

The evolution of free time throughout history. Video games as a modern leisure activity

Abstract: Against the background of civilizational development, the 21st century appears as a time of great opportunities of self-development and general progress but also as a time of various new leisure activities. Thanks to the society's prosperity, as a consequence of scientific and technological research as well as technological progress, our lives have been improving on a daily basis, evolving towards "excellence". A similar evolution has taken place in terms of leisure activities that have been known since antiquity. Some of them have slipped into oblivion, giving way to more interesting and controversial forms of leisure, including computer games.

Computer games have become a part of our society; the role they have played in the 21st century is immense. Both children and teenagers are involved in this sort of pastime on a daily basis. To many of them, a day without their favourite game or virtual hero is hard to imagine. When asked about computer games, most adolescents will flood you with information on the subject. To children and teenagers, games are a source of lively colours, sounds and great opportunities. They offer a world beyond a child's common experience. Games make a child feel needed. Most of all, computer games are more attractive and more easily accessible than other leisure activities.

Keywords: computer games, leisure, youth

The 21st century is a time of dynamic transformations and unlimited opportunities for the development of entire civilisations (societies) and individuals that have a fundamental impact on their functioning. Changes can also be found in the realisation and domination of various leisure time forms. Through the benefits that our society has gained from the development of scientific and technological research and technological progress, everyday life has changed, and it is undoubtedly continuing to improve and evolve towards excellence. The same evolution has been observed in the forms of leisure activities known since ancient times, which have been marginalised in favour of other, more interesting, passive

and often controversial forms of spending free time, such as new media, the Internet and video games¹.

The latter have now become ingrained in our society, and their role is enormous in the 21st century. All age categories – children, youth, adults and seniors – have contact with this form of leisure on a daily basis. Many of them cannot imagine a new day without their favourite game or virtual hero, and – especially the young generation – when asked about computer games, are able to present an extensive lecture about them. For them, games are a trove of vivid colours, sounds and vast possibilities. They are more attractive and accessible than other forms of leisure. In addition, they offer a world that cannot be experienced on a daily basis and make individuals feel they are needed and valued.

The evolution of leisure time throughout history

Free time is a category known since time immemorial². Since the Middle Ages, it has been a subject of interest of philosophers, and then scientists, who conducted a number of studies concerning this phenomenon in relation to different age categories. Today's researchers have extended the meaning of this concept and have come up with a number of useful terms, such as recreation, holidays, rest, relaxation, fun, self-improvement, entertainment, gaming and hobbies³. On the basis of the literature on the subject, it can be concluded that free time is an inseparable element of social life, which has been a part of every human being's life since ancient times. It is not only a part of life, but also a carrier of certain cultural values, which are passed down from generation to generation⁴. Commonly speaking, free time is defined as "*time devoid of duties, intended for leisure activities*"⁵. This is a simplified definition, but it indicates the freedom of an individual to choose activities and forms of filling their free time. Therefore, it seems justified to state that "*this time is filled with activity in which humans engage on their own volition (after fulfilling their professional, family and social duties). It is part of the general time, a quantitative category*"⁶. Therefore, free time is not an unproductive category – in fact, it is an important element in the daily system of human functioning, during which an individual can carry out their own forms of activity.

¹ Cf.: M. ORŁOWSKA, O. KHYZHNA, J.J. BŁESZYŃSKI, *Miejsce Internetu w budzecie czasu polskiego dziecka – perspektywa pedagogiczna*, [in:] Education – Technology – Computer Science 2017, No 1/19/2017; D. PONCZEK, I. OLSZOWY, *Styl życia młodzieży i jego wpływ na zdrowie*, [in:] Probl Hig Epidemiol 2012, no. 93(2), pp. 266.

² Cf.: M. TRUSZKOWSKA-WOJTKOWIAK, *Prawa dziecka a czas wolny*, [in:] Studia Gdańskie. Wizje i rzeczywistość 2013, no. 10.

³ J. PIĘTA, *Pedagogika czasu wolnego*, Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczna, Warsaw 2004, pp. 11.

⁴ Ibidem, pp. 62.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 11.

⁶ Ibidem.

