

ETHICS IN LOCAL INFORMATION SERVICES BROADCASTED IN TRANS-REGIONAL RADIO STATIONS IN POLAND

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Abstract

For many years, the rules of ethical behavior in the media is one of the most important scientific issues. The increasing specialization of the media makes it in many cases very difficult to maintain the objectivity of the information. It is especially difficult when you are dealing with trans-regional media, which can not only broadcast throughout the country but also locally. The specific structure of the program makes the keeping of the rules of journalistic ethics requires many efforts. Article informs us about the specifics of local news in the trans-regional radio stations. Due to their nature, it's very hard to keep the rules of journalistic ethics. Although it is not impossible.

The text presents not only the difficulties that journalists of trans-regional radio stations have to face but also possibilities of avoiding staying in conflict with the principles of journalistic ethics.

Method that was used in text is ethnographic case study. It was examined an example of trans-regional radio station operating on the basis of trans-regional concessions. Ethnographic case study method was possible to use due to the fact that the author of the publication was an employee the audited station, so that he could to learn the rules of its functioning from the inside.

Keywords:Media, journalism, ethics, information service, broadcasting

Introduction

Ethics in the media in recent times is a common theme in the way not only variety of scientific treatises, but also during the discussion about means of information stations. In modern times – especially in recent years – we have to face flood of information.

For a long time major news media – newspapers, radio and television – do not have a monopoly on information. Also, the Internet is no longer like a few years ago. Everywhere we are dealing with a specialization. Once in a television, newspaper, radio or website you can get information, find entertainment and learn. Now it's past.

All around the world media companies are creating theme TV stations, formatted radio stations, information portals. All of these initiatives are directed to the receiver set to a specific message. Most people know which TV station gives latest information. People listening to the radio know where is the music that they are looking for. Readers critically look at the titles Releases knowing who is considered the most reliable in the topic.

Therefore, there was a situation that the news on thematic TV and formatted radio stations have been marginalized to a minimum. The whole weight of the transmission of current news fell on the news stations. The other are limited only to give only basic information services that allow listeners and viewers to keep up when it comes to major events.

In this context, the publisher every day have a very difficult task - a fair and complete transmission of information.

These considerations will be limited only to information services presented on the air of trans-regional radio stations during the so called “local broadcasting”. To introduce the characteristics of these elements of the program, I’ll briefly describe the structure of information blocks in this type of stations. This analysis will help to understand how difficult it is to maintain the basic principles of ethics in the media of this type.

A few words about the ethics of journalism

By definition, ethics are rules of behavior based on ideas about what is morally good and bad, in a given era and its particular community or system. In other words, these are the assessment, standards, principles and ideals defining beliefs, behaviors and actions deemed appropriate. As a result, ethics helps to understand and appreciate what is good.

From experience we know that every area of human life is guided by ethics. In the case of journalism, the situation is similar. Therefore, the ethical standards for the profession of journalism are included in all kinds of codes.¹

Please note that ethical codes are valid only at the time when they are recognized by professional journalists. There are in fact no other rights that might take precedence sanctioning their validity and compliance. And while on the one hand they allow the journalist to the set of his action to the truth presented in a faithful and honest, on the other they have only the meaning of honor. Moreover, they apply only in conscience.

The media reports indisputably the most important is to preserve the truth. Truth is the adequacy of the content of the judgment with the real state of things. The truth can be known through continuous exploration, thanks to the cooperation and assistance of others. In the opinion of many authors, the truth is not limited to truthfulness. It is also the compatibility of communication with the inner truth of presented cases. This requires from a journalist effort that will allow him to know the subject in the fullest possible manner in the free way from any assumptions.

Passing the truth is not only the right approach to the described subject. This is also the correct ratio of transmission to recipients. Always, without any exception media must treat them in a subjective way. Do not forget that each of them is a free and rational, which implies both – the right to accept or reject the journalists arguments.

