

Review

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RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF PUBLICATIONS ON SPORTS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN MASS MEDIA OF YEKATERINBURG (1886–2024)

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Abstract: The aim of the article is to conduct a retrospective analysis of the media functions in Yekaterinburg from 1886 to 2024, as observed in publications about sports and physical education, and to present a periodization of their evolution. This approach allows us to identify a link between the mass media establishment and sports and physical education that occurred in the regional center amid the growth of the population of the city. During the research we identified the following media functions: educational, informational, political, and economic. Based on the analysis conducted, we assessed the prospects for the existence of regional mass media specializing in sports.

Keywords: mass media, sports, physical education, the Urals

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Introduction

Yekaterinburg is located on the border between Europe and Asia and is the fourth most populous city in the Russian Federation. A retrospective analysis of the evolution of the publications content on physical education and sports in the mass media of the city whose population has increased 50 times over the past 100 years is of great interest. According to A.I. Kuzmin and A.G. Orudzhieva (1998), the population of Yekaterinburg grew from 20,048 people in 1860 to 79,000 in 1913. In 1967 the city's population exceeded one million. Currently Yekaterinburg is the fourth largest city by population in Russia with a developed sports infrastructure presenting several large sports facilities including the Yekaterinburg Arena football stadium, the Kalininet sports complex, the multifunctional UMMC Arena ice rink, the Water Sports Palace, the Judo Palace, the Centre for Artistic and Aesthetic Gymnastics, and the RCC Martial Arts Academy. The city is home to well-known sports clubs in Russia, such as the volleyball club "Uralochka-NTMK", the hockey club "Avtomobilist", the basketball club "Ural-mash" and the football club "Ural".

It is also worth noting that during this historical period the monarchy in Russia was replaced by the Soviet state, then eventually by a government form that recognizes private ownership. These changes impacted both the status and the functions of mass media as well as the content of the publications under study.

Thus, a retrospective analysis of the evolution of the publications content on physical education and sports in the mass media of Yekaterinburg (1886–2024) within the framework of the historical method will allow to identify their functions in relation to the discussed area of activity and to present a periodization of their evolution.

Periodization of Media Functions Evolution in Yekaterinburg

Educational Period (1886–1917). This period begins with the reports in the local newspaper "Yekaterinburgskaya Nedelya" ("Yekaterinburg Week") about establishing the Charter of the Yekaterinburg Bicycle Society and the Yekaterinburg Horse Racing Society in 1886. It is worth noting that these reports were preceded by a publication indicating that cyclists, moving uncontrollably around the city, were frightening horses and causing inconveniences to the citizens. Besides, the advertisements for horse races and bicycles were regularly featured in the newspapers of this period. The newspaper made a significant contribution to the formation of public opinion regarding sports and physical education. Several issues of the newspaper in 1886 were dedicated to pedagogical issues, including the publication of an article titled "Family and School" (the author's name was concealed under a pseudonym), a review of physical

education in Ancient Greece, and a critical article on the current state of school physical education. Additionally, several issues of "Yekaterinburgskaya Nedelya" featured excerpts from the book by Modest Ivanovich Galanin "Essays on School Hygiene," which raised relevant issues of physical education, including the physical education of girls.

Subjective opinions on the discussed issues, as presented in the newspaper, deserve particular attention. For instance, local journalists, while describing the townspeople's active winter entertainment on the ice of the city pond in 1886, compared it to Olympic contests. An example from 1889 is an article about the visit of a professional runner to Yekaterinburg. The athlete, competing against a horse, covered a distance of about 12 km in 37 minutes, while the horse refused to continue after the fourth kilometer of the race had been done. The journalist remarked that the four-legged creature, designed specifically for running, faltered against the two-legged one, designed to think, and expressed a negative attitude towards the event as a whole. Returning to issues of physical education, it is worth noting that in 1896 (seven years after the introduction of the first military gymnastics programme), a correspondent positively evaluated the visual example set by athletes in contrast to mere "intellectual education" while announcing the opening of the circus. Several interesting facts related to sports were published the same year. One report mentioned the visit of world-famous runner A. Yablochkin, who had arrived from Athens after the fest of Olympic Games and competitions. However, since his purpose for visiting Yekaterinburg was to compete with a set of three horses over a distance of 60 versts (1 verst about 1.067km) for a wager of 1,000 rubles, all his previous information lost significance – yet not for his contemporaries. Another publication reported that an Englishman named Jeffersson rode his bicycle from Perm to Yekaterinburg.