The same view was shared by Paul Lafargue, who regarded leisure time as time for free and, above all, unrestricted choice of various alternative forms of active recreation, entertainment, as well as interests which correspond to and are in line with the preferences of the individual. According to the author, free time should also be used for active and conscious searching for new goals and values, which will allow for shaping the attitude of the individual towards their external environment, as well as for finding their own role in society. All these values, which will be created through hobbies and professional activities, can allow people to live fulfilling and happy lives⁷.

The category of free time also has its reference to children and young people, which is why it is worth presenting it in a broader context.

Research on leisure time among children and adolescents started very late, at the end of the 19th century. The studies were initiated by the Medical Academy of Paris⁸. There is a fundamental difference in scientific considerations concerning the free time of children and youth, and the free time of adults. A significant distinguishing feature is the socio-economic situation and life experience (a child has them only to a limited extent). Moreover, young people do not have the mental maturity and have a limited right to decide about their life and free time⁹. The activity or passivity of a child is therefore dependent on the organisation of the life of the child's parents/guardians. Therefore, adults should take great responsibility in order to properly control and determine not only their own free time, but also that of their children¹⁰. Therefore, the free time of children and young people can be defined as follows: "*Children's free time is the period of the day which is at their sole disposal, taking into account time spent in school, meals, sleep, homework, and required activities at home. The child's free time also includes voluntarily assumed social duties (e.g. having a role in a scouting organisation, activities in the student council, a day-care centre, a community centre, etc.). A child's leisure time is time that can be spent on relaxation, entertainment and pursuing personal interests*"¹¹. While specifying this definition proposed by Kazimierz Czajkowski, it is worthwhile to present a more detailed schedule of a child's day at the age of 7-15.

This schedule presents the proper course of the day of life of a child aged 7-15 from health and pedagogical standpoint. On its basis, it can be assumed that work (which encompasses learning in school and doing homework) in the discussed age bracket takes up to 8 hours. Sleep should take 9 hours. Other activities, including extracurricular activities,

⁷ Cf.: P. LAFARGUE, *Prawo do lenistwa*, translated by: I. BIBROWSKA, Studenckie Koło Filozofii Marksistowskiej, Warsaw 2006, online edition: <http://www.filozofia.uw.edu.pl/skfm/publikacje/lafargue03.pdf>; K. Czajkowski, *Wychowanie do rekreacji*, WSiP, Warsaw 1979, pp. 21.

⁸ Ibidem, pp. 34.

⁹ M. TRUSZKOWSKA-WOJTKOWIAK, *Prawa dziecka...*

¹⁰ K. CZAJKOWSKI, *Wychowanie...*, op. cit., pp. 40.

¹¹ K. CZAJKOWSKI, *Rola zajęć pozalekcyjnych w organizacji czasu dzieci i młodzieży na tle doświadczeń Pałacu Młodzieży w Warszawie*, [in:] *Biuletyn Pedagogiczny* 1960, no. 5.

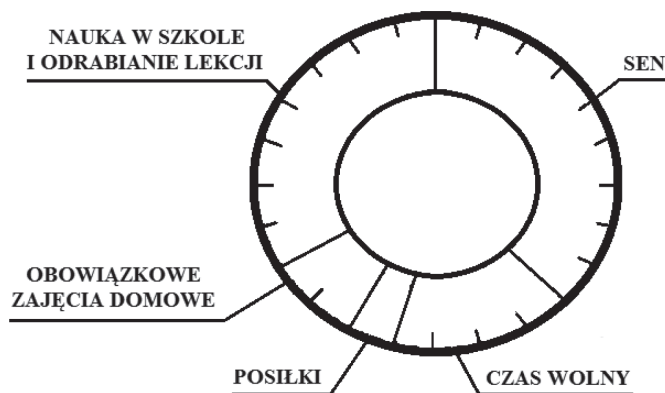


Fig. 1. Schedule of a student aged 7-15.

Source: Own compilation based on K. Czajkowski, *Wychowanie...*, op. cit., pp. 39.

homework and meals take up 3 hours. Therefore, 4 hours should be available to a child as free time¹².

