

## MEDIA – AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION

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### ABSTRACT

Medias make impact on social environment – they influence individual interrelations, communication, approach to oneself and entire world, “insist” on certain stereotypes in different situations. They take active part in socialization of individuals. Socialization is perceived as a continuous lifelong process, in which values, standards, social state, roles and patterns of social behaviour are mastered. The article analyzes impact of media (social agents) in socialization processes of individuals.

KEYWORDS: *media, agent, socialization, media experience, media texts, media action mode, audience.*

JEL CODES: Z19.

### Introduction

Media related info-sphere is a part of modern life, an agent of social transformation and changes. The very notion of “agent” implicates a subject – “a reason for something, taking place in animate and inanimate nature” (International Dictionary, 2004: 21), whereas the notion of medias is related to characterization and definition of mass media. Accordingly, medias are to be treated as factors, taking part in socialization of individuals and causing reasons for alteration in these processes.

Socialization is perceived as a lifelong process, continuing throughout entire individual life and assisting in mastering of values, standards, social state, roles and patterns of social behaviour. In other words, socialization is the process of personality formation/self-formation and functioning, when consciousness and behaviour related features, regulating individual relationship with society are gained. Different agents participate in socialization – they are people (parents, teachers, peers) and social structures (school, religion, mass media, working environment, different institutions).

Researchers (Plungė, 2011; McLuhan, 2003; Nabi, Oliver, 2009 et al.) emphasize that medias are not only the agents of socialization. They are also treated as a socio-cultural factor, transforming entire neighbouring environment. Their impact on individuals can be both positive and negative, since they bring changes into the process of cognition and effect. They develop the “here and now effect” and take part in following processes, related to socialization of individuals:

- social adaptation of individuals (individual adaptation to socio-cultural conditions and social roles, standards and social groups, organizations or social institutions);
- interiorization (internalization) processes (mastering of social standards, values and their transition to internal human world);
- exteriorization (externalization) processes (reaction to external cultural stimulus on the basis of internalized standards and activity patterns).

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**Scientific problem.** In socialization related processes each individual interacts with medias (their texts). Therefore, it is important to answer the question – in which processes of socialization their impact on individuals is strongest?

Aim of the research is to make analysis of media impacts on individuals in their process of socialization. Object of the research is the impact of medias on individuals.

Tasks (objectives):

- to make analysis of relation between media action mode and impact;
- to discuss the importance of individual media related experience in processes of socialization;
- to explore media related impact on individuals in processes of socialization.

Methods: analysis of scientific literature, questionnaire, analysis of mathematic-statistic data (percentage frequencies).

## 1. Relation between media action mode and impact

Medias influence social environment – they make impact on interrelations of individuals, communication, approach to oneself and entire world, “insist” on certain stereotypes in different situations. They take active part in socialization of individuals. Diversification is typical to them, since it provides them with opportunity for penetration into environment, in which individuals personally could hardly ever penetrate. In other words, boundaries between different environments are eliminated. This impact in community could be entitled as media action mode (methods and styles of action and activities). Above action mode consists of entire chain of these action methods and all this is operated by medias. They are always focused on specific aim, depending on targets that information is orientated on.

There are following landmarks in media action mode:

- analysis of audience preferences/choice, when media action mode is focused on specific demands of audience (personal, social, cultural, etc.);
- analysis of social standards and interests – media action mode is focused on demands of community, in which interaction of medias and audience takes place;
- medias as a factor, making social impact.

Media action mode is always focused on specific aim (audience). Their relations are specific and result in mutual and productive interaction, which predetermines or not successive and progressive functioning of each mass media. Media audience is a group of people, individual/individuals, contacting with media texts and differentiated on the basis of different attributes (age, social, education, racial, national, etc.). Media texts are any mass media and any messages (article, film, TV, radio show, etc.).

