

**FUNCTIONAL DIFFERENTIATION OF THE CONCEPTS "GENRE" AND  
"FORMAT" IN SPORTS BROADCAST JOURNALISM**

***DIFERENCIAÇÃO FUNCIONAL DOS CONCEITOS "GÊNERO" E "FORMATO" NO  
JORNALISMO DE TRANSMISSÃO ESPORTIVA***

***DIFERENCIACIÓN FUNCIONAL DE LOS CONCEPTOS "GÉNERO" Y "FORMATO"  
EN EL PERIODISMO DE RADIODIFUSIÓN DEPORTIVA***

Gulsina MURTAZINA<sup>1</sup>  
Marina GOLOKOVA<sup>2</sup>  
Natalia BERDYSHEVA<sup>3</sup>  
Nina BOJKOVA<sup>4</sup>  
Madina KARAZHAEVA<sup>5</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The social significance of sports and interest in it caused by unpredictable results, dramatic events and acute conflicts make sports attractive to journalists from different mass media working in a variety of genres and formats. Due to the introduction of new communication channels, the use of high technologies and growing competition with online broadcasts, the established system of genres in television journalism has been blurred. It lost its clear typology, merged some genres and broke the traditional canons by adopting hybrid groups of entertainment content (talk show, reality show). Study aims at systematizing such concepts as "genre" and "format" in sports journalism. Television sports broadcasting acts as a special discourse. The authors of the article defined the format of television sports broadcasting and considered its connection with traditional journalistic genres. They also overviewed such a media product as the Russian sports TV channel "Match TV" in terms of its quality.

**KEYWORDS:** Digital television. Sports journalism. Genre. Format. Sports TV channel.

**RESUMO:** *O significado social do esporte e o interesse por ele causado por resultados imprevisíveis, eventos dramáticos e conflitos agudos tornam o esporte atrativo para jornalistas de diversos meios de comunicação de massa que atuam em diversos gêneros e formatos. Com a introdução de novos canais de comunicação, o uso de altas tecnologias e a crescente competição com as transmissões online, o sistema de gêneros estabelecido no telejornalismo se esfumou. Perdeu sua tipologia clara, fundiu alguns gêneros e quebrou os*

<sup>1</sup> Lesgaft National State University (LNSU), Saint-Petersburg – Russia. Associate Professor. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3423-7922>. E-mail: [g.murtazina@lesgaft.spb.ru](mailto:g.murtazina@lesgaft.spb.ru)

<sup>2</sup> Lesgaft National State University (LNSU), Saint-Petersburg – Russia. Associate Professor. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4675-7175>. E-mail: [m.golokova@lesgaft.spb.ru](mailto:m.golokova@lesgaft.spb.ru)

<sup>3</sup> Lesgaft National State University (LNSU), Saint-Petersburg – Russia. Associate Professor. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0970-2522>. E-mail: [n.berdysheva@lesgaft.spb.ru](mailto:n.berdysheva@lesgaft.spb.ru)

<sup>4</sup> Lesgaft National State University (LNSU), Saint-Petersburg – Russia. Associate Professor. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7594-141X>. E-mail: [n.g.bojkova@mail.ru](mailto:n.g.bojkova@mail.ru)

<sup>5</sup> Lesgaft National State University (LNSU), Saint-Petersburg – Russia. Associate Professor. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5078-2448>. E-mail: [k-madina@mail.ru](mailto:k-madina@mail.ru)

*cânones tradicionais ao adotar grupos híbridos de conteúdo de entretenimento. O estudo visa sistematizar conceitos como "gênero" e "formato" no jornalismo esportivo. A transmissão esportiva televisiva funciona como um discurso especial. Os autores do artigo definiram o formato da transmissão esportiva televisiva e consideraram sua ligação com os gêneros jornalísticos tradicionais. Eles também analisaram um produto de mídia como o canal de TV esportivo russo "Match TV" em termos de qualidade.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Televisão digital. Jornalismo esportivo. Gênero. Formato. Canal de TV esportiva.*

**RESUMEN:** *La trascendencia social del deporte y el interés que suscitan los resultados impredecibles, los hechos dramáticos y los conflictos agudos hacen que el deporte sea atractivo para los periodistas de diferentes medios de comunicación que trabajan en una variedad de géneros y formatos. Debido a la introducción de nuevos canales de comunicación, el uso de altas tecnologías y la creciente competencia con las transmisiones en línea, el sistema establecido de géneros en el periodismo televisivo se ha desdibujado. El estudio tiene como objetivo sistematizar conceptos como "gênero" y "formato" en el periodismo deportivo. La retransmisión deportiva televisiva actúa como un discurso especial. Los autores del artículo definieron el formato de la retransmisión deportiva televisiva y consideraron su conexión con los géneros periodísticos tradicionales. También revisaron un producto de medios como el canal de televisión deportivo ruso "Match TV" en términos de calidad.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Televisión digital. Periodismo desportivo. Género. Canal deportivo.*

## Introduction

The infrastructure of state broadcast television networks began its modernization with the all-Russian compulsory public television and replacement of the analog signal with digital terrestrial TV in 2009. Now analog channels are being replaced with digital ones and the number of non-terrestrial (paid) channels is growing (cable, satellite, interactive TV). The audiovisual possibilities of television journalism represented by three semiotic groups (verbal – text; visual – video, photographs, infographics; acoustic – noise, music) allow using the product of journalistic creativity in a wide variety of forms. This is where two terms intersect: "genre" which means a combination of texts based on common essential features of publications included in a stable group of texts and "format" that is often used in journalism and has become a kind of synonym to "genre" (LAZUTINA, 2010; MURTAZINA, 2021).