Complementing the definition of free time for children and youth, it is also worth pointing out four aspects that make it a social concept, namely the following:

- socio-economic,
- psychological,
- hygiene and health,
- pedagogical¹³.

The pedagogical aspect is the idea of all the functions of free time and should therefore be given more attention.

The pedagogical aspect of children's and youth's free time is mainly related to creating situations in which the young generation can show their own initiative, become active and organise their own activities, which go beyond the schedule of their everyday duties. During their free time, children can organise and develop their activities, creativity and independence by carrying out tasks corresponding to their preferences. The young generation comes to the point that they should grow up by themselves, improve their skills and hone them, thanks to which they have a feeling of freedom and possibility to develop their initiative.

From the pedagogical point of view, free time has a very positive impact on children and young people, who have the opportunity to voluntarily choose the form of their activities and the content of tasks that directly correspond to their own individual needs and

¹² Idem, *Wychowanie...*, op. cit., pp. 38.

¹³ Ibidem, pp. 43-58.

interests. A child who has free time uses it in various ways, looking for newer and better methods and forms of its organisation¹⁴.

It also seems reasonable to say that leisure activities depend on various factors. It is important to be aware of the diversity of leisure activities, the individual preferences of the individual, as well as the amount of material resources that the individual has at their disposal and that they are able to devote to the proper implementation of their preferred leisure activities. However, in order to become aware of the diversity and multitude of leisure activities, it is necessary to look at how they have evolved throughout history.

Leisure activities in the past

Based on material sources produced by mankind as early as in ancient times, a certain image of various forms of spending free time was created, even though this concept did not become a subject of interest until medieval scientists came into the picture.

Using the example of ancient and medieval leisure activities, it is worth showing the evolution of the presented issue. Understanding the origins of contemporary free time forms requires reference to ancient times, where one can find the beginnings of modern forms of spending free time.

Ancient era

The ancient era is the period that spans from 10,000 BCE to about 500 CE. Contemporary researchers have at their disposal a multitude of source materials in the form of statues, pictures, as well as religious and everyday objects, which constitute vital proof of human activity. Despite the fact that the ancient era was diverse, both culturally and economically, it was characterised, among other things, by systematic civilisational progress initiated by the development of culture, trade and shipping. On this basis, we can determine the free-time forms preferred by the population living almost 2,000 years ago in Egypt, Greece and Rome¹⁵.

Table 1 illustrates how free time was spent during the period in question.

The ancient period was regulated by the rhythm of nature, which regulated both working and free time. On the other hand, the forms of spending free time themselves were connected with culture, religion and the opportunities offered by nature. The latter has been both a driving force and an obstacle for the development of new forms of leisure activities.

Despite the fact that many years have passed, some ancient leisure activities have survived to the present day, such as the Olympic Games.

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 52-53.

¹⁵ J. PIĘTA, *Pedagogika...*, op. cit., pp. 65.

Table 1. Forms of spending free time in the ancient era

State	Forms of spending free time
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual and group migrations of the population related to trade, religious worship, diplomacy, wars and willingness to get to know the world, • temple buildings – theatres where dramatic rites and spectacular religious ceremonies were presented, • games – field and board games, singers, musicians, dancers, jugglers and acrobats, • physical activity – races, rides, boat fights, sport hunting, fishing.
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • journeys, land and sea expeditions related to trade, religious worship, diplomacy, wars and willingness to get to know the surrounding world, • games, entertainment known and practised in Egypt, poetry, music, theatre with professional actors, festivals, theatre competitions, music concerts, • sport and gymnastics, sports competitions, Olympic, Pythian, Isthmian and Nemean Games.
Rome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • migrations connected with fighting and conquering the areas around the Mediterranean basin, Western Europe and parts of Asian territories, • theatrical performances for thousands of viewers, • taking over Greek culture, including running, javelin throwing, wrestling; military competitions, gladiators' fights with wild animals, amphitheatres, • meetings and discussions in public parks and gardens.

Source: Own compilation based on J. Pięta, *Pedagogika...*, op. cit., pp. 66.