Media action mode is focused on:

- planning of information, which is topical and relevant for audience; rendering of daily assistance (audience is searching for answers in topical daily issues and problem solution ways);
- spread and dissemination of scientific knowledge and education.

In their contacts with audience trends in media action mode could be characterized in the following way:

- informational, i. e. information about global events and those in the nearest and closest social environment of individuals;
- satisfaction of individual general interests and striving for knowledge, i. e. teaching and establishment of proper possibilities for self-education;
- identification of personality, when media action mode is focused on strengthening of individual’s personal values, knowledge and patterns of behaviour; identification of individuals with values of others; establishment and development of opportunities for search of self-realization;

- social communication, when individuals are provided with opportunities for realization of own emphatic abilities, experience and social communication, for shaping of base in dialogue and implementation of social roles, satisfaction of demands for integration within communities;
- entertaining, when media action mode is orientated towards individual emotional discharge and organization of leisure time, *escapism* (premeditated avoidance of relevant social problems, escapism from reality, life in imaginary world), aesthetic satisfaction, sexual excitement.

Therefore, trends in media action mode are integrated into all processes of individual socialization – social adaptation, interiorization (internalization) and exteriorization.

Significance and importance of media action mode in community is defined by following functions: *cognitive (reception of information and acquisition of knowledge)*; *relaxing (entertainment and escape from inaction and boredom)*; *satisfaction of individual demands (e. g., escape from reality or search for replacement of social contacts)*. The more media action mode is directed towards individuals (not as entire audience, but towards specific human), the more its expression is productive. D. G. Myers (2008: 284) emphasizes that “the more mass media is closer to daily life, the more suggestive is its information“. It is necessary to note that the power of informational impact depends on persuasion methods, which are:

- major – the process, when persuaded people concentrate their attention on arguments and react positively thinking – media action mode is orientated towards subservience (audience gets what it wants – entertainment, solving personality identification related problems);
- minor – the process, when people are affected by accidental actions and without any consideration they concentrate on signs and symbols that induce for approval without exhaustive reply. Media action mode is focused on topical problems, relevant for entire audience (global events, social injustice, etc.).

Efficiency of media action mode depends on whether or not information in media texts is related to pleasant experience. If it is related, this information becomes more persuasive. Effect is the indicator of media action mode and its efficiency. Therefore, impact should be realized as a consequence of action mode. Media action mode and indicator of its efficiency (impact) depend on the trend of socialization:

- organized (purposeful) socialization – when a specially designed system of media impact concentrates on formation of specific type of personality, on specific social aims and interests. Organized socialization is determined by other social institutions, social groups, social control, social status, roles and relations;
- spontaneous (disorganized) base for socialization is spontaneous adoption of specific social skills, individually interacting with medias (or their texts). In the process of spontaneous socialization changes in results of activity take place. These changes are materialized in culture (abilities and skills), in ideas, standards of behaviour and regulations.

Medias function in a wide social space and make impact on its different structures and levels. Efficiency of media action mode and its content in the process of personal socialization depend on the level of society’s development, democratic achievements, social and historical conditions, culture and traditions.

## 2. Media experience in individual socialization related processes

Mass media enables to perceive and understand social reality, existing here and now and to get a huge amount of different information. Excess of the latter deforms the tactics in mastering of knowledge: individual needs no further recollections – the only thing he has to know is where and how to search for information. Medias change his sensations, inner world and social links. Most of medias are items, assisting in production and distribution of other products. We are living in “transformed and transferred reality” – surrounding reality turns into informational screens, delivering different messages (Mostauskis, 2011: 31). Reception of reality is recoded in accordance with principles and requirements of communication, whereas media related

space orientates itself in accordance with expectations of audience, modelling them and further improving. Media is environment, offering us information about reality in the shape of alternative experience. The more information humans receive about the world, the more remote it becomes (Mostauskis, 2011: 35). Technologies provide individual with opportunities for introduction to the world and knowledge about it rather than the world itself. Media related info-sphere “ties” audience and forms subjection: “we tie us up with technological prostheses and technological dependence on networks of informational stream” (McLuchan, 2003: 53).