Several publications dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the Yekaterinburg Society of Bicycle Enthusiasts should be highlighted. For instance, in 1896, it was reported that there were plans to "build an arena that would allow for the establishment of a gymnasium for gymnastics, athletic exercises, and physical games, where physical education of the younger generation could be concentrated". Additionally, the society being awarded a gold badge by the chairman of the bicycle society, Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovich was reported. Interestingly, this series of publications concluded with an article about the creation of a committee made up of professors from Kazan University to assess the benefits of "bicycle riding from a hygienic perspective for students of secondary educational institutions". The committee recommended cycling for students aged 16 and older.

In the early 20th century, the number of media outlets in the region increased. Newspapers such as "Uralskaya Zhizn", "Uralsky Krai", "Golos Urala", "Zauralsky Krai",

"Vestnik of the Orenburg educational district" and "Vestnik of the family and school. A magazine for parents, educators, and teachers" were published, providing information about the activities of sports societies, competitions, physical education, and gymnastics festivals.

During the period under consideration, newspaper publications reflected both successful and unsuccessful attempts to expand the range of sports accessible to the residents of Yekaterinburg. For instance, in 1902, a chess tournament was announced but unfortunately did not take place due to the cancellation of appropriations. In 1908 publications reported on wrestling and weightlifting competitions organized by the Yekaterinburg branch of the Petersburg Athletic Society. An intriguing account described an entrepreneur Naumov attempting to arrange commercial races over "exotic" distances, such as a five-verst race with jumps, a one-verst egg-and-spoon race, a one-verst Indian run, a one-verst sack race, and a one-verst race with a clown. According to the correspondent's summary, as it was to be expected, the races turned out to be uninteresting. The same year there was a publication about preparing for the construction of the first heated sports hall for a gymnasium in the Urals.

By the end of the period publications containing results and announcements of local competitions became common (e.g., the great ski races in January 1914 and a football match between the teams of Perm and Yekaterinburg in June 1914). However, from the beginning of World War I until the October Socialist Revolution, publications about sports and physical education almost disappeared from Yekaterinburg's mass media.

The Ideological Period (1917–1991). This period begins with the October Socialist Revolution and ends with the collapse of the Soviet Union (the USSR). The number of publications during that period significantly increased. Notably, in 1929, a free supplement to the newspaper "Na Smenu!" called "Uralsky Phiskulturnik" ("Ural Athlete") was published, which was released twice a month and consisted of eight pages. That was the first publication in Yekaterinburg dedicated exclusively to sports and physical education. It provided information about regional sports events, reported on interactions with foreign worker-athletes, and published satirical notes about those who violated sporting regulations. Of particular interest is the coverage of the Ural-Kuzbass Spartakiad held in Yekaterinburg in 1932 (Gail, 2006). From 1937 to 2003, the editorial office of the newspaper "Uralsky Rabochy" was the main organizer of the annual regional athletics relay that took place on the streets of Yekaterinburg (Vasiliev, 2023). From 1957 to 2019, a combined relay was held under the auspices of the newspaper "Vecherny Yekaterinburg". Thus, the city media were actively involved in physical culture and sports. Meanwhile, this period features the emergence of sports correspondents distinguished by their exceptional awareness of sports and physical education in

Yekaterinburg. The professional activity of A.I. Chudinovsky, a correspondent for the newspaper "Vecherny Yekaterinburg" illustrates this.