Middle Ages

The next epoch in the history of humankind was the Middle Ages. This period in the history of Europe between the 4th and 15th centuries gave rise to the development of new political, social and economic forms, as well as to the development of various free time activities. The differences in spending leisure time resulted mainly from belonging to a given social class. The privileged strata, such as nobility, knighthood, and magnates, spent their leisure time differently from the lower strata: townsmen and peasants.

The following list of leisure activities does not, however, take class distinctions into account. The free time forms in the approach presented by J. Pięta should be viewed as forms of spending free time generally used in the Middle Ages.

The Middle Ages was a very heterogeneous period in the history of civilisation's development. That is why it is worthwhile to look at it in more detail, taking into account the context of free time in three significant time periods:

- the early Middle Ages, from the 4th–5th to the 11th centuries;
- the rise of the Middle Ages, which coincided with the 11th and 12th centuries;
- the late Middle Ages, from the 14th to the 15th centuries, also known as the Renaissance¹⁶.

Table 2 shows the leisure activities undertaken by the population in the Middle Ages.

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 69-70.

Table 2. Leisure activities in the Middle Ages

Periods of the Middle Ages	Forms of spending free time
Early (4th-5th to the 11th century)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the beginnings of modern tourism, trade expeditions and pilgrimages to sacred sites, sea and land expeditions, • establishing hospitality and social buildings: inns, taverns, • various tournaments and skill-based games, theatre plays, read poetry, development of music, • development of religious drama in church performances related to the celebration of Christian holidays.
Bloom (11th-13th centuries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further development of merchant and religious tourism, • further development of poetry, music and theatre, development of biblical themes and the creation of a dramatic medieval genre – mystery¹⁷ and miracle plays¹⁸.
Late (14th–15th centuries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further development of longer tourist and religious expeditions, discovery of America, • development of new literary genres, as well as painting and sculpture, • theatrical performances staged in university halls, palaces, houses where actors were writers and free artists, while the plays themselves were sometimes written by jugglers and singers; development of pantomime and puppet theatre also took place during this period.

Source: Own compilation based on J. Pięta, *Pedagogika...*, op. cit., pp. 70.

Leisure activities have developed over the centuries, but their development has been influenced by many factors. Nowadays, however, it can be considered that forms of spending free time have developed systematically and moderately in all epochs to the present day.

Modern leisure activities

Modern forms of spending leisure time were formed only in the second half of the 20th century. The three main forms of leisure time, which are currently carried out by the largest number of people, are tourism, sport and the media. When considering the variety of forms of leisure activities in a broader perspective, one can additionally distinguish such forms as:

- theatres and concert halls,
- exhibitions and museums,

¹⁷ MYSTERY PLAY – a medieval religious drama featuring themes drawn from the Old and New Testament, from the apocrypha and lives of the saints. It was developed in the 12th–13th centuries from church liturgical rites. In the 16th century, it left the walls of churches and became public performances, often presented in town squares. The mystery play genre developed in the 14th-15th centuries, mainly in France, England and Germany. In Poland, the oldest known mystery play is the *Story of the Glorious Resurrection of the Lord* (1580-1582) by Mikołaj of Wilkowiecko. Elements of the mystery were preserved by nativity plays.

¹⁸ MIRACLE PLAY – a medieval religious drama that depicts miraculous events from the lives of saints and martyrs on stage. These dramas combined miraculousness with realistic social and religious observation.

- self-study,
- amateur art,
- DIY and amateur craft,
- amateur farming,
- entertainment and social contacts,
- collecting and social activity¹⁹.

In view of the above categories of forms of spending free time, “[...] *it is possible to state that today we are dealing with a pluralism of free time activities, which means that there are many forms, through which this time can be realised*”²⁰.

Tourism

This is one of the types of contemporary leisure activities with a growing number of practitioners. Initially, tourist expeditions were organised over short distances, but nowadays, tourist traffic includes expeditions to other, distant countries and even as far as to other continents. Currently, it is estimated that this form is used by as many as one million people in Poland. The rich, the wealthy, and nowadays even those with moderate spending ability, make numerous journeys for cognitive, health, leisure and pleasure purposes.