Media texts provide us with positive and (or) negative experience. Content of media texts functions like a powerful info-sphere and its major role is in presentation of social reality to audience (Devereux, 2009: 23). According to Ž. J. Jackūnas (2008: 27), “experience is environment, in which meaning is given to information that reflects comprehensible (perceptible) phenomena”. Medias help individuals to improve and enlarge their *media experience* – “social experience, gained in the process of personal development, when learning and employing technical and scientific heritage of society” (Jovaiša, 2007: 202). Medias are creations of social intellectual potential and technical progress. They predetermine changes in communities and general individual experience. According to J. Dewey, experience is “the most important and decisive factor in perceiving the world and planning the future“ (Duoblienė, 2006: 16). Dictionary of Psychology (1993: 205) characterizes *experience* as “practice based sensual, empiric cognition of reality, as entirety of knowledge and abilities”. However, “experience is improving only in interpretational space. Interpretation is perceived as interaction of phenomenon and personal experience” (Jackūnas, 2009: 4–6). After analysis of researchers’ positions the author of this article designed a scheme of human experience, in which following components were emphasized: knowledge, abilities, skills, sensations and views (creed, approach, position, attitude) (see Fig. 3).

Ž. J. Jackūnas (2008, p. 24) maintains that “experience is a system of meanings, recording personally significant knowledge, abilities, impressions and values“, whereas proficiency by him is defined as a source of experience, differently integrated by each individual in the process of socialization. Experience