The etymology of the word "genre" goes back to Latin (generis – "genus, species, tribe, generation") and was further adopted by the Romance languages (Italian genere, French genre, etc.). Starting from the first printed newspaper "The Vedomosti (bulletin) on military and other affairs deserving to be known and remembered which have taken place in Moscow

state or neighboring countries" of 1703, a proto-genre typology of printed texts was developing in Russia. Nevertheless, the "Russian system of genres" was fully formed only in the Soviet era (AKHMADULIN, 2021).

From the viewpoint of speech reproduction, a genre is a stable type of text distinguished by certain structural, content and stylistic features. These typical characteristics underlie the definition of the genre. The established system of genres includes informational, analytical and artistic-journalistic groups, based primarily on functional criteria (BOIKOVA, 2019). A large number of definitions allows identifying their main characteristics, content, and forms. Journalistic genres are close to the genres of literary works, united by a set of formal and content properties and defined as stable forms of journalistic works. Many scholars pay attention to the fact that the genres of newspaper journalism have lost their "stable form". As the journalistic profession develops, they transform, intertwine and complement each other (ALEKSEEV; ILCHENKO, 2016; AKHMADULIN, 2021; GUREVICH, 2004; KACHKAEVA; SHOMOVA, 2017; KEMARSKAYA, 2010; KOLESNICHENKO, 2008; KROICHIK, 2000).

Kolesnichenko emphasized that "there was no generally accepted classification of journalistic genres" (KOLESNICHENKO, 2008, p. 6). Kroichik claimed that "some genres (report, interview, correspondence or coverage) were no longer classified as informational and analytical" (KROICHIK, 2000, p. 68). According to the scholar, some genres have practically disappeared from newspapers (feature article, feuilleton, editorial, press review), while the others have become more popular (interviews, commentaries and essays). In accordance with the interpretation of S.M. Gurevich, "modern newspaper journalism uses about two dozen genres" (GUREVICH, 2004, p. 152). V.T. Tretyakov expressed the opposite opinion regarding the typology that has developed in journalistic theory: "Neither the old Soviet theory nor the new democratic practice convinced me. There is only information, a report, an interview and an article. Everything else is the work of the devil, varieties of the four main genres, or stylistic features of presentation used by one journalist or another" (TRETAKOV, 2004, p. 124). The rest of the genres is "incomprehensible" and "indistinguishable".

A.A. Tertychnyi (2000) noted that the traditional concept of "genre" could not be rejected for the following reasons: 1. journalistic works are divided into genres based on a number of principles; 2. a formalized idea of the genre helps journalists communicate professionally. When receiving a creative task from an editor, a journalist has an exact idea of what genre this or that material will be.

Since there are many definitions of the genre, we can reveal its main characteristics, content and structure: a set of creative professional techniques in journalistic activity that are used for data processing in order to give it a complete form as a media product covering its specific content in the form of text (ALEKSEEV; ILCHENKO, 2016; STEPANYAN, 2013); the combination of works into one group on the basis of their similarity (KEMARSKAYA, 2010); the static nature of the genre (NOVIKOVA, 2013); an unvoiced pact between the author and the audience's expectations (TSVIK, 2010).

Discussions in the scientific community about the confusion of such concepts as "genre" and "format" were caused by numerous publications on semantic transformations of these concepts in the professional vocabulary. The old school apologists argue that these discussions are unscientific and unfounded. However, there is a parallel thesis of their opponents that the "genre" term is an outdated description for new TV products. The use of the "format" word in the Russian vocabulary dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and its origin is associated with the structure of books, the size of printed editions and printed sheets (CHERNYKH, 1999). In relation to television journalism, the concept of "format" is associated with the amount of information transmitted, timing, broadcasting structure, functions, ideologies, and style characteristics of the channel. This determines the following genre-forming features: content, composition, and speech features of television programs. Thus, the format is a broader concept if compared to the genre. It embraces a wide range of factors influencing the creation of a media product. The format is a set of external features that define a certain model or the basis for creating a television program.

The format has technical characteristics (adaptation, content, distribution, cost) (KACHKAEVA; SHOMOVA, 2017); a unique feature and at the same time "similarity" (KEMARSKAYA, 2010); constant variability and the ability to adopt new features, techniques, methods of action from other arts (NOVIKOVA, 2013); a fixed set of features and rules that fit certain events and activities (SOLGANIK, 2010); a kind of market contract between the producer and the viewer (TSVIK, 2010). This list can be supplemented not only with technical requirements but also with the name of the program, its design, timing, place in a broadcast schedule, description of the audience, budget and license.

