

The Specifics Of The Coverage Of Protest Actions In Moscow By Correspondents Of “Echo Of Moscow” Radio And “Deutschland Radio”

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Abstract

This article uncovers and examines the features of coverage of rallies in Moscow in 2019-2021. The mass media have a tremendous power to influence people's thinking. This is especially evident in the means of quick and efficient delivery of information. Radio broadcasting is a unique way of communicating with the audience. With its help, with the power of the “living word”, it becomes one of the main instruments of media influence. Every year, radio broadcasting changes under the onslaught of new technologies that are constantly emerging. With their help, radio broadcasting retains primacy in the efficiency of delivering information to the audience. It is also worth noting that with the efficiency, improved sound quality, possibilities to access the Internet, radio broadcasting has started to specialize in the subject and type of broadcasting. Talk radio took over the coverage of the agenda, which is difficult to talk about even on the television. With the help of the radio, the audience can quickly receive information directly from the venue. However, it is essential to remember that this power can be used to manipulate the audience. Coverage of protests is no exception. Protest is an active form of conflict behavior. It can be expressed in various forms: organized and spontaneous, direct or indirect, taking on the character of violence or a system of nonviolent action. Having studied 200 radio broadcasts on the Echo of Moscow radio and Deutschland Radio, the authors of the article revealed the peculiarities of coverage of rallies in Moscow in 2019-2021. The authors studied the genre variety of broadcasts and the presence of manipulative techniques in them, with the help of which the journalists of radio stations manipulate the audience. The authors of this article found that the form of presenting an information event on a Russian and German radio station has many differences. Echo of Moscow radio often uses analytical genres, while Deutschland Radio covers rallies only through informational interviews and short notes. The results of this research support the conclusions of such scientists as L. Guo, H.T. Vu and M. McCombs (2022), S.B. Rothman

(2011), T.A. Birkland (2015), B.H. Bagdikian (2004), H. Brandenburg (2004), P.J. Shoemaker and S.D. Reese (2013), H.A. Innis (2008), A. Giddens (2013), G.V. Lazutina (2010), S.G. Korkonosenko (2016), A.A. Sherel (2005), Yu.F. Lukin (1991), V.V. Smirnov (2002), S.A. Zelinsky (2008), M. Idov (2018) and add their examples from the present-day practice of radio journalism.

Keywords: journalist, radio, news, storyline, news broadcast, rally, protest, Echo of Moscow radio, Deutschland Radio.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to identify and study the specifics of the coverage of protests actions in Moscow in 2019-2021 by correspondents of two popular radio stations: Echo of Moscow (Russia) and Deutschland Radio (Germany).

Radio programs are a natural form of capturing, reflecting, and broadcasting of audio material. There are many types of programs, and they all put together specific material into integral whole. The types of programs are described in the works of G.V. Lazutina (Lazutina, 2010) [1].

The relevance of this scientific work lies in the fact that all the above factors led to a variety of opportunities for coverage of events. In this diversity, the main place is occupied by the radio broadcasting which creates a picture of world for the audience. With such a broad coverage, we should bear in mind that broadcasting has many possibilities for manipulation.

Radio is one of the oldest ways of transmitting information. Radio journalism is “a type of journalistic activity based on the use of technical means of radio broadcasting, a set of radio programs related to the field of journalism, the result of the activities of radio journalists” (Korkonosenko, 2016) [2]. It is the radio that contains a lot of properties, which distinguish it from other types of journalistic activities. These properties include efficiency, emotionality of delivering information, influence on the audience.

Radio stations can't function without an information agenda, which is the most important thing in journalism. The mass media cannot survive without information and news. It is important to make out several things (Sherel, 2005) [3].

The information agenda is a collection of the main topics, events, processes that are published by the mass media. If the news gets into the media, it automatically appears on the agenda. There are also radio stations that select news or create their own one, and then form the agenda for the whole day. Information that gets into the media automatically becomes public (Lukin, 1991) [4].

It was the creation of radio that became the greatest discovery and achievement of mankind at the end of the nineteenth century. In today's world, radio stations and broadcasting in general have become a significant part of our daily life. Radio broadcasting is now outperforming other media owing to its accessibility.

The radio also manages to maintain a competitive activity in the severe conditions of the struggle for content and audience. A.A. Sherel describes in his scientific works the natural properties of radio broadcasting which reveal its viability. Firstly, television and the Internet

do not allow technically to quickly conveying information to the audience. Radio stations do it with ease. Due to the technique, which does not provide much trouble to the journalist, radio allows you to quickly and efficiently convey information to the reader anywhere in the world. Secondly, radio is always available to the audience (Sherel, 2005) [3].

Protest is “the direction of social activity and the manifestation of disagreement in society, its nonconformity” (Lukin, 1991) [4]. Yu.F. Lukin writes in his scientific work that protest is one of the directions of social activity, as a manifestation of disagreement, dissenting view, as opposition activity, and corresponding political behavior. Any resistance – non-violent, peaceful or violent, armed – begins with a protest. And only when a spiritual protest is realized in any kind of activity, social activity, only then the process of resistance begins.