The Economic Period (1991–2024) features the establishment of the regional media market. Newspaper columns describing sports events have become traditional for the city's media today. In addition to newspapers, information internet agencies (E1, 66RU, JUST MEDIA, URA.RU) have developed, publishing information about sports events; websites of government and private organizations in sports have emerged, where the news is posted.

The digitization of the domestic television industry has led to reforming changes in the regional television channel market (Myasnikova, 2021). Programmes dedicated to sports and physical education have disappeared from the local channels, except for match live broadcasts.

Unfortunately, sports projects of Yekaterinburg newspapers have started to be curtailed due to the new economic conditions. After the 2003 relay race, the editorial board of the newspaper "Uralsky Rabochy" withdrew from the list of its founders, therefore the name of the sports event was changed. The relay race under the patronage of the editorial board of the newspaper "Vecherny Yekaterinburg" was held until 2019. Restrictive measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic became one of the main reasons for the cessation of these relay races.

From 1998 to 2023, the newspaper "Sport-Anshlag" was published in Yekaterinburg. This monthly print edition provided information about the development of sports in the Sverdlovsk region and Ural Federal District, highlighting achievements, new sports approaches, and the activities of leading sports clubs. The establishment of this edition marked the priority of the economic media function in the Ural region, as the newspaper promoted services in physical culture and sports. It is important to note that this was the only newspaper in the Ural region specializing in information about physical culture and sports. Refusing the printed version of the medium could probably have enhanced the competitiveness of the newspaper.

In general, the municipal sports management authority effectively utilizes the opportunities provided by city mass media. In November 2024, Yekaterinburg became the winner of the "Sport is a Way of Life" contest among municipalities in the category of cities with a population over one million. The Ural capital won gold in the nomination for "Best Municipal Practice in Informational and Educational Work to Engage the Population in Regular Physical Culture and Mass Sports Activities" (Rytov, 2024).

Analysis of the functions of the media in Yekaterinburg

During the Educational period (1886–1917), several functions of the mass media in Yekaterinburg emerged. From our perspective, the most significant of these is the narrative function, which has both historiographical and subjective components. The articles content, organized chronologically, significantly supplements data that can be utilized by scholars specializing in the history of the region (the historiographical aspect). For instance, publications from Yekaterinburg's newspapers were used by the authors in a historiographical context when studying the evolution of the subject "Physical Culture" in schools in the Urals (Gail, 2006). Meanwhile, comparing the information obtained with historical data from other regions of Russia and the world provides a more comprehensive vision. While the delay in development of sports in Yekaterinburg, as a city considerably removed from the capital of Russia, may seem evident; the equestrian sport being the first in the historical sequence of the emergence of sports societies in Yekaterinburg repeats the history of modern sports in England with a two-century delay.

While discussing the subjective aspects of the narrative function during the Educational period (1886–1917), it is important to note that the newspapers were primarily accessible to affluent citizens and reflected the views of this particular social class. Evidently, an amateur model of sports participation was realized among the class representatives. In this context, it is interesting to consider mentions of the Olympic Games as restrained. Publications mentioning the Olympic Games in press in Yekaterinburg were recorded only in 1886 and 1896, and had not been seen until the Political period (1917–1991), despite a gradually forming positive attitude towards sports among the citizens and the participation of the Russian national team in the 1912 Olympics. In our view, these facts illustrate both a lack of information in the provincial city and a reluctance to contradict censorship. Another interpretation may involve the emergence of a European model of amateur sports in Yekaterinburg as organized physical exercises and entertainment while maintaining a negative attitude towards competitive activities, deemed unworthy for affluent citizens. The competitions became a part of public life in Yekaterinburg only at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries.