At the end of the twentieth century, this leisure activity extended to a broad variety of social strata and became widespread on a large scale, fulfilling a number of functions, including:

- health,
- leisure,
- cultural,
- cognitive,
- educational,
- economic.

Tourism as a form of spending free time has a significant impact on both the social and economic development of many countries. It is also an important element of recreation and cultural development of a given person²¹.

Sport

The origins of this leisure activity can be traced back to ancient times. It refers to primal human activities such as hunting, archery, skiing, fishing and rowing. Today, sport has become a form of leisure practised by many people around the world. Sport is also considered to be a spectacle that emotionally engages a broad range of fans and supporters. It can also be considered that this form of free time brings about a strong integration of different environments, both local, regional and global.

The development of sport-themed publications made it possible to classify this form of spending free time as a social phenomenon and broadly understood human activity.

¹⁹ J. Pięta, *Pedagogika...*, op. cit., pp. 81.

²⁰ Ibidem, pp. 81-82.

²¹ Ibidem, pp. 81-86.

According to J. Pięta, sport is now a part of physical culture, which in turn is an element of the culture of the whole society. It encompasses activities that pertain to taking care of one's health and proper posture of the body, as well as physical development of humans, shaping and improving their motor abilities and physical fitness. Sport also refers to a system of behaviours, as well as individual and social needs, views, attitudes and theories that directly concern these behaviours and attitudes.

When considering sport as a form of spending free time, it is worth mentioning two types of sport:

- interest in sport – refers to the visualisation of a sport event itself,
- participation in sport – refers to active participation in sport.

In both cases, the fact that sport is in a key position in the management of leisure time for millions of people worldwide is a common feature²².

Media

These days, in the era of globalisation, the realisation of leisure time has undergone huge changes. This is mainly due to the emergence of new types of social ties, commercialisation, popular culture and the weakening of interpersonal ties. It can even be assumed that at present there are no longer any known forms of folklore or ludic qualities. A significant transformation is also taking place in the approach to spending free time, which is currently treated as an indicator of the success of individuals, and the belief in the essence of pleasure and entertainment as the main element of everyday life prevails – the aspect of the festivity of leisure time is disappearing²³. This perception of free time is therefore greatly influenced by the mass media. This term refers to devices and institutions that present certain content to a wide audience. The mass media include radio, television, press, books, phonographs, cinema films, videograms and the Internet, which are widely distributed. The mass media constitute the foundation of the communication systems in mass culture²⁴, which to a large extent determine the nature of this culture. Today, this form is used by the majority of our society.

All of the leisure activities discussed above apply to both adults and children. However, it is also worth mentioning the games preferred in the recent past, especially by the latter age category. These include:

- board games,
- LEGO blocks,
- building models,
- collecting (*ibid.*, pp. 92-99).

²² *Ibidem*, pp. 87-92.

²³ Cf.: J. MOKRAS-GRABOWSKA, *Czas wolny w dobie postmodernizmu*, [in:] FOLIA TURISTICA 2015, no. 34, p. 12; T. PALECZNY, *Zabawa w czasach globalizacji*, [in:] *Waż w raju. Zabawa w społeczeństwie konsumpcyjnym*, R. KANTOR, T. PALECZNY, M. BANASZKIEWICZ (eds.), Wydawnictwo UJ, Kraków 2011, pp. 10.

²⁴ Mass culture – a set of uniform forms of mass participation in culture and uniform products of this culture, which are used today by large, diverse masses of people. However, this culture has been criticised by some, who accuse it of lowering aesthetic tastes and moral values.

Board games

Board games are described as educationally valuable. They have a good reputation among educators and teachers. They involve the participation of a certain number of players and relate to various topics.

The modern offer includes games aimed at parents with younger children. The problem begins when the child reaches the age of 8, as the current offering rarely foresees older audiences²⁵.

Examples of board games include chess, checkers, Scrabble, Monopoly and Ludo.

LEGO blocks

According to Thomas Feibel, LEGO blocks were the only plastic game that was never criticised. Through this game, children can develop their creativity and create their own spatial structures for hours. These blocks are designed in such a way that a certain system of tips fits perfectly into the corresponding sockets. Thanks to the Danish producer, children have been able to enjoy this game for many generations.

