

TRENDS IN RADIO NEWS COVERAGE OF PRIVATE BROADCASTERS IN THE CONDITIONS OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT:

This study takes a broader look at the news broadcasts of private broadcasters in the Slovak environment. News is an attractive part of any radio station, which, depending on its territorial coverage and focus, adapts the content of information in individual news blocks. The text focuses on the two most listened-to private radio stations in Slovakia, namely *Rádio Expres* and *Fun Rádio*, which operate as the two ‘flagships’ of the two largest media houses in Slovakia. The ambition is to identify and define the current trends in commercial radio broadcasting, which are ascertained through the analysis of news blocks at selected specific times, especially in prime-time in November 2021. In total, there were more than 160 news blocks. In the different parts of the research, we focused on the number of news blocks broadcast, the frequency of news that repeats, the genre of the news broadcast, but also on the news presenter’s involvement in the stream of broadcasting, and thus activity outside of their main broadcasting job or position. On the basis of the data obtained, we identify current trends in radio news coverage of commercial broadcasters in Slovakia.

KEY WORDS:

commercial broadcasting, news block, reporter, radio, news

1 Introduction

News is the main source of information and in radio production it is important to grasp the facts clearly so that the listener is not confused and understands the content of the news at the first hearing. In media communication, news can be defined as informing the general public about important, beneficial, interesting, tragic and other facts. Historically, it is the oldest part of journalistic work. The subjects of interest can range from issues related to current events of societal importance to tips, innovations, discoveries and findings of the recipients.¹ All journalistic work is subject to certain criteria; Jiráek and Burton say that news values refer to a set of criteria by which the media assess the news acceptability of an event and the newsworthiness

¹ KAČINCOVÁ PREDMERSKÁ, A.: *Žurnalistické zánre. Spravodajstvo v periodickej tlači*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2017, p. 29.

of their treatment. These are factors that influence the form of the distributed message.² What a particular media outlet chooses as a newsworthy event depends on the culture and organisation of the media outlet. General values include, for example: frequency of occurrence, proximity, clarity, simplicity, meaningfulness, novelty, continuity, possibility of further development, personalisation, negativity, congruence, variation, surprise or predictability, and relationship to the nation's elites, celebrities, etc.³ McMahon notes that it is the responsibility of the private media to provide an information service. *"Independent radio stations are obliged by their broadcast licences to offer public service content in the form of daily news and current affairs output while upholding the core values of public service media."*⁴ News values are not the only aspect of news production; the topic a presenter wants to cover in a radio broadcast determines the genre of the piece. Rončáková writes that journalistic genres are dynamic and constantly changing. They are created, for example, by splitting, dispersion, chain progression, and thus that one genre develops another, but also by imitation, identification, atrophy and creation. This process is triggered by new social conditions.⁵ However, we dare to say that the creation of journalistic genres and their definition in the literature is outdated. This is confirmed by the words of Višňovský and Radošínská: *"The speed of these ongoing transformation processes is, however, the reason why journalistic practices, along with the theory of journalism, are hardly able to cope with them."*⁶ For this reason, we find very few genres in their pure form in radio broadcasting. Among the news genres that are used in radio broadcasting there are, according to Jenča, for example: flash report, extended report, audio report, news report, news interview, poll, news broadcast, report, news audio montage, press review.⁷ Wu made a similar assessment, claiming that the radio industry has shifted dramatically since the mid-1990s, but the literature on news and all-news radio stations remains outdated.⁸

Radio broadcasting is still one of the important sources and ways of informing the public. It has the advantage of being able to inform here and now. Information flows to listeners through just one part of the broadcast, the news block. Hudíková and Habiňáková describe the "news block" in radio as follows: *"News broadcast is a relatively separated and closed element of a programme that is separated from the other parts of the programme verbally or by a musical or acoustic signal (sound, gong, pause, etc.) or composition (...). News broadcast has its stable dramaturgy."*⁹ The news block starts with a headline and continues with short reports from home and around the world. Contributions are in the form of reports, montages, synchrons, short news, but there are also sports news, weather and traffic services. However, this sorting is not a universally applicable model. Some broadcasters deliberately break this structure in order to make the broadcast content more attractive.¹⁰ Each private broadcaster adapts the form of its news coverage to the focus of the radio station. *"Private radio often broadcast three-minute news programmes only consisting of three major news blocks."*¹¹ The importance of private broadcasters is also confirmed by Sámelová, who argues that one of the reasons why private radio stations are dominant is a kind of mantra of the Slovak approach to public media programmes, that they should not be concerned with high viewership, but with quality content. She further adds that unmonitored media without listeners cannot have a significant impact.¹² Viewership or listenership is therefore key for private broadcasters.