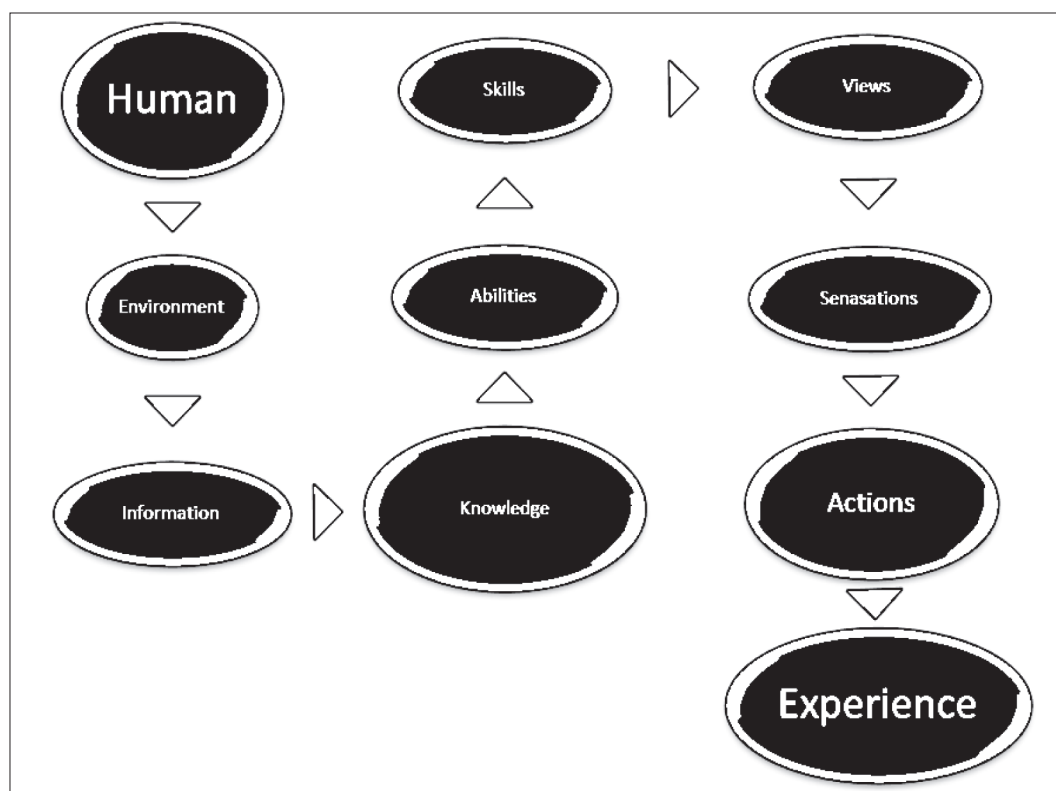


Figure 1. Human experience.  
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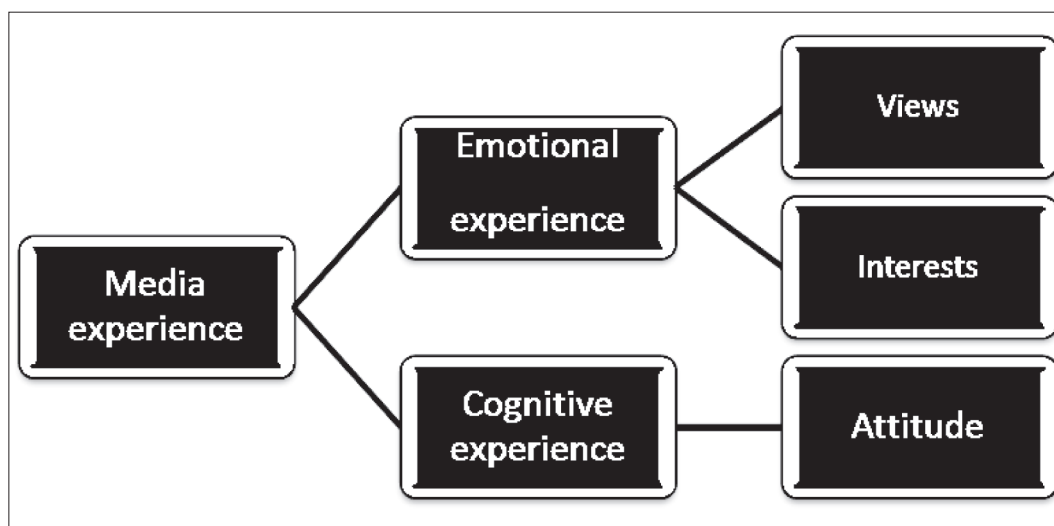


Figure 2. Formation of media experience (N – attitude, approach; P – views; I – interests)

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gives impulse to development of science, theory, practice and is treated as being equivalent to following phenomena: approach to environment, personal actions, spiritual, physical processes and interpersonal relations. Dictionaries of Lithuanian language define proficiency/experience as acquired practical knowledge, sensations and abilities (<http://www.lkz.lt/dzl.php>). Technical progress and modern technologies contribute largely to individual experience in socialization related processes. Every member of community is living, thinking and acting in informational space, in which he experiences sensual, cognitive, empiric and theoretical understanding of objective reality. Medias create info-sphere, providing individual with opportunities for understanding of micro and microenvironment without direct interaction with it.

Media experience starts developing from the very moment, when individuals become a part of media audience. Presumably, sequence in development of media experience is very much like that of general personal experience. Author of the article introduces a scheme about formation of media experience (see Fig. 4).

On the basis of researchers' positions and own insights the author introduces definition of media experience: they are experiences, based on media messages, which are further generalized and abstracted in accordance with individual thinking and perception, later in real life revealing themselves in the form of applicability principle (knowledge, abilities, skills, sensations and views). Individual experience, acquired via content of media texts and other forms of presentation, can't make real and direct impact on medias, though the latter ones integrate themselves into socialization processes of individuals and make impact on them. In the process of socialization individuals get involved in specific environment, taking over social experience as external one, transforming it later into internal, integrating it together with media experience. As an object he experiences the impact of social environment and changes it as a subject. On the basis of individual media experience medias influence on transformation processes of societies: from traditional to modern, from modern to post-modern, also performing the role of mass intermediary (Devereux, 2009: 13).

