

Trends of Journalistic Investigation Genre Development in Russian Media

Tatiana A. Nagovitsina and Ramis R. Gazizov

Kazan Federal University, Kremliovskaya Str. 18, 420008 Kazan, Russian Federation

Abstract: The study examines the transformation of journalistic investigation genre using the example of Russian media. The researchers are focused on the problems of journalistic investigation transformation from the perspective of problem-thematic trend. On the basis of the current practice analysis of one Russian TV channel, there are the following most frequent and intensively developing journalistic investigations: political, social, economic, criminal one. The political and social investigations are highlighted especially. The researchers explain this by new demands of the audience interested in the actual results of investigative journalist operation. The researchers identified the audience preferences in the process of consumption of the genre of journalistic investigation according to a number of criteria: age, gender, thematic preferences, TV program and TV channel choice motivation. Considering journalistic investigation as the result of an a journalist active intervention in addressing the most pressing issues of public life, the researchers identify the features of the modern period of investigative journalism genre development. The key feature is the close interdependence from the factor of audience/auditorium preferences. Highlighting the criminal, political and social forms of investigative journalism is conditioned by the increased attention of the audience to these topical trends. This helps to develop a new autonomous genre species the thematic investigative journalism.

Key words: Journalistic investigation, muckrakers, thematic transformation, mass media, journalistic genre

INTRODUCTION

In the modern practice of Foreign and domestic media investigative journalism is presented quite widely. The changes in the political, economic and social spheres predetermined the demand for investigative journalism and its impact on all spheres of public life. Activating public opinion, investigative journalism acts not only as a modern media product but also as an incentive of serious social problems solution. This is especially, true in terms of aggravated international conflicts, requiring constant public scrutiny and analysis.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The formation and the development of Russian investigative journalism was influenced by a huge experience accumulated in this field by outstanding domestic and Foreign journalists. Journalistic investigation as one of creative activity kinds was discussed in the thesis written by Berger (2006) and Zubarkina (2009).

There were always some ups and losses in journalism, including regional one, which is reflected in the study by Garifullin and Sabirova (2015). Similarly, journalistic investigation was developed in a spiral way. The

important trends in which the study of this kind of journalism should be carried out are described by the leading theorists of journalism, in particular by Eijk (2005). Two opposing concepts of investigative journalism were developed in Russian science, which differ both theoretically and practically. If the representatives of the practice concept are inclined to assume that the journalistic investigation by creative activity of a journalist, the supporters of the theoretical concept consider the investigative journalism as the genre of journalism. For instance, Tertychny (2000) relates journalistic investigation to a separate analytical genre. According to Konstantinov's opinion the investigative journalism is the method of journalism, which includes the search, the disclosure and the investigation of some facts, which for some reasons were outside the public attention.

Today in the domestic theory of journalism, the trend to the presentation of investigative journalism not only as a method or a genre is growing. For example, according to Mishchenko (2005), journalistic investigation should be considered in the totality of its all constituent characteristics, defining it not only as the phenomenon of political correctness but also as a form developing trend (Konstantinov, 2003).

As commonly understood, the establishment of investigative journalism was contributed to American “muckrakers”, who appeared in the late XIXth early XXth century. This term was first used by US President Theodore Roosevelt in his speech on April 14, 1906 in Washington, during the foundation of the House of Representatives Building (Mishchenko, 2005). The industrial revolution of 20-40’s of the XIXth century in the United States led to the emergence of corruption, requiring the exposure of senior citizens who violated the law. For the first time in journalism, an American reporter of the study “Territorial Enterprise” Clemens began to write incriminating material about the officials, judges and lawyers. For a long time, American journalism brought its changes in social processes due to investigative journalism. However, there are restrictions on the activities of such journalists in the course of time. They suggest a “neutral” behavior and the most important thing is to write about politics, without expressing one’s opinion. Thus in 1950, when Senator Joseph McCarthy in the state department opposed the so-called “205 communists”, the work of journalists was limited only to the records about McCarthy charges. In this regard, Douglas Cater, in his book “The fourth power” emphasized that the degree of mass media failure, which was demonstrated by McCarthyism may be measured by the fact that only a few journalists who were constantly writing reports on McCarthy’s activities, unquestioningly believed in him, others simply feared and hated him (Anonymous, 1989). By the way in the same book, Douglass Cater called mass media “the fourth power”. This expression became widespread, and largely because of the mass media that which were quite satisfied by such an assessment of their status and role in society.

Nelson (2000) continued the issue raised by Douglas (1959) Cater concerning a journalist independence: “News as they are” is an absolute commandment for a greater part of journalism, which became a straitjacket for the destruction of a reporter’s initiative and independence.