Prerequisite for good transfer of information is that it was a reliable and honest and based on some sources. Important is that at every step – from gathering, through development, to the use of it – the message has to be related to and consistent with the truth.

Collecting information should be done according to respect for single people and whole social classes. This solution should be used also during selection of information.²

Each stage of journalistic work should be maintained objectivity. It is a condition to communicate the truth of the recipient. Therefore, a journalist can not forget that the man is conditioned in different ways. Therefore, should first of all keep their distance from the case and stick to the facts. Another important element should be striving to remain impartial by rejecting prejudices and assumptions. He should also be factual and try at all costs not undergo any influence, which allows him to stay independent.

Objectivity of journalist, however, does not depend only on himself. This is due to the fact that during his work he acquires the messages from the subjective informers. That is why he is forced not only to collect material from many sources and to complete information, but also present different points of view.³

¹ Boyd A., *Dziennikarstwo radiowo – telewizyjne: techniki tworzenia programów informacyjnych*, Kraków 2006. str. 299.

² *Ibidem* pp. 66.

³ *Ibidem* pp. 279.

As you can see, ethics imposes on the work of the journalist many requirements and responsibilities. Keeping its rules often forced to significantly increase the effort and increase the expenditure incurred during the preparation of the publication. Adapting of the material to the generally accepted moral norms takes place at every stage of creation and requires repeated control of reliability, objectivity and accuracy. However, the final effect of all of this is undoubtedly a reliable and ethically correct work of the journalist, that successfully becomes a reliable and credible source of information for all of your readers.

Features of local news in trans-regional radio stations

Trans-regional radio stations broadcast their program through a network of local radio stations. At the beginning, the network was formed based on local branches.

In most cases trans-regional radio stations are formatted stations. It means that they are broadcasting program dedicated to specific group of listeners (teenagers, 40+) or with specified music format (jazz, classic, rock).

Broadcasting system in trans-regional radio stations is made to minimize costs without losing attractiveness for listeners. It would be easy if it was only transferring broadcasting from central studio to local branch and then forward it to listener. In time, media companies and holdings could afford to buy small local stations and transform them into their local branches. Over the years, companies have also begun to apply franchising that gives you the ability to "territorial expansion" practically without incurring the costs associated with organizing new editorials.

However, keep in mind the fact that having a local branch is not only a radio transmitter and possibly a small editorial. Such an investment is associated primarily with the acquisition of concession to broadcast on the airwaves in the region. Of course, such a concession assumes that the program will more or less have a local character. Unfortunately - the realization of this clause only by broadcasting from central editorial is infeasible.

Simply enter a the following example - trans-regional station with headquarters in Warsaw and ten regional offices. Typically, the license requires local stations to include in its program from 10% to 20% of a local program. This gives you more or less 2.5 and 5 hours scheme which treats only about local matters.

If the broadcaster wishes to implement the provisions of the concession at the same time broadcast the program only from central editorial, in the best case, the listener would have to deal with extremely inconsistent show, which every two hours moves into another area of the country. If the number of branches larger than 10 - broadcasters simply run out of time to complete the records of concession.

Towards of this situation trans-regional stations have decided to keep model of program with so-called "local broadcasting".

All day program is been broadcasted from the central newsroom, where from via satellite signal is transmitted to the local branches of the station. Just from there, using terrestrial transmitters, it's emitted on the air. Broadcasting the local stations takes place using a special computer program that allows you to receive and re-transmit the satellite signal from central newsroom.

To comply with records of the concession (and indirectly to the attach listeners to the station), at certain pores satellite broadcast from the central studio is interrupted. At that time, each of the local branches start with "local emission". Because each branch gives its own broadcast, and after its completion central studio starts its broadcasting, the local emission is also called the "local broadcasting".

It is widely accepted that within "local broadcasting", on-air radio features news and information programs. Most often you can hear them in two forms - local news (in addition to general information service) and local news magazine.

The magazine is usually a presenters band lasting two hours. The network schedule is placed late in the afternoon, what allows for a summary of the events of the day in an extensive and exhaustive way.