Although LEGO blocks still appear on the contemporary market, fewer and fewer children use them on a daily basis²⁶.

Models

Children have always been fascinated with assembling, matching and gluing certain elements, which in the end were supposed to create an interesting and original composition. That is why in recent times children were eager to reach for models that they could glue together. Thanks to this form of spending free time, various spatial works were created: ships, airplanes, trains, dinosaurs, animals, tanks, and so on. Model assembly was mostly an activity done by boys, who showed a certain propensity for accuracy and precision in making such models. According to T. Feibel, such a form of spending free time was included in the category of “military toys.” These days, however, there is a clear tendency to move away from this form in favour of other, more attractive and, above all, less expensive forms of spending free time²⁷.

Collecting

Another very attractive form of spending free time practised in the recent past by children, who used to collect different things and objects. They tried to imitate a certain pattern, a trend which was “fashionable” in a given period of time among their peers. Therefore, the things that children and young people collected were often described as strange and unnecessary by their parents. However, they were eager to devote themselves to their passions. Children enjoyed collecting glass balls and cards with their favourite

²⁵ T. FEIBEL, *Zabójca w dzieciennym pokoju przemoc i gry komputerowe*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warsaw 2006, pp. 34.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 34.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 35-36.

characters from animated TV series, tokens presenting characters from animated films, figures from surprise eggs, stickers, school bags with emblems of favourite series and animated films²⁸.

Video games as a contemporary leisure activity

Everything that surrounds us is undeniably changing and evolving. The world is developing rapidly day after day. The development of technology not only improves the lives of all human beings, but also changes them. It is therefore worthwhile to examine the new way of spending free time, which has emerged and developed through the development of science and technological research, responding in particular to the demanding preferences of young people.

One of the easiest, as well as very pleasant, ways of spending one's free time using a computer or other mobile devices is by **playing video games**. They are particularly important for children and young people, who use them most, most often and most willingly. Games are treated as an extremely interesting and attractive form of spending free time, while at the same time being not overly expensive and generally available.

Based on the results of research conducted by Newzoo, a research company dealing with analysis of the computer games market, it can be assumed that in 2014, there were 13.4 million gamers in Poland²⁹, while in 2017 there were as many as 16 million³⁰. At present, the computer gaming market is developing dynamically, attracting an ever-wider group of users at various ages. According to the results of the research, games are most frequently played by people aged 9-43 (Polish Gamers Research, 2016).

Researchers of the computer game phenomenon keep looking at the 1970s as the beginning of their development, inextricably linked to the progress of computer technology, which had a significant impact on the changes in the possibilities of realisation various forms of leisure activities³¹. The growth of popularity of computer games in subject literature is described as a social and cultural phenomenon of the end of the 20th century³². In

²⁸ Ibidem, pp. 36-38.

²⁹ Gryonline.pl, <https://www.gry-online.pl/S013.asp?ID=82806>, after: Newzoo, <https://newzoo.com/insights/infographics/infographic-polish-games-market/>, 2014.

³⁰ Newzoo, <https://newzoo.com/insights/infographics/the-polish-gamer-2017/>, 2017.

³¹ Cf.: M. WAWRZAK-CHODACZEK, *Rola gier komputerowych w czasie wolnym młodzieży w wieku adolescencji*, [in:] CHOWANNA 2012, no. 2; M. GAJEWSKI, *Niebezpieczne gry komputerowe*, [in:] Wychowawca 2002, no. 1.