### 3. Impact of medias on socialization processes of individuals: research

Description of research. *Aim* of the research is to estimate influence of medias in socialization processes of individuals.

Questionnaire is the *Instrument* of the research. The structure of questionnaire was planned on the basis of general principles and recommendations for arrangement of questions (Kardelis, 2002: 189–191). It is structured into “introductory, major and final (Tidikis, 2003: 483).

*Sample* of the research – 108 respondents, ageing from 18 to 25 (respondents were not differentiated on gender basis), including 78 % of those studying in higher schools of Klaipėda and 22 % working in local and regional private and state companies.

*Time* of the research: December 2011 – March 2012n.

SPSS software (version 14.0) was employed for *analysis of data*. *Descriptive statistics* in percentage frequencies was employed in data processing.

Results of the research. The research revealed respondents’ opinion about functions of media in socialization related processes. Almost all respondents (96 %) emphasized informative function as their essential one; 71 % of them maintained that in the process of socialization media performs recreational function, i.e. provide with entertainment and relax. Respondents (58 %) underlined that media assists in finding other countries and entire world (educative function), 36 % maintained that it helps to establish social contacts. Only 19 % of them emphasized their cultural function, i.e. assistance in understanding national culture and traditions (see Fig. 3).

On the basis of received results it is possible to maintain that above functions of media are integrated into all processes of individual socialization (social adaptation, internalization, exteriorization), take part in them and influence them.

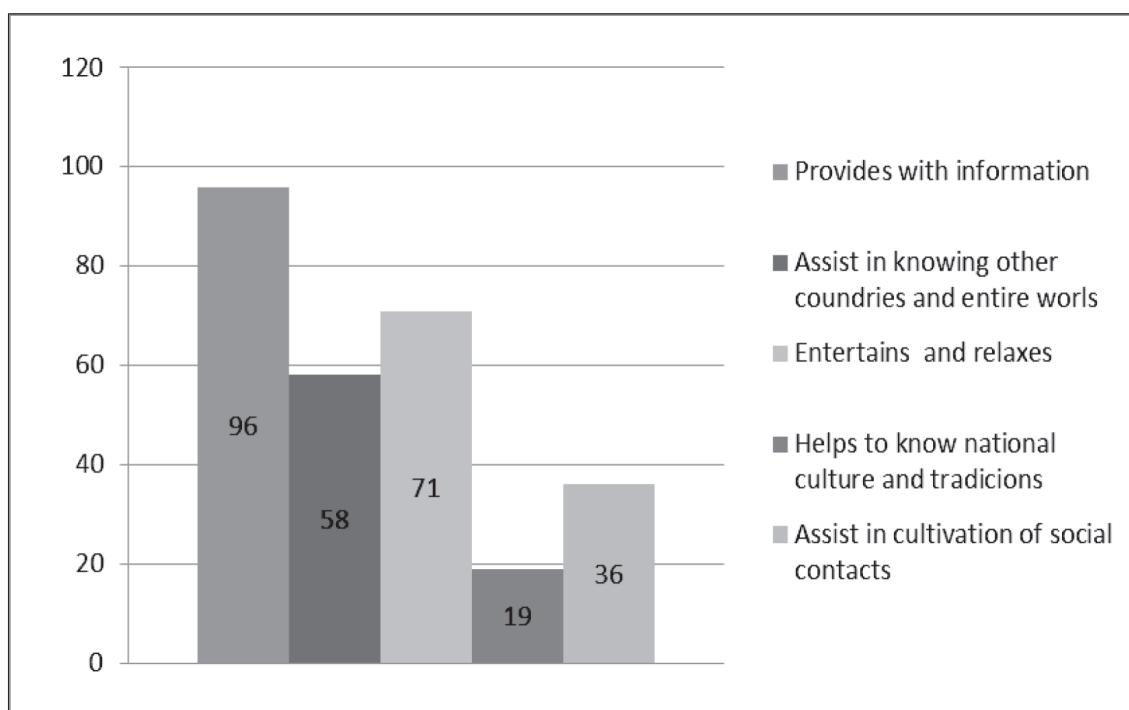


Figure 3. Functions of media in the process of socialization (percentage frequencies)