Another subjective aspect of the narrative function during the Educational period (1886–1917) was communicating the attitudes towards the establishment of physical education in educational institutions in Yekaterinburg. However, a restrained attitude towards the changes taking place and the announced reforms should be noted. An interesting contrast is drawn between sports and the folk entertainment of "Kulachki" (mass hand-to-hand combat). An unknown author in 1886 views physical education as a means of active recreation, in contrast to brawling and drunkenness, while a publication of 1914 provided a report on a hand-to-hand fight that involved men aged 10

to 60 (1 killed, 2 severely injured, 26 lightly injured, duration 5 hours). Thus, the narrative function of these publications contributed to the formation of public opinion about sports and physical education. From a historical perspective, it is interesting to evaluate the manifestation of this function as a reflection of public opinion.

The informational function during the Educational period (1886–1917) was very important, as its implementation allowed the townspeople not only to receive information about the spatial and temporal parameters of the events in sports and physical education but also, in some cases, to familiarize themselves with the theoretical foundations of the discussed activities.

The economic function was placed in the context of the Educational period (1886–1917). While the advertisements for organizing horse races and the sale of bicycles directly fulfilled this function, the activities of the respective sports societies described in publications were secondary to those advertisements but nonetheless contributed to maintaining the demand for the discussed services. It is worth noting that there also appeared some advertising articles about sports events. For example, publications about the visit of the world-famous runner A. Yablochkin, who was ready to compete against a set of three horses over a distance of 60 versts for a wager of 1,000 rubles in 1896, and about the races at unconventional distances in unconventional ways in 1908. It should be emphasized that the publications about sports and physical education during the period were published on the last pages of newspapers, concluding that they did not make a significant contribution to the publication budgets.

During the Ideological period (1917–1991), the ideological function emerged as prominent, manifesting the state's perspective on events and processes in sports and physical education. This was justified by the lack of competition for readers in the context of a socialist economy. For example, when describing the events of the Ural-Kuzbass Spartakiad in 1932, a contrast was drawn between it and the Olympic Games held in Los Angeles. In the supplement "Uralsky Phiskulturnik" ("Ural Sportsman") an ideological assessment of all aspects of physical education and sports activities was promoted. It is noteworthy that during the Ideological period, there was an inversion of the economic function: whereas in the previous period newspapers needed to generate income, later they had to sponsor sports competitions. Additionally, the relay race organized with the participation of the "Uralsky Rabochiy" ("Ural Worker") editorial team significantly influenced the development of athletics in the region during the 20th century.

The Economic period (1991–2024) features an increase in the number of ways to transmit information. On the one hand, it contributed to a rise in the number of media outlets; on the other hand, competition and the overall economic situation in the country led to the optimization of their amount. While the reduction of media non-

core expenses for organizing competitions can be justified by competition, the cessation of activities of the only newspaper in the region devoted to sports can be evaluated as a negative consequence of the competition. From our perspective, the city that won the nationwide competition in the nomination for "Best Municipal Practice in Information and Educational Work to Engage the Population in Regular Physical Culture and Mass Sports Activities" (Rytov, 2024) could have consolidated efforts to preserve the newspaper "Sport-Anshlag". Yet, the victory in the contest illustrates the modernization of the ideological function expressing a shift in emphasis from the propaganda of socialism to the promotion of state policies aimed at promoting mass sports.

Conclusion

As a result of the retrospective analysis of publications in the mass media in Yekaterinburg regarding sports and physical education (1886–2024), we identified the three periods: the Educational Period (1886–1917), the Ideological Period (1917–1991), and the Economic Period (1991–2024). During the studied time frame, the publications displayed the following functions of mass media: narrative, informational, economic, and ideological. The publications from the Educational Period (1886–1917) hold narrative value, enriching the historiography of the development of sports and physical education in Yekaterinburg. The most prominent function became the ideological one, which evolved from political propaganda during the Ideological Period (1917–1991) to the promotion of mass sports as a component of state policy during the Economic Period (1991–2024).

A market for information about sports and physical education was being formed in Yekaterinburg over the period from 1886 to 2024. However, the economic prerequisites for the sustainable functioning of independent media specializing in this issue did not develop. Besides, applying a full range of information presentation methods enabled the municipal authorities of Yekaterinburg to achieve success in 2024 in their informational and educational efforts to engage the population in mass sports.

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