³² Cf.: D. GAŁUSZKA, *Antropologia komputerowa wobec fenomenu gier komputerowych*, [in:] Studia Socjologiczne 2015, no. 4; F. MÄYRÄ, *An Introduction to Game Studies. Games In Culture*, SAGE Publications, London 2008; I. ULFIK-JAWORSKA, *Komputerowi mordercy Tendencje Konstruktywne i destruktywne u graczy komputerowych*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2005, pp. 59; M. WAWRZAK-CHODACZEK, *Kształcenie kultury audiowizualnej. Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Prace Pedagogiczne CXXXIII*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2000, pp. 52; T. ZYSS, J. BORON, *Świat gier komputerowych I-nowe medium rozrywkowe i nowe zagrożenia*, [in:] Psychiatria Polska 1996, no. 2(30), 2, pp. 255-266.

subject literature, computer games are defined as “a computer programme saved in any form and on any digital medium (...) which performs a ludic function by enabling manipulation of electronically generated objects or text on a screen (liquid crystal display, monitor, television, etc.), in accordance with the rules specified by the creators of the game. Unlike, for example, graphic software, games are intended for entertainment purposes only and therefore do not have any useful function for any form of creative work”³³.

In today’s entertainment market one can find a multitude of different game genres, which can meet the sophisticated preferences of their users. Most often eight main game genres are mentioned: logic, adventure, role-playing, sports, arcade, strategic, simulation, educational³⁴. However, this is a simplified classification. Contemporary approaches present different genres and types of games within them, for example by taking the type of entertainment into consideration – including *single player*, *multiplayer* and *on-line games*.

On the basis of opinions of various researchers, it is also possible to distinguish features of games that make children and young people consider them attractive and willing to use them in their free time. These features are, for example:

- the existence of an identification process that enables the player to play any role and experience their emotions and experiences,
- interactivity, which enables the player to communicate freely and participate in the game directly³⁵,
- constant readiness to use – the game does not have human features; therefore, it does not get tired or unwilling to play,
- there is no requirement for another person to be present, as the computer itself is already a sufficient simulator of fun, as well as other people in *multiplayer* mode,
- providing many stimuli to the player (influencing the senses), so that the user can experience different kinds of emotions (from positive to negative), as well as realise their dreams and develop their interests,
- losing oneself in virtual reality, a way of getting away from everyday problems: family, school and peer problems,
- immediate feedback on and correction of player errors, lack of consequences for errors,
- creating a sense of being in a “safe” world, the player can quit it at any time or start again in the case of failure,
- providing various forms of gratification, rewarding for good decisions and acquiring new skills³⁶.

³³ S. ŁUKASZ, *Magia gier wirtualnych*, Mikom, Warsaw 1998, p. 11.

³⁴ I. ULFIK-JAWORSKA, *Komputerowi mordercy...*, op. cit., pp. 45.

³⁵ B. FIOLEK-LUBCZYŃSKA, *Gry komputerowe w kulturze audiowizualnej i edukacji*, [in:] Acta Universitatis Lodzianis. Folia Litteraria Polonica 2005, no. 7.

³⁶ I. ULFIK-JAWORSKA, *Komputerowi mordercy...*, op. cit.; T. ZYSS, J. BOROŃ, *Świat gier...*, op. cit.

Many researchers also emphasise that computer games are very attractive especially for people who are frustrated, have low self-esteem and for people who have problems in relations not only with parents, teachers, but also with their peers. It is thanks to computer games that they break their shyness in the virtual world, experience a sense of power, strength and independence. They also fulfil their dreams and influence the fate of others. Thanks to the games they can protect themselves against negative emotions, such as rejection from a peer group, humiliation and ridicule. Instead, they may feel valued and appreciated³⁷.

Therefore, when comparing old leisure activities with modern ones, in particular with computer games, it can be unequivocally stated that computer games are very attractive for modern users. They do not require any participation of third parties, they do not require sophisticated and expensive equipment, and they offer a wide range of possibilities which are not offered by other forms of spending free time. It is no wonder that the number of their users is still growing.

Conclusion

Due to the evolution of forms of spending free time throughout history and the development of scientific and technical research, video games have emerged as a new and, above all, attractive form of spending free time for young people. Video games have also become an interesting alternative for people who are “hungry” for new adventures with a small financial outlay. Modern video games as a form of spending free time are attractive and diverse in terms of content and form, but most of all they meet the preferences of young people and every year, they attract more and more fans, offering a range of new opportunities.