In the process of above research importance of media action mode in processes of individual socialization was discovered. Respondents emphasized following basic dominants of action mode: self-education (56 %), establishment of behaviour related standards (56 %), fosterage of values (22 %) and self-realization related processes (35 %). Received results show that media action mode is orientated towards specific demands of audience (self-education and self-realization processes), towards needs and demands of community, in which interaction between media and audience takes place (fosterage of values). Media action mode is also orientated towards social influence (establishment of behaviour related standards) (see Fig. 4).

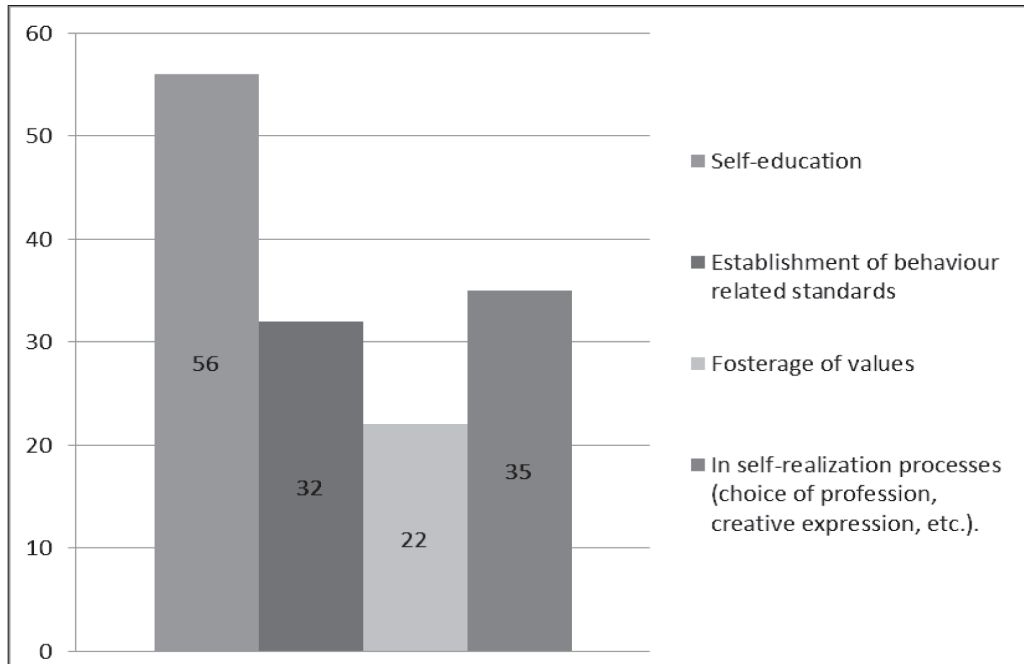


Figure 4. Importance of media action mode in the process of socialization (percentage frequencies)

It was also important to clarify reasons of interaction between media and individuals. It was discovered that respondents (63 %) interact with medias (their texts), as they search for information and knowledge; 46 % of them become part of media audience, hoping to relax and properly spend their leisure time; about 21 % of respondents search for “sharp” sensations; 13 % of them noted that they search for interaction with media texts to escape from troubles and reality; 9 % of respondents search there for answers to specific questions of their spiritual life.

