to view local TV newscasts as more entertaining and less informative.

Diddi & LaRose (2006) found that surveillance and escapism gratifications were the most consistent predictors of news consumption behaviour. Meanwhile, the strength of habit was the most powerful predictor for news consumption overall. On the other hand, entertainment motive manifested itself very weakly.

Lee distinguished and summarized four major themes for television news gratifications: information-motivated, entertainment-motivated, opinion-motivated, and social-motivated news consumption. Besides, Lee (2013) combines escape and entertainment motive for viewing TV news into a single entertainment motivational theme. This latter approach seems the most reliable, since salient distinctions between both viewing motives cannot be made and in further research these motives should be combined into the entertainment and escape motive.

Television news has long been combining entertainment and information functions. In addition, entertainment-oriented news items are regarded as soft news. Soft news is defined as stories that focus on human topics and interests or nonpolicy issues (Scott & Gobetz, 1992). Whereas serious news relates to content reporting on serious and socially important issues, representing hard news. Concerning time relation between soft and hard news in an average newscast, one may see that although all networks increased the amount of soft news from 1972 through 1987, soft news still remained a small part of the newscast (Scott & Gobetz, 1992).

Zillmann, Gibson, & Ordman (1994) found that humorous news item at the end of the newscast, rather than human-interest story, led respondents to evaluate overall issues reported in the news as less severe. Therefore, soft news provides relief for hard news' potentially harmful effects. However, soft news itself influences the way hard news is perceived. Boukes & Boomgaarden (2015) showed that soft news increased political cynicism in Netherlands.

Although entertainment and escape motives for TV news viewing are strong, Lee (2013) found that the TV news attracts adult Americans as a mean for satisfying information needs. However, this does not regard to specific soft news programming, where all the content is packaged and transmitted in a humorous or amusing way. On the other hand, for the mixed soft/hard newscasts, the primary motive is informational.

4. Conclusions

The analysis of the reviewed scientific papers indicates that TV news has to be considered within two motivational patterns elaborated by U&G scholars for general TV use: instrumental and ritualistic viewing. Escape and entertainment motives are indisputable attributes of ritualistic use, whereas informational or surveillance motive leads to instrumental use.

So, are escape and entertainment motives stronger in the TV news audience than information-seeking motives? There are two approaches on this issue: 1) TV news play informative role and only soft news tend to entertain viewers of TV newscasts, soft news provides an emotional relief for the strain elicited by hard news items beforehand; 2) It is no matter what to watch, TV in general constitute stress-reducing activity. TV news as one of the major parts of the television output, are equally driven to by entertainment and escape motives on the one hand, and informational use, on the other. Definite balance between these two paradigms is yet to be developed in further research. At this stage of development of relevant research, TV news' motivational structure is still hard to address, mainly due to the lack of scholarly evidence.

From all aforementioned we may not confirm the extraordinary strength of entertainment and escape motives in TV news viewing. However, regarding TV use in general, these motives remain relevant. Crucial point here is the notion of distraction and consuming the finite product that does not require active mental effort in viewing audience, regardless of what content to perceive. In this context, Klite et al. (1997) emphasized dangerous trend of devaluation of quality

in TV newscasts: “However, as accounts of the newscasts themselves effectively demonstrate, the window opens instead to a world where greed and profit have largely swallowed quality journalism and where the very idea of news has been perverted into a steady diet of titillating, terrifying, and manipulative entertainment” (p. 102).

Within Uses and Gratifications Theory, the concepts of escapism and entertainment occupy central positions in the row of TV viewing motives. However, they are often considered as a motivation to watch entertainment TV – fictional or reality-based programmes. But specific motivational structure that drives viewers to watch TV news remain largely meagre and divergent. In this study we analysed the evidence that indicate various extents of strength of escapism and entertainment motives towards TV news viewing.

Notwithstanding some criticisms, U&G proved to be an enduring scientific approach. In U&G research, watching TV news is regarded as a process, aimed at obtaining messages about the world and neighbourhood, as well as information necessary for everyday decision making by the viewer and her/his relatives. In recent decades, the infotainment genre or soft news has been becoming more popular, and more and more tabloid TV stations tend to consider that TV news should entertain the viewers at least not less than to inform, or even more.

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