

Contemporary Hit Radio as a format of radio stations-leaders in radio broadcasting

Galina L. Arsenteva

Kazan Federal University, Higher school of journalism, Russia

Email: info@ores.su

Abstract

The paper discusses one of the two radio format groups which are the most popular in Russia, namely, Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR) via theoretical and general scientific methods. In particular, using the methods of analogy and generalization, conclusions were made regarding the reasons for the popularity of this group of formats and the peculiarities of CHR in Russia were identified. The main conclusion of the study is based on the assumption that the radio stations of the CHR format group are by many parameters included in the top radio stations of Russia, including advertising volume and audience size.

Keywords: Station, Broadcasting, Radio Format, Audience.

Hit Radio Contemporánea como formato de emisoras de radio líderes en radiodifusión

Resumen

El artículo analiza uno de los dos grupos de formatos de radio que son los más populares en Rusia, a saber, Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR) a través de métodos científicos teóricos y generales. En particular, utilizando los métodos de analogía y generalización, se hicieron conclusiones sobre las razones de la popularidad de este grupo de formatos y se identificaron las peculiaridades de la CHR en Rusia. La conclusión principal del estudio se basa en la suposición de que las estaciones de radio del grupo de formato CHR se basan en muchos parámetros incluidos en las principales estaciones de radio de Rusia, incluido el volumen de publicidad y el tamaño de la audiencia.

Palabras clave: Estación, Radiodifusión, Formato de Radio, Audiencia.

1. Introduction

There are several definitions of the format used in modern scientific literature on radio journalism. In general, all of them are similar and complement each other, but in each of them the emphasis is made either in the style of the music, or on the characteristics of the audience. For example, the following definition: the format of a radio station is a type of broadcasting, and the way a station exists in the air combines the concepts of format and type of broadcasting. Another definition is that the format is the concept of a broadcasting station designed to attract a specific audience, taking into account its socio-demographic, psychotype, generational characteristics, lifestyle and even the level of spiritual development. In this study, the following definition most

fully reflects the theme: format is the style of musical radio programs designed to satisfy the tastes of a specific target audience. At the same time, the format is, without a doubt, not only the musical content of the ether, not only the style of music, but also the packaging for the ether, the work of the moderator, the programs and headings of the radio broadcast, the concept of morning broadcast, the image and technology of the ether and even the technical equipment of the studio.

In Russia and in the world, the most popular are radio formats of two large groups: Adult Contemporary (AC) and Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR). The Contemporary Hit Radio format group is designed for an audience of 15 to 35 years old, i.e. for a youth audience. As it seems to authors, the optimal division into subspecies of this format in Russia is the following: CHR Mainstream, CHR Dance, and CHR Rock. Radio stations belonging to these subspecies of the CHR format group differ by their musical stylistics and design (packaging of the air), but they have a common target audience, similarities in the programming of the ether, and also all belong to the musical or musical and information type of broadcasting and are commercial. It was the appearance of commercial radio stations in Russia in the early 1990s that contributed to the division of broadcasting into formats. In addition, an essential distinguishing feature of the radio channels became the sounding of advertising in them, which ultimately corresponded to the general format of the radio station, if not in the musical sense, then in relation to the target audience. Advertising has long become a part of our life and gives life to most commercial media, but almost 30 years ago in Russia the radio advertising was a noticeable innovation. Today, advertising is part of the audio stream on the radio, and therefore cannot be ignored in studies related to the formatting of radio stations. Moreover, there is an opinion among media theorists that the main type of good that commercial media sell is not the content sold to the audience, but the audience sold to the advertiser. In this case, the target audience for which the studied group of formats works acquires fundamental importance from the economic point of view on broadcasting (Smythe, 1981).

Also quite interesting is the fact that the radio stations simultaneously belong to the same group of formats, but at the same time are in different media holdings. And, according to some research data, if in the USA in the 1980s 20 corporations controlled more than 50% of the profits of radio stations, then today in Russia it is quite difficult to track the owners of broadcasting companies. At the same time, the lists of main advertisers are transparent and accessible, including the leaders in terms of the volume of advertising orders on the radio. All these phenomena of the activity of radio companies in Russia under market conditions are related to the existence and characteristics of any radio format, including CHR. This study was hosted with the aim of interpreting statistical data and comparing them with the content that CHR radio stations in Russia offer today. Also the issue of radio stations belonging to the studied group of formats, features of CHR and its subspecies in the country is in priority.