The concept of “protest” often covers a fairly wide range of phenomena. Researchers note that social protest can also include “challenging”, “denying” all social activity, the very principles of social and political life, and indignation with the existing system and institutions of power in general, and protest actions only against certain trends in their policies or methods of its implementation. The factors influencing the behavior of the population can be divided into four main groups: economic, political, informational and social (Gio, Vu and McCombs, 2022) [5].

Appearance of a protest implies the presence of opposing interests. Aggravated contradictions give rise to social tension, which often escalates, into a conflict (Rothman, 2011) [6].

A conflict is a clash of opposing goals, positions, opinions and views of opponents or subjects of interaction. The most striking form of a conflict expression is various mass actions (Birkland, 2015) [7]. These mass actions take form in the demands on authorities from the dissatisfied social groups, in mobilizing public opinion in support of their demands or alternative programs, in direct social protest actions (Bagdikian, 2004) [8].

As for the legal side of public protests, it is reflected in the Law of the Russian Federation “On holding assemblies, rallies, demonstrations, marches and picketing” dated June 19, 2004.

The purpose of freedom of assemblies, rallies, marches, demonstrations and picketing is to discuss problems related to the policy of the state authorities, decisions of governmental bodies and officials of local self-government or protest against them, the intention to make public their position on this or other issue, to compel public authorities and local government to make some decisions (Brandenburg, 2004) [9].

A rally is a mass presence of citizens in a certain place for common expression of public opinion on current issues of a predominantly socio-political nature (Shoemaker and Reese, 2013) [10].

Comparison of the definitions of “meeting” and “rally” reveals difference in the characteristics of the issues that are the subject of their discussion (Innis, 2008) [11].

It should be noted that public protest, as a socially significant phenomenon and relevant at all stages of the development of the society, is not only an informational occasion, but also a subject of research and in-depth analysis for the mass media (Giddens, 2013) [12]. The results of this study confirm the findings of such researchers as G.V. Lazutina (2010) [1],

S.G. Korkonosenko (2016) [2], A.A. Sherel (2005) [3], Yu.F. Lukin (1991) [4], L. Guo, H.T. Vu and M. McCombs (2022) [5], S.B. Rothman (2011) [6], T.A. Birkland (2015) [7], B.H. Bagdikian (2004) [8], H. Brandenburg (2004) [9], P.J. Shoemaker and S.D. Reese (2013) [10], H.A. Innis (2008) [11], A. Giddens (2013) [12], V.V. Smirnov (2002) [13], S.A. Zelinsky (2008) [14], M. Idov (2018) [15] and add their examples from the present-day practice of radio journalism.

Materials and methods

We studied 200 broadcasts of Echo of Moscow radio [16] and Deutschland Radio [17] for the period from July 14, 2019 to August 30, 2021. We chose these radio stations because they had the leading positions in the citation index rating according to the “Medialogia” research company in the summer of 2019 [18]. In our research we applied the following methods.

In our research, we applied the following methods.

1. Contextual analysis of the broadcasts, which made it possible to reveal the specifics of the radio broadcasting.
2. Plot-compositional analysis helps to understand the structure of broadcasts, which allows us to determine their genre characteristics.
3. Lexical-stylistic analysis to identify manipulative techniques in radio broadcasts.
4. Comparative analysis of the broadcasts of the selected radio stations. This method allows the author to identify and analyze the similarities and differences in the coverage of rallies in Moscow in 2019-2021.

Results and discussion

For the analysis, we selected the Echo of Moscow radio and Deutschland Radio, namely the broadcasts on the Echo of Moscow radio (from 14.06.2019 to 30.08.2021) and the broadcasts of the Deutschland Radio (from 16.07.2019 to 30.08.2021). The policy of the Echo of Moscow radio is based on timely and impartial informing the audience about the events of the Russian Federation. The shortwave broadcasting of programs covers the territory of the entire Russian Federation.

The information function of the radio station is carried out through the information program “Echo”, which were on the air 14 times a day. The duration of one news release was from 6 to 10 minutes. The exceptions were breaking news, which are not announced separately and can be broadcast during any radio program. At the same time, the news is published on the radio station's website. Also, the emphasis was on the exclusive news.

We studied the broadcasts of the Echo of Moscow radio during the period when the summer protests in Moscow were actively covered by the mass media. At the time, the situation escalated around the elections to the Moscow City Duma. During the preparations for the elections, the protest actions prompted statements by independent candidates who accused the current government of violating the procedures for registering participants. The protests resulted in mass arrests.

V.V. Smirnov described the concept of a genre and its specificity in the radio journalism in his scientific work (Smirnov, 2002) [13]. He divided genres into informational, analytical, documentary and artistic. Also, to analyze the genre diversity of radio broadcasts, we used the works of A.A. Sherel. In his textbook the author divided genres according to the same principle (Sherel, 2005) [3].