Local news is a short “local broadcasting”, which due to time constraints allow for the presentation of two pieces of information read form, or one with short sounds reportage.

Practice shows that local news are usually placed in the network schedule after the overall news transmitted from the central studio. For this reason, its length is limited to approximately one minute. At this time, in addition to the information must still fit jingles, which indicate the beginning and the end of the local news. Jingles lasts about 5 seconds each, which in turn limits the time that can be used for the presentation of information for 50 seconds.

Fifty seconds –this amount of time is available to local news publisher to present information in a fair, clear, accurate and comprehensive way. It should also be noted that more and more editorials focuses on the quality of information and work of their own editors. This is expressed in issuing information using reporter sounds. For this reason, the publisher has even less time for the presentation of information.

Keep in mind that a journalist – reporter, who works on the subjects is obliged to prepare it according to the rules of journalistic ethics. Therefore, he’s not only trying to delve into the topic, get to know it and understand it. He also makes every effort to deplete him. That’s why he strives to ensure that he reaches all parties and obtain statements and positions of the maximum number of persons involved in the issue.

In the case of radio journalism reporter based primarily on statements recorded by him during the conversation. However, many times the subject is much more extensive and requires explanations that reporter placed in the input or the end of the recorded statement.

Of course, it can be assumed that the reporter focuses only on reliable and complete presentation of the subject. However, the practice shows that the publisher does not only has the ability, but also has an obligation to suggest a reporter form in which the information should be prepared. In such a situation, the reporter makes a preliminary analysis and processing of the collected material, so that the publisher was not forced to complete reediting information.

However, if the reporter fails to develop the subject in line with expectations publisher, he is forced to work earnestly, that will allow him to "fit" the information in the allotted time (fifty seconds), while retaining the same meaning and significance of it.

Difficulties in maintaining the principles of journalistic ethics

The publisher may receive material from a reporter in four forms⁴:

1. Text information interspersed with sounds (recorded statements of adversaries);
2. Text information announcing a short reportage, that by using carefully selected questions, answers, speech and sound effects, is to give the recipient image of the subject of the information;
3. "Mouth" - a brief announcement to the sound, in which the reporter personally discuss the topic;
4. SPEC - a brief announcement to the sound, in which the reporter personally presents topic and illustrates the contributors adversaries.

Shortening of the first type of materials seems to be the easiest for the publisher. This is due to the fact that the publisher can correct practically every piece of information. If the publisher after hearing the prepared material sees that it does not have time to present it within the stipulated time, it must decide what and how to change to get the desired effect.

⁴ Ibidem pp. 324 – 342.

In this case, most often begins with an analysis of the text. After noting the all the information the publisher may try to find a sentences that can be removed. Editor should be very careful, because such activity can radically change the meaning of reporter material. Removing sentences or fragments may deprive the listener of relevant information. It may also make it difficult to understand the message and, in extreme cases, misrepresent reality. Therefore, in any case, you must not remove the formulations relevant to discuss the heart of the matter. Also, the inclusions must be removed very rarely, mostly because they allow the listener to properly understand the issues.

The second thing publisher can do with announced is the simplification of the text. It often happens that reporters try to explain topic using detailed descriptions. With good efficiency publishers often can replace many words with one. Then there are all sorts of useful collocations.

Unfortunately, in this case also may occur irregularities. Simplifying text brings the threat changes its meaning.

As for other forms of radio journalism, the publisher has a very limited field of action. This is due to the fact that the reporter supplies audio finished material, which forms a whole. Under the assumption that the reporter is preparing information in accordance with the guidelines of the publisher, the whole should be drafted so as to read the announcement and sound emission with the possible ending lasted no more than the allowed duration of a local news service. Otherwise, the publisher is faced with the need considerable interference in the form of information.

In this case, issue is so difficult that the design of this type of information implies a short announcement and cohesive sound material. Obviously the publisher may shorten or simplify the announcement and ending but it is usually so short that the effect does not meet up to expectations.