2. Methods

Empirical, theoretical, and general scientific methods were used in the work. In particular, using the method of analogy and comparison, we tried to find out which of the main radio stations in modern Russia can be attributed to each of the subspecies of the CHR format group and why. To this end, the content of the radio stations Europa Plus, DFM, Maximum, Record, and Love Radio, which are the most prominent representatives of CHR, was studied. The conclusions were made on the basis of live broadcasts of these stations, as well as using data from the official sites of the radio companies. During the observation, we evaluated the following radio elements according to the

appropriate format: music style, morning show, the work of a presenter, and packaging of the air, advertising, and news programs.

The method of analyzing statistical data allowed us to interpret the annual industry report of the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation, to compare the figures and confirm the hypothesis that CHR format radio stations are not only widely represented in the Russian FM today, but are also very popular. With the help of empirical data, the outstanding characteristics and programming features common to the whole group, as well as those that allowed the format of a given radio station from the research list to be assigned to a specific subtype from the Contemporary Hit Radio group, were identified.

3. Results

The Contemporary Hit Radio format group is aimed at a young audience of 15-35 years old. This is a fundamental element in the definition of this group of formats, and all subspecies of the CHR are based on it. In addition, the format requires the presence of charts, as it built entirely on modern hits. The rotation list, as a rule, is very limited, what is explained by the frequent repetition of tracks during a broadcast day. The presenters speak to the young audience in its language, in particular, when addressing listeners, they use the second person's pronoun, the singular, they actively use borrowings or words in English, the tempo of speech is high, intonations are aimed at emotional lift. The Mainstream CHR subspecies are operating in accordance with the above characteristics. Rock CHR is based on rock music hits, and the subspecies of Dance CHR based on dance music and dance arrangements for famous tracks.

Five large Russian radio stations for youth are Europa Plus, Maximum, Record, Love Radio, DFM; they belong to the studied group of formats along with some others. We settle on these radio stations because, in our opinion, they most fully demonstrate the features of Russian CHR broadcasting. All the studied radio stations are actively represented in social networks, what is reflected in the industry report of the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications. In particular, in the social network VKontakte, CHR-radio stations lead in the number of subscribers: Record has 3.67 million subscribers, Europa Plus - 2.90 million, DFM - 1.2 million. By the way, the third place in the list is occupied by the Energy radio station, which also has a CHR format, with its 1.6 million subscribers. The popularity of CHR-format radio stations is indirectly confirmed by the cost of commercials on the radio. According to the latest data of the Mediascope company posted on the Rospechat (Federal Agency on Press and Mass Communications) website, the Europa Plus, DFM, Love Radio, and Record radio stations are in the TOP-20 according to the results of the tariff policy from July to December 2016 in Russia among cities with a population of over 100 thousand people, and the Europa Plus radio station is in the first place in this list (Ivanov, 2018).

In addition, if we look at the demographic tables, then in Russia, with the exception of Moscow and St. Petersburg, the main age cohorts of the radio audience are 12-19 (6.3%), 20-29 (20.4%) and 30-39 years (22.2%), which in total is 48.9% of radio listeners. This means that almost half of Russia's radio listeners are at the age of the target audience of radio stations of the CHR format group. If you look at the numbers of the average annual audience share (AQH Share) of radio stations, measured in Russia in 2016, then four of the radio stations studied under were this paper in the top twenty, and Radio Maximum is in 22nd place. At the same time, the Europa Plus radio station ranks first with a large margin - 9.5% against 6.6% from the Russkoye Radio which is in second place (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2005).