The format of sports TV shows has its own specifics. In particular, the main forming factor is the focus on the target audience, including fans, athletes, coaches, and all sports participants.

While analyzing the relevant scientific literature, we defined the concept of "sports TV channel format" as a sample of a competitive and creative media product based on a

combination of external characteristics, focused on the target audience and performing mainly informational, recreational and influencing functions.

## **Methods**

To achieve the research objective, we used the following methods:

- The analysis of literary sources, which included the collection of information, the study of the main theoretical works on the research topic and the selection of the main concepts to refer to during the survey.
- The case study. This method allowed to collect the necessary information in order to review the media product of the Russian sports TV channel "Match TV".
- SWOT analysis. Using this method, we were able to identify the internal and external environment of this TV channel, as well as the opportunities and potential threats that are associated with the development of a media product.

Due to a decreasing interest in news stories, we should consider broadcasts of the "Match TV" channel, a new media player on the sports television Olympus. According to the amended Decree "On All-Russian Compulsory Public Television and Radio Channels", "Match TV" replaced "Rossiya-2" and was launched on November 1, 2015. The channel was included into the list of all-Russian compulsory public television channels and is now broadcasted in the whole territory of the Russian Federation. "Match TV" presents itself as a channel about sports and a healthy lifestyle and is a "flagship product" of the media holding "Gazprom-Media". This channel uses various formats and genres of TV shows (news, analytics, reports, entertainment programs, reality and talk shows, documentaries, feature films, and series).

The channel's spectators are family audiences of all ages: at the initial stage, the buying audience consisted of men aged between 25 and 59; as of 2017, men from 18 to 59 years old; as of 2018, men from 14 to 59 years old. On average, 7.7 million viewers watch the channel every day. This TV channel was widely criticized, experts predicted losses and employee attrition. Nowadays the channel holds the leading position in the ranking of sports programs by genre. At the end of 2019, "Match TV" covered more than 70 types of sports, the share of broadcasts reached 63% and their total duration was more than 5,500 hours (KUZNETSOV, 2020).

The federal public channel "Match! Country" is dedicated to the sports life of the country and the development of Russian sports. Most broadcasts showcase club competitions. The main content consists of news, special projects, documentaries and program premieres.

Non-air shows require authorization and a monthly or annual subscription:

- "Match Premier" is a premium channel about Russian football: Football 1, 2, 3 are three channels combined in one premium package (championship and league matches; the World Cup matches; qualification tournaments; thematic programs; and analytics).
- "Match! Fighter" broadcasts live championships in boxing, MMA, kickboxing, sambo, wrestling and martial arts. "Match! Arena" (biathlon competitions, cross-country skiing, figure skating, swimming, athletics, motorsport).
- "Match! Game" (team sports tournaments: basketball, handball, volleyball).
- "Match! Planet" (promotes Russian sports by live broadcasting national competitions in other countries).

## Results and discussion

According to the Levada Center polls, television remains the main source of information for most Russians but its audience is gradually declining. Compared to 2020, the intensity of news consumption has decreased. This applies to both television and Internet news. The share of those who watch TV news on a daily basis has decreased from 44% to 34%, and those who use the Internet from 36% to 31%.

The quality of a media product is determined by the production of sports television broadcasts, in particular, the work of a team of TV specialists, including the chief director, broadcast editor, graphics operators, virtual graphics operators, director, and replay operators. They operate special EVS slow-motion replay systems. There are also dozens of screens broadcasting picture from all the installed cameras. The production of sports TV broadcasts is also determined by sound characteristics (high-quality sound with commentary), such technical innovations as quadcopters or the Go Line camera system located above the goal and deciding whether the ball crossed the goal line at a controversial moment.

The strategic planning method (SWOT analysis) revealed the internal (pros and cons) and external environment (opportunities and threats) of the TV channel. Its pros include the popularity of the channel's brand, modern technical equipment, loyal buying audience, the search for new formats and hybrid genre forms. Its cons comprise the lack of readiness for uninterrupted operation. For example, the 2020 pandemic resulted in a massive ban on all

sports events and there was no relevant content, as a result, the channel's rating dropped. Threats include high competition from other sports channels: Okko-sport (Sberbank), Yandex and the Start video service (Megafon), and the repurchase of exclusive broadcasts. Potential opportunities are associated with ambitious projects to enter the international level.

One of the most important tasks of "Match TV" is to broadcast news. In contrast to entertainment news programs, sports news (especially during mega-events) promotes patriotism and improves the image of the country, sports stars, favorite teams and players, which is in line with the mission and strategic goals of the channel.

## Conclusion

The concept of "format" acquires the features of a term and requires theoretical understanding to determine its place and role in professional sports journalism.

Sports broadcast journalism is traditionally represented by three groups of genres: informational (information, plot, coverage, speech, report and interview), analytical (review, commentary, discussion, interview, conversation) and less popular artistic and journalistic genres (essay and sketch).

Digital television presents sports news and coverage of various types (live broadcasting or recording) on all the Russian TV channels but "Match TV", which is a media product comprising different genres and formats, has become their main supplier.

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