

УДК 070

Aigerim B. Alzhanova, Askhat Yerkimbay
Al-Farabi Kazakh National University

Radio in Kazakhstan since Independence

This article discusses how radio in Kazakhstan changed after the Soviet Union collapsed and market-oriented independent countries emerged. Since independence in 1991, the media, including radio, developed partly as a private enterprise and partly as a government entity with government radio operations controlled by the State Television and Radio Broadcasting Corporation. State radio stations in Kazakhstan are subsidized and operations do not depend on popularity or successful competition for audiences. Commercial stations have found support in advertising and continue to be successful. Although Kazakhstan has been independent for about 22 years and Kazakh stations are successful, the radio market in Kazakhstan is dominated by Russian radio. This article highlights the significant challenge for Kazakh radio as it continues to develop a uniquely Kazakh character that can promote the Kazakh language and culture and successfully attract a Kazakh audience.

Keywords: Radio, development TV, media content

А. Альжанова, А. Еркимбай

Развитие радиостанций Казахстана в период независимости

С момента обретения в 1991 г. независимости Казахстан приступил к проведению коренных преобразований в сфере информационной политики, заявив о необходимости пристального внимания законодательному обеспечению прав и свобод граждан. Прежде всего, это связано с пониманием того факта, что наличие развитых, организационно сильных и свободных средств массовой информации является одним из основных показателей демократического общества.

Ключевые слова: радио, развитие ТВ, медиаконтент.

А. Әлжанова, А. Еркiмбай

Қазақстанның А. Еркiмбайақпараттық тәуелсіздігі Қазақстанға қарай

Мақалада Қазақстанның 1991 ж. тәуелсіздік алған кезеңнен бастау алған ақпараттық саясаттағы түпкі өзгерістер, азаматтардың құқығы және еркіндігі жан-жақты сарапталды. Бұқаралық ақпараттың күшті болуы демократиялық қоғамның негізгі көрсеткіштері ретінде қарастырылады.

Түйін сөздер: радио, ТВ дамыту, медиа контент.

Introduction

Since gaining its independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has embarked on radical transformations in information policy and paid particular attention to the legislative provision of the rights and freedoms of citizens. First of all, it is crucial to understand that the presence of developed, organizational strengths and free media are main indicators of a democratic society.

It is possible to allocate three stages that characterize the development of the information market in Kazakhstan. First, radio competes with other mass media, and the most successful media are responsive to audience demands and needs.

This was problematic during the communist regime. Editorial content tried to meet audience needs, but the core socialist competition among mass media was ideological and not economic, and the media was bound to these ideological principles. Radio stations in Kazakhstan were subsidized, and their operations did not depend on popularity or successful competition for audiences. The Kazakh government, which considered mass media a powerful ideological tool, covered all expenses. The primary goal of radio was to maintain the ideological principles associated with Kazakh and Soviet governance, which was the goal of other media as well, so market

competition was not a primary element of radio's operation.

Because of the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of market-oriented independent states into Kazakhstan's information field, dozens of private radio stations appeared. Due to more flexible operational approaches, response to requests by the audience, and the emerging acuteness and relevance of the materials, private radio stations were able to significantly displace the state mass media for two to three years.

The second stage is the formation and growth (1992-1996) of radio in the emerging marketplace. A certain level of withdrawal of the state from unconditional dominance in the information field led to the rapid development of non-governmental (private, corporate, etc.) mass media. The first private radio stations in Kazakhstan appeared in 1990. By 1996, they were in every major city of Kazakhstan limiting the spread of local government radio stations. By December 1996 the Republic had about 30 private radio stations.

Between 1994 and 1996 private radio stations competed with Russian stations from Moscow. Social surveys from that time indicate that governmental mass media had 10% of the city audience, while independent media held 40 to 50% of the audience. One of the main issues of independence was its influence on the content of broadcasts and trust in the media. Soviet-era governmental media could not offer true unbiased information, and it was difficult to change communist stereotypes which had a negative impact on the popularity of government sponsored media products.

Third is the liberal stage, characterized by qualitative and quantitative changes in the media market. In order to conduct information policy the government privatized formerly state-owned mass media and printing enterprises, and started subsidizing the media. This stage of the development of the information space began around 1997.

Censorship was eased during this time and the absence of tough censorship limits and control from the government allowed journalists to raise sociopolitical issues. Many media successfully used sociopolitical topics to gain audiences, increase ratings, and benefit financially. The "political" discourse was not too critical of government leaders, but focused on scandal news and entertaining issues.