4. Discussion

In the five radio stations we are considering, all the subtypes of the Contemporary Hit Radio format are presented. Radio Europa Plus and Love Radio can be attributed to the Mainstream CHR, radio Maximum is a subspecies of Rock CHR, and Dance CHR in our list are the radio stations DFM and Record. In addition to musical stylistics, we identified the following fundamental differences in the concepts of broadcasting data from radio stations: 1) Radio Maximum has the most extensive rotation list, since it builds broadcasting on popular music, regardless of its entry into the latest charts. At the same time, the radio station has an American presenter who is fluent in Russian at a sufficiently high level (the presenter's name is Adam Jays); 2) Europa Plus and Love Radio broadcast socio-political news, including regional; 3) DFM and Record radio stations are the most heavy radio stations in terms of musical direction, which can be attributed to a rather narrow group of dance music, in addition, they change the format of the CHR to Club format in the evening and night radio, which stands out not only from the musical point of view, but also the point of view of hosting the air: it is transmitted to professional club DJs, who usually play their music live, while technologically the process of their work differs from the work of full-time presenters (Subbotin, 2016).

Particularly noteworthy is the second item concerning the inclusion of socio-political news programs in the CHR format. In this regard, we add that Roskomnadzor (Federal Supervision Agency for Information Technologies, Communications and Mass Media) notes a tendency to reduce the thematic scope of the concepts that radio stations offer when participating in competitions for the right to host terrestrial broadcasting using specific radio frequencies. Among the concepts offered by radio stations, the most are entertainment and information orientation concepts. Concepts with educational content are less frequently proposed. Thus, Mainstream CHR format radio stations are trying to attract an audience by deepening the format using information broadcasting. Perhaps this is due to the tendency of consumers to seek sources of information that are close to them in spirit. They rate such sources as better ones (Everette and Dennis, 1996).

As for the morning shows and the segmentation of the daily broadcast, the CHR radio stations are similar to each other in many respects. In particular, the morning shows are presented by several presenters, the themes of the day are discussed in a comic manner, and the interactivity is quantitatively high with a predominance of games, quizzes and cantrips. According to experts, the main work on the air design in the stations focused on music broadcasting has a distinct seasonal character. This is confirmed by the annual monitoring of these radio stations: for example, the packaging of the air is reprogrammed for New Year holidays, in the spring, for the summer holiday season, etc. The active rotation of foreign music implies not only the use of borrowed vocabulary, but also an appeal to foreign holidays and national traditions. According to the above statistics, CHR radio stations occupy a leading position in many respects. However, the issue of preserving the current state of affairs is relevant in the current transition situation of digital television and radio broadcasting. If the demand for terrestrial TV by the population is decreasing due to the natural growth of alternative means of distribution of TV channels, then experts say that the popularity of radio remains at the same level due to the increase in the number of mobile listeners and despite the outflow of wired and stationary receivers. This suggests that in the new technical and technological conditions, the tendency to increase remains for the younger audience of broadcasting again (Shirley, 2006).

5. Conclusion

1. The number and official cost of commercials in radio stations of CHR-formats, the average annual share figures for the audience of radio stations in Russian cities with a population of over 100 thousand people and over 12 years, as well as falling almost half of the entire audience of listeners into the age range from 12 to 39 years old directly or indirectly indicate a high popularity of Contemporary Hit Radio.
2. In the Russian broadcasting, three subspecies from the Contemporary Hit Radio are presented: Mainstream CHR, Dance CHR, Rock CHR format group. The main elements of the similarity of these subspecies are in the principles of programming of the ether, in the feed and speed of the musical content, in the manner of hosting the ether, in the structure of the morning shows. The fundamental similarity is based on the age characteristics of the target audience (young people aged 15-35) and the presence of charts on the air.
3. CHR radio stations in the historic moment of the transition to digital broadcasting are actively seeking alternative sources to attract audiences. In particular, they successfully use the capabilities of social networks, develop Internet versions and mobile applications.
4. All of the radio stations studied by us have certain signs of mixed formatting. This suggests that in a situation of high competition, radio stations are looking for ways to attract an audience inside the main air. Trends in the transformation of CHR-formats, the so-called evolution of formats, the issue of preserving the main format features, the place of other formats in Russian broadcasting, so, all this can be continued in subsequent studies.

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