The second activity that publisher may take is interference in the audio material. In the case of the "picture" action is relatively simple, because he can shorten or delete the sound effects appear in a material. However, should be remembered that they are most often placed by a certain logic, and therefore cause – effect link, they often not allowed their complete removal. Similarly, consideration should be maximum when it comes to editing statements. Of course we must remember to keep their meaning and expression.

It is much harder shorten the "mouth of" that is spoken reporter's report. This is due to the fact that the sound material is made of one statement that simplification is not possible. Here, the publisher has very little maneuverability. The only intervention for which he can afford is the removal of these elements statements that do not directly relate to the topic. However, in the case of an experienced reporter, those are mostly the not there.⁵

The so-called. SPEC is the largest and also the most difficult task for the publisher. This is due not only to the fact that information is transmitted personally by a reporter, but also because it contains the different types of sounds and speech signals, which are connected together constitute a full-fledged material reporter. SPEC is a kind of "picture" with the narration. In addition, well-prepared SPEC is designed so that it provides a uniform product. Removal of any of its elements completely changes its meaning or even makes it incomprehensible. Here – as in "picture", the publisher must proceed very carefully with each of its parts. Nevertheless, in most cases, it turns out that the material is designed so that the publisher can not make any interference. Every since his operation leads to changes in the content and meaning of the material, which makes it incompatible with the facts and at the same time worthless from the standpoint of journalism.

⁵ Ibidem pp. 363.

Unfortunately, the majority of publishers in the local branches of trans-regional station does not have any other possibility of such rewrite the material in order to have enough time available for its emission. Therefore, they are often in the situation in which it is better to dispense emission at all. If the publisher is faced with a choice - publish all the material risking that there is not enough time for its emission; reword it by removing certain elements and to jeopardize its reliability as a journalist; and finally to give up its emissions - mostly opting for the latter solution.

It must be remembered that although the problem seems to be difficult and often impossible to solve, many experienced journalists (especially radio publishers) very well aware of the fact that the minute is a very long time. Many authors notes that the attention of the listener returns the first 5-7 seconds reportage. For the experienced publisher brief introduction to the reportage is enough to judge whether it intended for fill local service 60 seconds. At the same time efficient reporter knows which elements should be avoided in order to not unnecessarily increase the size of the reportage compiled by him.

So it's time to answer the question in the introduction: Is it possible to observe the rules of journalistic ethics in local news reports in trans-regional radio stations?

The author is convinced that, yes. Of course, this characterization of the work puts a lot of difficulties, but in most cases they are not impossible to solve.

To make sure that local news will always be made in accordance with the principles of journalistic ethics really is enough keep a few basic principles, that rely mainly on solid cooperation publisher with a reporter. Publisher clearly should inform the reporter what material is expected. The reporter must be aware that the topic should be depleted in a specific period of time. On the other hand, the reporter should inform the editor which the finished material elements are less important, or even can be removed without changing the meaning of the prepared information. The ideal would be if the publisher obliged to correct the resulting material, consult the changes made to a reporter before the issuance of the revised version. However, assuming full professionalism of employees in the newsroom, in fact, consultation is necessary.

Conclusion

Summarizing the above considerations it can be concluded, that regardless of the nature of the information service which is prepared for the needs of the radio station, and regardless of the type of reportage supplied publisher, maintain an appropriate level on the air can be guaranteed only through the involvement of all the people participating in creating the final production, which is a local information service.

It is impossible for a serious approach to the subject when the publisher cannot or do not want to clearly formulate their expectations according to delegated tasks. It is also difficult to interfere with the material when the publisher completely doesn't know anything about the situation reportage is about.

Thus, in the vast majority success of the task which is preserving all the rules of journalistic ethics depends not only on the professionalism and experience of practitioners, but also the relationship prevailing between the members of the editorial and cooperation skills and a clear articulation of their expectations, needs and concerns.

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