

# THE ROLE OF REGIONAL TELEVISION IN THE LIFE OF A MEGACITY

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## ABSTRACT

67% of Russians watch TV every day. The number of those who want to know about local events is permanently increasing. Therefore, the target audience of regional TV channels is growing. For TKT-TV it's about 250 thousand spectators per day. Thanks to local TV, the residents have the opportunity to be heard. On TKT-TV, spectators offer topics for reportages and analytical stories by calling the editorial office and reporting about holes on roads or unauthorized advertisements. Secondly, this is a real outlet for those who are tired of sensations. TKT-TV doesn't show crime and news from celebrities. They talk about athletes, musicians, philanthropists living next to us. Finally, the news of the district channel concerns everyone. The results of the research can be applied to the work of mass media of any city. In the future, they can become the basis for creating a regional television channel in any city, because this practice is quite new.

Keywords: Mass media, Regional TV, Broadcasting, Local television.

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of broadcasting in people's lives is difficult to overestimate. Although today some people prefer to get news from the Internet, TV still exists in every family. News is watched in the mornings, discussed over dinners, and affect our daily lives.

Many people want to know about what is directly related to them. For example, when their local area will be included in the city program for improvement, where and how they can get social benefits from the government, who is responsible for repairing their houses, what concerts and competitions will be held in the district. Here the regional television plays an important role and can help them a lot.

The purpose of the research is to reveal the technologies of the district broadcasting in a megacity.

In accordance with this purpose, I solved the following tasks:

- To reveal specific features of the interaction of a regional TV channel with a spectator;

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- To show the formation of the image of the regional television channel in a megacity.

The object of the study is the practice of broadcasting a regional television channel.

The subject of the study is the specific work of correspondents of TV channel TKT-TV in St. Petersburg.

I will investigate the topic on the example of broadcasting the TV channel "TKT-TV" for the period from 2013 to 2016. I chose this time interval because I used to work there during this period.

The channel called itself as «the closest TV to you», and this is not a coincidence. Spectators do not find here reportages about what is happening in the country; instead, the channel talks about the events in their districts and even in their homes.

### **ACTUALITY OF THE RESEARCH**

According to the Public Opinion Foundation, most Russians watch TV and 67% do it every day. At the same time, the number of those who would like to know about local events is predominantly increasing. It means, people do care not only about politics and international relations, but also about social problems such as healthcare, education, etc. – in other words, that is what most concerns them directly. Therefore, the target audience of local and regional TV channels is constantly growing. For TKT-TV, this share is more than 1.4 million apartments in all districts of the city and about 250 thousand spectators per day.

The object for reflection for all TV channels is our reality. However, different media reflect different aspects of it, and in this case, a local channel takes precedence over a federal one. People are interested to see their streets and houses, to ask government officials of their district administrations, to participate in solving their own backyard problems. Therefore, district channels will become successful anyway.

Each district of the megacity needs its own TV channel. First, thanks to local TV, the residents have the opportunity to be heard. On TKT-TV, spectators offer topics for reportages and analytical stories by calling the editorial office and reporting about potholes on roads or unauthorized advertisements. Sometimes this even becomes a basis for a special reportage. For example, in the summer of 2015, my story about the rats in Primorsky region and the inaction of officials who just nodded one on another came out. It started from the call of a resident of the region who called us and complained about rats (The text of this reportage is presented in Attachment 1).

Secondly, this is a real outlet for people who are tired of sensationalism. TKT-TV deliberately does not show crime and news from celebrities. Instead, they talk about "celebrities" among the local residents such as athletes, musicians, philanthropists living next door to us. Even more stories are devoted to people of "humane" professions such as doctors, teachers, and social workers. In a global sense, TKT-TV adheres to the British principle of journalism – to educate a spectator instead of simply informing them about the events.

Finally, the news of the district channel concerns everyone. The conflict in Syria, for example, will not affect a mother with a small child directly. But the impossibility to go with the stroller to the metro station or the hospital, because there is no sidewalk, has much more effect on her daily life. For example, in the winter of 2015, my reportage from the 5th Predportovaya Street in St. Petersburg, where this problem existed, came out (the text is presented in Attachment 2)

## **PROPOSED SOLUTIONS**

TKT-TV did not come immediately to this form of broadcasting. In fact, firstly there was a simple news coverage; the program was called «A week in your city». It used to be just a copy of other TV channels of St. Petersburg. Moreover, the news came out not every day, but on Tuesdays and Fridays. That is why to compete with other channels was impossible – we were always late in reporting news, and the target audience was about to go away. The system had been like this until 2014 and the rating of the channel was less than 1.5% of the city's residents.

In 2015, the channel approved a new style of broadcasting. The program changed its name and time interval. 20-minutes of «A week in your city» disappeared, and the new 1-hour program called «Regions. Quarters» came out. There was much less urban news, but more attention was dedicated to local events and social problems. More special reports and journalistic investigations started coming out. Instead of simply reporting, correspondents came to analytical stories. Also, the broadcasting time changed - news began to appear as a separate block in prime time, whereas before they were broadcasted after federal and city news.

The style of the program also changed. Now there is a full-hour program with sparkling humor of anchors and experts' opinions. The program began to follow the talk show format (with two anchors and an expert sitting on the sofa) but with news releases included into it. As a result, the rating of the TV channel increased by 20%. The average number of views of a reportage on YouTube channel increased to 1000.