Bibliography

Books

- CZAJKOWSKI K., *Wychowanie do rekreacji*, WSiP, Warsaw 1979.
- FEIBEL T., *Zabójca w dzieciennym pokoju przemoc i gry komputerowe*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warsaw 2006.
- ŁUKASZ S., *Magia gier wirtualnych*, Mikom, Warsaw 1998.
- MÄYRÄ F., *An Introduction to Game Studies. Games In Culture*, SAGE Publications, London 2008.
- PALECZNY T., *Zabawa w czasach globalizacji*, [in:] *Wąz w raju. Zabawa w społeczeństwie konsumpcyjnym*, KANTOR R., PALECZNY T., BANASZKIEWICZ M. (eds.), Wydawnictwo UJ, Kraków 2011.
- PIĘTA J., *Pedagogika czasu wolnego*, Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczna, Warsaw 2004.

³⁷ I. ULFIK-JAWORSKA, *Czy gry komputerowe mogą być niebezpieczne?*, [in:] *Wychowawca* 2002, no. 1, pp. 12-15.

- TRUSZKOWSKA-WOJTKOWIAK M., *Fenomen czasu wolnego*, Harmonia Universalis, Gdańsk 2012.
- ULFIK-JAWORSKA I., *Komputerowi mordercy. Tendencje Konstrukttywne i destruktywne u graczy komputerowych*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2005.
- WAWRZAK-CHODACZEK M., *Kształcenie kultury audiowizualnej. Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Prace Pedagogiczne CXXXIII*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2000.

Journals and magazines

- CZAJKOWSKI K., *Rola zajęć pozalekcyjnych w organizacji czasu dzieci i młodzieży na tle doświadczeń Pałacu Młodzieży w Warszawie*, [in:] Biuletyn Pedagogiczny 1960, no. 5.
- FIOLEK-LUBCZYŃSKA B., *Gry komputerowe w kulturze audiowizualnej i edukacji*, [in:] Acta Universitatis Lodzianis. Folia Litteraria Polonica 2005, no. 7.
- GAJEWSKI M., *Niebezpieczne gry komputerowe*, [in:] Wychowawca 2002, no. 1.
- GAŁUSZKA D., *Antropologia komputerowa wobec fenomenu gier komputerowych*, [in:] Studia Socjologiczne 2015, no. 4.
- MOKRAS-GRABOWSKA J., *Czas wolny w dobie postmodernizmu*, [in:] FOLIA TURISTICA 2015, no. 34.
- ORŁOWSKA M., KHYZHNA O., BŁESZYŃSKI J. J., *Miejsce Internetu w budżecie czasu polskiego dziecka – perspektywa pedagogiczna*, [in:] Education – Technology – Computer Science 2017, No 1/19/2017.
- PONCZEK D., OLSZOWY I., *Styl życia młodzieży i jego wpływ na zdrowie*, [in:] Probl Hig Epidemiol 2012, no. 93(2).
- TRUSZKOWSKA-WOJTKOWIAK M., *Prawa dziecka a czas wolny*, [in:] Studia Gdańskie. Wizje i rzeczywistość 2013, no. 10.
- ULFIK-JAWORSKA I., *Czy gry komputerowe mogą być niebezpieczne?*, [in:] Wychowawca 2002, no. 1.
- WAWRZAK-CHODACZEK M., *Rola gier komputerowych w czasie wolnym młodzieży w wieku adolescencji*, [in:] CHOWANNA 2012, no. 2.
- ZYSS T., BOROŃ J., *Świat gier komputerowych I-nowe medium rozrywkowe i nowe zagrożenia*, [in:] Psychiatria Polska 1996, no. 2(30), 2.

Internet sources

- Gryonline.pl, <https://www.gry-online.pl/S013.asp?ID=82806>.
- LAFARGUE P., *Prawo do lenistwa*, translated by: BIBROWSKA I., Studenckie Koło Filozofii Marksistowskiej, Warsaw 2006, online edition: <http://www.filozofia.uw.edu.pl/skfm/publikacje/lafargue03.pdf>.
- Newzoo, <https://newzoo.com/insights/infographics/infographic-polish-games-market/>, 2014.
- Newzoo, <https://newzoo.com/insights/infographics/the-polish-gamer-2017/>, 2017.