As a talk radio station, the Echo of Moscow emphasized not only the coverage of events, but also the analysis of what was happening. The topics analyzed by us were covered in news bulletins several times a day. They did not contain the author's assessment, only the dry facts. However, in many cases, the news was supplemented with the comments, often live broadcasts from the rallies. We should note that the protesters willingly gave comments to the radio station without giving their names and surnames.

Also, on the air of the Echo of Moscow, Moscow rallies in the 2019-2021 were covered in the genres of analytical and informational interviews. For example, in the episodes of the "Personally Yours" radio program, you could often hear informational interviews. A guest was invited to the studio, or the presenter contacted him via audio and video. Famous media figures S. Aleksashenko, E. Roizman, A. Venediktov, S. Buntman and others were invited as guests. The analytical interview was aired on the "Minority Opinion" radio program. The presenters also invited politicians, public figures, scientists, etc. to the studio. As in the other programs of the Echo of Moscow radio station, the presenters changed with each release if these were not authorial programs.

The Deutschland Radio station was founded on 01.01.1994 based on three radio stations, one of which was of a pronounced propaganda character. Deutschland Radio in just a few years of existence managed to become the largest radio station in the country, as well as the most quoted in other German media, which proves its weight not only among listeners, but also among the journalistic community.

Deutschland Radio produces two programs: "Deutschlandfunk" and "Deutschland Radio Kultur". The main component of the first program is information, news; of the second one – culture. Both programs are completely free of advertising and are financed exclusively from targeted funds allocated from the federal budget.

For a more accurate analysis, the broadcasting grid of a full two months was reviewed. In total for this period, the radio station conducted three radio broadcasts dedicated to the protests in Moscow in 2019-2021.

The analyzed radio broadcasts were on the air in the morning and lasted for about five minutes. The episodes were brief informational notes about what was happening. Sometimes the speeches of Russian protesters taken from Echo of Moscow sounded on the air. Also, on one of the radio broadcasts, the journalist contacted by phone D. Lugovoi, the Russian representative of the federal government.

To identify manipulative techniques, we turned to the classification of S.A. Zelinsky (Zelinsky, 2008) [14]. In his scientific work, he writes that in journalism it is possible to manipulate the audience using the principle of priority, false evidence, "contrived" image of the enemy, shift of emphasis, reorientation of attention, ostentatious range of problems, stove piping, effect of believability and emotional charge of articles.

As a talk radio station, Echo of Moscow emphasized not only coverage of events, but also analysis of what was happening. The manipulation techniques described in scientific works were manifested only in the fact that public figures and people who adhere to opposition views were invited to the studio. Thus, the audience may not always see the full picture of what is happening in the world. After all, the task of journalism is to show the situation from all sides and assess it.

On the air of the Deutschland Radio station, there was an emotional charge, which was described by S.A. Zelinsky. Each issue began with a headline that attracted the listener's attention and held it (Zelinsky, 2008) [14]. For example, one of the issues began with the words "The Russian leadership is unsafe".

Conclusions

1. Both radio stations studied by us go on the air in a single information space of Russia. However, the form of presentation and coverage of rallies in Moscow in 2019-2021 at the radio stations had many differences. The Echo of Moscow radio station covered the most significant, in their opinion, news on the analyzed news issue. The radio station also reacted in more detail to the coverage of the rallies. Journalists more often conveyed analytical interviews. However, it should be noted that more often people adhering opposition views were invited to the studio. Thus, the journalists of the radio station to some extent manipulate the audience and cover what is happening only from one side. Conducting analytical interviews allows you to "get close to the fact", to make acquaintance with it gradually. The Deutschland Radio radio station has a more accurate form of information sharing. These are precisely the clear answers to classical questions (Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?) and building up the broadcasts in the form of an "inverted pyramid". The radio station's journalists often referred to Echo of Moscow radio in their programs and included the comments that were given to Echo correspondents. The broadcasts on this radio station are not cluttered with secondary details and unnecessary details that distract attention from the main content. At this radio station, you can also see the use of manipulative techniques, since the broadcast began with a lead-in, which was presented to the audience in a rather provocative tone.

2. The Echo of Moscow radio station provided more detailed coverage of the events in Moscow in 2019-2021. Journalists used the genre of analytical interviews, which, in our opinion, helped listeners to understand what was happening.

3. Both radio stations used manipulative techniques when covering rallies in Moscow.

4. At the Deutschland Radio station the broadcasts were presented in the informative genre. When an expert was invited to the studio, the journalist rarely delved into what was happening; he only learned his opinion on a specific informational issue.

5. The correspondents of both radio stations often inserted comments of experts or public figures into their programs as a reaction to the holding of rallies in Moscow. At the

same time, the correspondents and commentators of Deutschland Radio often referred in their news releases to the messages of the authors of Echo of Moscow radio.

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