Private radio took the lead and had more success in this process, leaving state radio behind.

Main body

The central issue that emerged from these three stages was competition for audiences and advertisement money between Russian and Kazakhstan private media. It was difficult for Kazakh journalists to compete with Russian journalists. Russian journalism schools were stronger than Kazakhstan journalism schools, and the level of sophistication and professionalism in Russian programs was higher. Nevertheless, Kazakh radio emerged with a strong segment of the market. Between 1993 and 1996, 30 radio stations were funded by money from advertising.

In the mid-90s market-driven radio became dominant. Audience demand decided what programs would be produced and competition increased as each radio station tried to make its content better. The audience played a crucial role because of the financial benefit from advertising. As a result, stations were motivated to produce high quality audience centered content.

However, this trend was interrupted by a government decree on December 11, 1996, that established a commission to organize a contest-auction for the right to use the radio spectrum. The main goal of the decree was to replenish the national budget by requiring broadcasters to purchase a license. Another reason for the decree was to standardize technical requirements so that private broadcasters met the same standards as national radio. However, the price for the license was extremely high. The average price for a 3-year broadcast license was between \$80,000 and \$120,000 depending on the power of the transmitter. As a result of the cost, some stations were forced to close. Among them were radio stations which criticized the government, such as Totem. Later these stations sued the government claiming damages as a result of the excessive fee which forced their termination, but the suit was not successful.

Today it is possible to claim that the information market of Kazakhstan has entered a phase of stable growth. Economic support of mass media increased the competitiveness of the domestic media market. So, from 2001 to 2004 production of radio companies was assessed on a zero rate of the value added tax. Within the last five years the size of a payment for use of radio frequencies

decreased annually, and in 2002 payments for their use was cancelled.

The parliament along with the international and Kazakhstan public associations were involved in a committee to give permission for the use of radio frequencies, thus, ensuring transparency of the process to obtain frequencies for broadcasting. The work of this commission was widely received by mass media and also had a positive impact on the development of the information field.

Measuring the radio audience

Measuring the radio audience is considered difficult in the research world because the behavior of radio listeners is more varied than the behavior of TV viewers or readers. The audience of radio is more mobile, more distributed, more sensitive to seasonal fluctuations, and is younger. Radio listening can take place during the day in various places on various receivers. It does not adapt to new technologies that measure radio

audiences, such as the peoplemeter, that measures the TV audience. The peoplemeter measures TV participation by stationary receivers on the computer devices, which report within 1 second information about the TV watcher. On the other hand, to measure radio listeners, individual tiny mobile devices are created in the form of a pager or timer to record certain radio frequencies. However, the use of radiometers in Kazakhstan is not possible in the near future. Not only due standard devices need to be developed, but also financial support need to be available to purchase research tools.

Country by country, prime time for radio varies. However, most audiences listen to the radio during the day from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm. If broadcasting time were divided into day parts, it would be possible to identify periods when radio listening increases or decreases. Table 1 shows six periods of radio listening time.

Table 1

Name period	Time interval
Morning time	6:00 am - 8:00 am
Morning prime-time	8:00 am - 10:00 am
Day prime-time	10:00 am - 3:00 pm
Day time	3:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Evening prime-time	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Late Night	8:00 pm - 6:00 am

The morning, day and evening are the prime time for radio. The prime time for radio is from 8:00

am to 6:00 pm on the average. Peak radio listening falls between 8:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Table 2 shows the type of listeners by time.

Table 2

Listening time	Segment
Morning and Afternoon	Housewives
Evening	Youth
Afternoon in weekend	Sportsmen
Sunday morning	Tourists
Over 8.00 pm	Employees
Night	Transport workers

Table 3 provides the percentage of the radio audience reached by various radio stations in Kazakhstan for December 2012:

* PPM panel, Kazakhstan All 6+

Table 3

Radio station	Reach %
Radio Retro	61.76
Russian Radio	53.05
Radio NS	51.05
Kazakh Radio	26.66
Radio Shalkar	25.79
Love Radio	21.76
Tengri FM	20.64
Radio Hit FM	11.71
Radio Europa Plus	9.69
Radio Astana	2.72
Radio Classic	0.93

Table 4 provides the percentage of the radio audience reached by various radio stations daily:

* PPM panel, Kazakhstan All 6+

Table 4

Radio station	Shr %
Radio Retro	32.58
Russian Radio	24.87
Kazakh Radio	10.89
Radio NS	9.64
Radio Shalkar	5.74
Love Radio	5.56
Tengri FM	3.86
Radio Europa Plus	3.61
Radio Hit FM	2.81
Radio Astana	0.33
Radio Classic	0.1

The content of radio stations is composed of music, news, comedy, weather forecasts, competitions and quizzes, interviews with celebrities, original music and documentary programs. According to experts, the main content of radio stations is music and news.