In Russia, a journalistic investigation is traditionally associated with such names as A.S. Pushkin, V.M. Doroshevich, V.A. Gilyarovskiy, N.S. Leskov, V.G. Korolenko, M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin and others. In the early 1990’s, the Russian press provided the first materials under the heading “Journalistic investigation”. The interest for investigative journalism in the Russian media, according to our observations was actualized during the last decade of the last century, due to the processes of publicity. The socially relevant materials on violations in various spheres of public life appear due to publicity. Based on the analysis of investigative journalism historical aspects development, we may

conclude that during recent years, the operation of investigative journalists was intensified in Russia. The operation was most evident on television.

The sociological survey was conducted within this study which revealed the main features of the journalistic investigation on Russian television and outlined the directions of genre transformation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There is a lot of investigative journalism projects on Russian television channels now. The program “Man and Law” (First channel) is one of the most popular, which is watched by 89% of this channel viewers according to Russian study data. The program focuses on criminal topics, ethics, investigative journalists projects, the effectiveness of investigations. The program collected extensive material which provides a complete picture of the regional problems in the area of crime. The journalists of this TV project seek to raise the most urgent issues related to the violation of law, justice and the involvement of senior officials in these processes, without the fear of their exposure, even in situations where a journalist is threatened.

The sociological survey was conducted within the study to identify the preferences of the audience TV programs. Total 100 people (40 men and 60 women) at the age from 18-65 year with a higher or incomplete higher education took part in the survey. During the analysis of the responses to the proposed issues the thematic preferences of the program “Man and Law” audience were revealed. The following programs were especially popular among the journalistic investigations: The criminal, social, political, economic and others (Table 1).

According to the study, the Russian TV program “Man and Law” is watched by the following age groups (Table 2):

The following answers were given to question of this program popularity (Table 3). Today, one can say with a full confidence that TV journalistic investigations impact

Table 1: Investigation issue in Russia

Investigation issues	Preference share (%)
Social	25
Economic	10
Political	15
Criminal	47
Other	3

Table 2: Analysis of interest developing in different ages through TV channel

Ages	The amount of viewers (%)
18 -25	20
26-40	30
41-65	35
65 and >65	15

Table 3: Audience arguments about TV programs

Audience arguments	The amount of viewers (%)
This Russian television program is a unique one	45
Interesting topic	35
An unusual presentation of materials	10
An attractive image of the host; A. Pimanov	10

positively on all spheres of modern life. Their role in all spheres of social life, the information servicing of viewers and the formation of the target audience is considered to be a common one. The journalistic investigative projects on Russian television at the present time are an effective method of socially significant information transformation in the field of politics, law and the social sphere. The program "Man and Law" on the first channel gives viewers the opportunity to meet not only with the violations in a particular area but also to learn the views of experts on these issues. The popularity of the program "Man and Law" is growing every year.

Summary: Investigative TV projects on Russian television demonstrate the thematic transformation of the genre. As our survey showed during the last years, the First Channel viewers are interested in criminal topics as well as in social and political ones. The establishment of a negative event specific causes and the choice of solution method to the problems raised in the material distinguish journalistic investigation from other genres. Genre and thematic transformation of a journalistic investigation, in our view will lead to the appearance of new autonomous genre. The quality journalistic investigation helps society not only to fight against negative phenomena but also to prevent them.

CONCLUSION

Thus, we came to the conclusion that with all the diversity of subjects Russian television investigation are united by the presence of egregious facts, the analysis of events and the researchers's own position.

The fact that watching television programs takes a lot of free time among Russian spectators is explained by the large number of investigative journalistic programs on the federal and regional TV channels. Today, one may talk with a full confidence about the positive impact of investigative journalism on all spheres of public life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The research is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

REFERENCES

- Anonymous, 1989. Theodor Roosevelt Cyclopedia. London; New York, pp: 204.
- Berger, N.V., 2006. Journalistic investigation as the method of journalism. Thesis; Doctor of Phil. Sciences. Spb., pp: 423.
- Douglas, C., 1959. The Fourth Branch of Government. New York, pp: 269.
- Eijk, D., 2005. Defining investigative journalism. Investigative Journalism in Europe. Edited by Dick van Eijk Amsterdam, pp: 13.
- Garifullin, V.Z., and L.R. Sabirova, 2015. The anniversary of the Tatar Journalism: Its progress and losses. J. of Language and Literature, 6 (2): 132-135.
- Konstantinov, A.D., 2003. Journalistic investigation: history and current practice of the method. SPb., pp: 383.
- Mishchenko, S.A., 2005. Investigative journalism and the system of modern periodicals genre in Russia. Thesis; Krasnodar, pp: 194.
- Nelson, M., 2000. Why the Media Presidents and Presidents hate the Media. Virginia Quarterly Review. No. 2, pp: 225.
- Tertychny, A.A., 2000. Investigative Journalism. M. Aspect Press, pp: 384.
- Zubarkina, E.S., 2009. Journalistic investigation: History and Practice of author TV programs. Thesis; Doctor of Phil. Sciences, pp: 170.