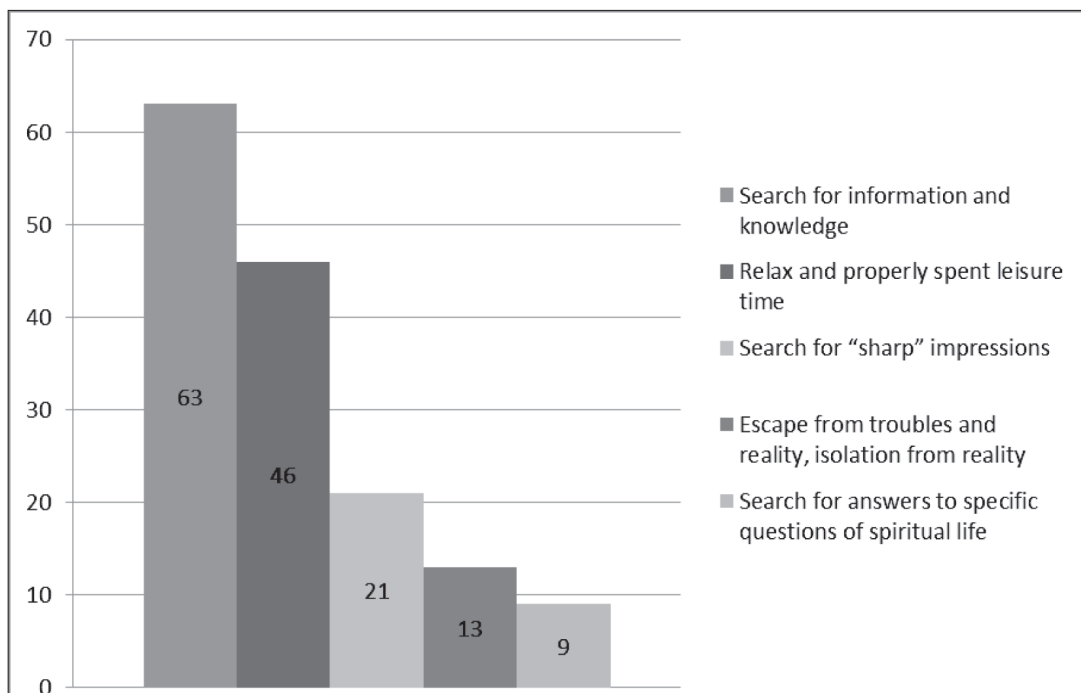


Figure 5. Reasons of interaction between media and individuals (percentage frequencies)



The research also confirmed the fact of applicability of media experience in real life. Respondents (25 %) emphasized that they employ media experience in their vocational activity; 23 % do not employ it at all; 21 % employ it for overcoming of own personal (mental, spiritual) problems; 12 % – for planning of their future and 16 % of respondents employ it when communicating with their friends. Some of them (3 %) noted that they employ media experience for other purposes: purchasing different items or property, choosing products, decorating their residence, etc.

Presumably, individuals employ media experience in their daily life. Accordingly, this experience is integrated into socialization processes.