A concept niche is very important for radio stations. According to Taylor Nelson Sofres TNS Central Asia Company media market specialists, compared to other types of traditional media, radio

is focused on a specific target audience, so a niche for the radio is very typical. For example, Retro Radio specializes in retro music, and Kazakh Radio broadcasts in the Kazakh language. Each radio stations are attracting a percentage of the whole audience. The viability of these narrow formats on radio is explained by the fact that radio is more attractive to the consumer, than other types of media, like TV. Radio is more portable and available to listeners always and everywhere.

The definition of niche means that a radio station orients its content and programming to target a certain segment of the audience. For example, there are many narrow format radio stations in the world where content varies by different styles of music to catch listeners' attention. At the frequency of 102.8 FM in Kazakhstan Radio Classic broadcasts classical music. The programming consists of classical music, jazz, film scores, cultural news programs and live performances from concert halls. The programs reach all of Kazakhstan. Radio Classic has developed in three stages. During the first month it broadcasted non-stop light recorded music. The second stage added information and news developed specifically for the station. The final stage added special projects and theatrical programs. It is hoped that Classic will influence the development of Kazakh music and increase the archive of Kazakh classical music.

The key problems lie in the country's media sphere. The state allocates substantial funds to support mediocre mass media. The quantitative growth of the domestic mass media does not positively affect the quality of the media. A more appropriate strategy would be to create a successful model of the media (TV, radio, newspapers, etc.) instead of injecting money into unpopular media.

Among the radio stations in Kazakhstan the most popular belong to Russian speaking radio channels. Although the radio in Kazakhstan reaches 100% of its audience, the most popular three radio stations are Russian Radio, Radio NS, and Radio Retro, capturing more than 80% of the audience.

Results

All in all, since the Independence the Kazakh media faces unique challenges that differ from other post-Soviet countries' media: (1) the dominance of

the Russian language, (2) the way the government funds the media and (3) the mismatching content for appropriate audience.

Kazakhstan's media content, especially on television, is influenced by Russian media. Likewise, in radio, except for the Kazakh Radio, the Russian language dominates. When comparing the types of mass media in other countries, the difference in quality is striking. The main problem is a lack of professionals in media management. The government's funds are given to the media without taking into consideration things like the audience, popularity, the return of the run for printed media, and the number of views and traffic for the Internet. As a result, media organizations report to the government only the number of published materials, and the effect of these materials on the public is unknown. The state does not use scientific measurements to verify the authenticity of the media reports.

Kazakhstan's audience prefers, entertainment, not socio-political content. Due to political apathy among the citizens, the audience for socio-political programs remains small. Broadcasting strategies do not take this situation into account. Another suggestion to make the Kazakh media successful would be to create another channel, which broadcasts only in the Kazakh language since the number of Kazakh speaking people are increasing year by year. However, advertisers continue to target the Russian-speaking urban population. That is why government subsidies are crucial in supporting the Kazakh media. Kazakhstan needs to develop a media that is truly sensitive to market forces, that meets the needs of the audience, that is scientifically evaluated for accuracy and effectiveness, and that reflects the growing independence and unique character of the Kazakh language and culture.

References

- 1 Udina Yelena, Methods of measuring radio audience Marketing and PR, http://www.4p.ru/main/research_shop/
- 2 Olga Ananina, Technology of buzzing: setting up the «Sarafan radio» frequency. «National Business» magazine, September, 2008.
- 3 V.B. Vostryakov, How to find amateur radio station. "Radio" magazine, №2 1946.
- 4 V.V. Shakhgildin, V.B. Kozyrev, A.A. Lyakhovkin, V.P. Nuyanzin, V.M. Rozov, M.S. Shumilin. Genre: Methodical handout. Publisher: Radio i Sviaz, 1990.
- 5 V.Y. Suetin. Digital measurement devices. Publisher Radio i Sviaz, 1984.