The system of journalists' work has also changed. Before a correspondent was able to work only at one studio in a certain area and create stories only there. Now «everyone works everywhere» and the journalist can be send to an event in any part of the city. On one hand, it lowered the level of general awareness of a journalist about the events in this area. Therefore, making connections and creating the journalist's own contact database became more difficult. On the other hand, the editors remained on the certain studios, and they are engaged in finding the right person for a comment. In addition, the new system enabled journalists to learn lessons from each other. As about more experienced correspondents, they are not limited to one district anymore.

Even the subjects of news releases changed a lot. Before, the stories were mostly made with the guidance of local administrations. They were the source of the channel's budget, they were also its main informants (the correspondents used to receive information about what happened or happen in the district mostly from the press officers of the administrations). At that time, 90% of the news was about the meetings of officials or some celebrations for local residents, organized by them.

After the program "Regions. Quarters» came out, contact with the press services has not gone away. They still help to get comments of the officials and invite us to the meeting, where important issues are discussed. However, the priorities of the channel have changed. Previously, despite the fact that it contradicts the principles of journalism, the meeting itself could have been an information guide. That is why this story could be interesting only to these officials. Now the correspondents began to use such meetings as an excuse for several full-fledged stories involving local residents, activists, experts in the field. As an example, my special reportage about the construction of the Western High-Speed Diameter on Vasilievsky Island. The idea to develop this topic was born after the meeting in the district administration, where

people found out that the construction was delayed. In the reportage, we talk not only about the progress of construction, but also about the problems for local residents who will hear the noise of cars 24 hours a day, about the system of payment for drivers, and whether or not using this road will be convenient and will help to avoid traffic jams (the text of this reportage is presented in Attachment № 3).

When editors choose the topics for reportages, they now refer more and more to city activists (for example, the organizers of the "Beautiful Petersburg" movement who are fighting for the purity and beauty of the city), museums (which help us a lot in receiving information about exhibitions or city tours for local residents) and even social networks. My story about homeless cats can be a good example of this tendency. Information for the occasion was found coincidentally – one day the owner of four cats wrote a message to my account on vk.com. The woman inherited those cats from her deceased mother, and she asked if I have a phone number of an animal shelter. Instead, we shot a full-fledged special reportage, where we helped this woman to find new homes for the cats and at the same time, talked about the problem of homeless animals in our city (the full text is presented in Attachment 4).

Since 2015, TKT-TV has had accounts in social networks such as VK, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, where all the news releases are posted. This helped to increase the target audience of the TV channel and attract young people who almost do not watch TV but prefer to get news from the Internet and social networks. Now YouTube channel has almost 2000 subscribers, and the VK group - more than 3000. It allows you to stay closer to spectators and get feedbacks from them.

In my research, I only consider the practice of megacities. However, this part is important for small towns as well, because the city's news releases often talk about the actions of government officials and one or two city events. A "TV closest to you" will help to unite people. For example, in spring 2015 my reportage about an attempt to build a beer restaurant in the courtyard of the apartment house came out. What surprised me is that local residents showed the same position and they did not want to compromise. Everyone was against the demolition of the children's playground and cutting of the trees in this park, as well as the noise the bar's guests would create at nights. Thanks to our reportage, the story attracted officials' attention (the text is presented in Attachment 5).

This is the kind of TV channel that will solve many problems for local residents (for example, after a reportage about a management company of a condominium fraud receipts for utilities, other condominium wanted to change the company. To avoid bankruptcy, communal companies will have to change their way of working).

## **NEEDS**

TV channel needs to establish cooperation with advertisers. Now there is no advertising on the channel at all, and all needs are fully covered from the city budget. This approach, on one hand, has the right to exist. On the other hand, the budget of the channel is very limited, that is why there are no available funds for additional PR and expansion of the target audience.

In addition, a good solution would be to combine the news releases of several districts. This is because some of them, mostly industrial areas, do not have many events. There is almost nothing happening, and the news release mainly consists of reports from the corridors of government buildings. That is why the rating of the program is lower than it could be.

Another problem of TKT-TV is the lack of professional equipment. Local camera operators use outdated models of television cameras. There are only a couple of wide-angle lenses and the same quantity of drones. The reason is only due in the lack of money for the modern technology, and not due to low professional quality of camera operators, as people might think. Almost all of them have a degree and more than 5 years of experience on various TV channels.

### **RESUME**

Regional television has firmly taken its niche in the St. Petersburg media market. However, the results of the research can be applied to the work of mass media of any city. Journalists of federal and city media can also use the methods described here if they want to remain close and interesting to spectators.

The quality of the regional television is growing, and therefore the audience's interest in it does not fall. Now many local channels present not only a news release, but also special reports, analytical reviews and even authoring programs. However, this channel also has problems such as the lack of advertisers, and therefore, the lack of funding, lack of technical equipment, dependence on local authorities. All above affects the image of the TV channel because spectators always compare a regional channel and federal channel.

In the future, it can become the base for creating a regional television channel, and in the long term, the results of the research can form the base for the establishment of a regional television channel in any city, since this practice is still quite new (in Russia, for example, only Moscow and St. Petersburg have their own channels).

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