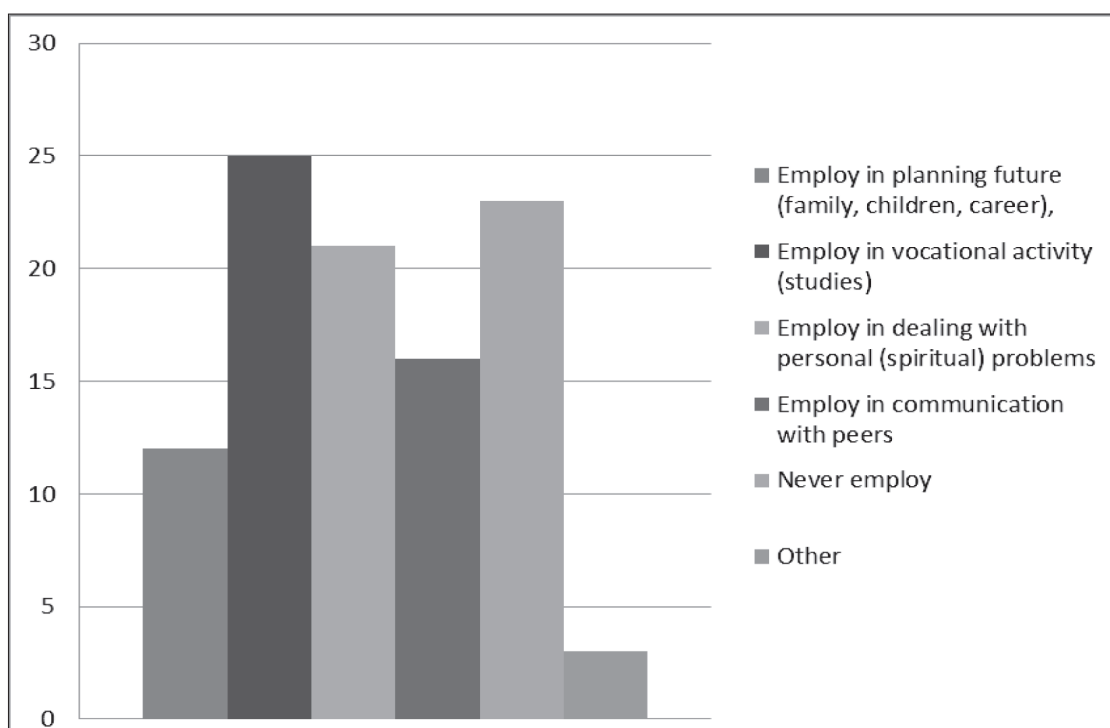


Figure 6. Employment of media experience in daily life (percentage frequencies)

## Conclusions

1. Trends of media action mode are integrated into all socialization processes of individuals (social adaptation, interiorization (internalization) and exteriorization).
2. Media action mode is orientated towards specific demands of audience (self-education and self-realization processes) and demands of communities, in which interaction of media and audience takes place (fostering of values). Media action mode is also orientated towards social influence (consolidation of behaviour related standards).
3. Media experience is proficiency, received via media messages. They are generalized and abstracted in accordance with personal thinking and perception and show themselves up in real life on the basis of applicability principle (knowledge, abilities, skills, sensations and views). The research revealed the fact of media experience and its applicability in real life. This experience is integrated into individual socialization related processes (social adaptation, interiorization (internalization) and exteriorization).
4. Medias are important agents of individual socialization and their action mode predetermines positive and negative aspects in the process of socialization.



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## MEDIA – SOCIALIZACIJOS AGENTAI

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## Santrauka

Medijų infosfera – šiuolaikinio gyvenimo dalis. Medijos veikia socialinę aplinką – daro įtaką individų tarpusavio santykiams, bendravimui, požiūriui į save ir pasaulį, „diktuoja“ stereotipus įvairiose gyvenimo situacijose. Medijos – visuomenės transformacijos ir socialinių pokyčių agentas. Medijų veiksenos kryptys nukreiptos į visus individų socializacijos procesus – socialinę adaptaciją, interiorizaciją (internalizaciją) bei eksteriorizaciją. Individai, sąveikaudami su medijomis (jų tekstais), kaupia medijinę patirtį. Medijinė patirtis – medijų pranešimais gaunami patyrimai, kurie, atsižvelgiant į asmens individualias mąstymo ir suvokimo galimybes, apibendrinami, abstrahuojami ir realizuojami pritaikomumo principu realiame gyvenime (žiniomis, mokėjimais, įgūdžiais, jausmais, pažiūromis). Tyrimas atskleidė medijų veiksenos priklausomybę nuo individų medijinės patirties, kuri lemia pozityvius arba neigiamus aspektus individų socializacijos procesuose (socialinėje adaptacijoje, interiorizacijoje [internalizacijoje] bei eksteriorizacijoje).

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *media, agentas, socializacija, medijinė patirtis, media tekstai, medijų veikseną, auditorija*.

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