2 BURTON, G., JIRÁK, J.: *Úvod do studia médií*. Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2001, p. 240.

3 BURTON, G., JIRÁK, J.: *Úvod do studia médií*. Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2001, p. 242-246.

4 MCMAHON, D.: Informed & Educated: When Public Service Radio Learns from the Commercial Radio Sector. In *Journal of European Television History and Culture*, 2019, Vol. 8, No. 16, p. 61. [online]. [2022-01-14]. Available at: <<http://doi.org/10.18146/2213-0969.2019.jethc175>>.

5 RONČÁKOVÁ, T.: *Žurnalistické žánre*. Bratislava: Verbum, 2011, p. 51-54.

6 RADOŠINSKÁ, J., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: Online Journalism: Current Trends and Challenges. In PEŇA ACUŇA, B. (ed.): *The Evolution of Media Communication*. Rijeka: InTech, 2017, p. 5. [online]. [2022-01-14]. Available at: <<https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/54896>>.

7 JENČA, I.: *Rozhlasová tvorba*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2013, p. 62-63.

8 WU, L.: Evaluating Local News on the Radio: A National Survey of Radio Station Executives. In *Electronic News*, 2017, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 233. [online]. [2022-01-17]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314140933_Evaluating_Local_News_on_the_Radio_A_National_Survey_of_Radio_Station_Executives>.

9 HUDÍKOVÁ, Z., HABIŇÁKOVÁ, E.: *Radio Broadcasting and Radio Production*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2018, p. 67.

10 BRŇÍK, A., KAPEC, M., BŮTOŠOVÁ, L.: *Rozhlasová tvorba a prax*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2020, p. 14.

11 HUDÍKOVÁ, Z., HABIŇÁKOVÁ, E.: *Radio Broadcasting and Radio Production*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2018, p. 67.

12 SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Dejiny verejnoprávnosti. Zrod Rozhlasu a televízie Slovenska*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2019, p. 15-16.

2 Methodology

The role of a licensed radio broadcaster – commercial radio – is to make a profit. Radio broadcasters have by law¹³ limited time and a limited number of advertising announcements they can air during the day. At the same time, their music format – the station's setup – obliges them to play popular songs to build and maintain a listener base. That's why time on the radio is 'expensive'. According to the EBU (European Broadcast Union), specifically Europeans and Radio 2021 survey, people want to hear music from radio first (47%), far behind is information, which 'only' 19% want to hear on air.¹⁴ We can therefore assume that although news is an important part of the broadcast programme, it will be shorter in content so that it does not occupy the dominant role in the broadcast, which according to listeners' preferences also belongs to music. Within the framework of our research and in the context of the above information, we set the main research question:

What are the current trends in news broadcasting among selected licensed broadcasters (commercial radio stations)?

In our extensive quantitative research, we wanted to analyse in detail the news broadcasts of selected radio stations. Therefore, in addition to the main research question, we also set secondary questions:

RQ1: How often is the news broadcast on private radios?

RQ2: How many reports are included in the news block during the day?

There are several private multi-regional radio stations in the Slovak radio market. It is difficult for these radio stations to make a profit and therefore there may be abolition of newsrooms or minimisation of the number of editors, transfer of competences. At the same time, commercial radio stations are trying to make news for the masses and thus bring in various elements that are not part of the news definition. Our third research question is:

RQ3: Which elements of infotainment are present in broadcasting?

Research Method and Areas of Investigation

To collect data in our research, we have selected a quantitative method of media content analysis, focusing on news programmes of selected radio stations that broadcast with license – commercial radio stations. Within the framework of our research and in the context of the defined research questions, we have divided the areas of investigation into two main parts that will enable us to understand the current trends in news coverage and thus answer our main research question.

Observed Indicators of News Coverage in the Radio Broadcasting Structure

- News coverage during the day – number of news blocks (main news programme) broadcast per day.
- News repetition – within the news blocks of the main news show, how many times the concrete report is repeated, and is it similar or focuses on the same topic or expands the previous message?

13 *Act No. 264/2022 Coll. on Media Services and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts (Media Services Act) of 22 June 2022*. [online]. [2022-10-14]. Available at: <<https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZL/2022/264/20220801>>.

14 *The European Broadcasting Union. Europeans & Radio*. [online]. [2022-01-14]. Available at: <https://acter.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-07-EBU-MIS_PSM_RADIO_Audience_Trends_Infographic_2021.pdf>.

- The position of the news presenter in the broadcast schedule – is the news presenter also involved in the broadcast apart from the news blocks and in what context? For example, hook, tease, interview, information on a topic, report.

Observed Indicators Related to the Characteristics of the News Content and Format of the Selected Radio Stations

- Number of reports – how many reports does the news block contain per broadcast?
- Headline, occurrence of headlines – do the news blocks start with headlines?
- Agency coverage – presence of agency coverage in broadcast news (number).
- Fieldwork – number of stories reporting directly from the field.
- Infotainment elements – is news underreported, a combination of informing and entertaining, sensationalism, events presented briefly and simply, with an emphasis on distraction rather than on the social gravity of the information, editors combine facts with various considerations and speculations.
- Genres – what genres appear in the news block (flash reports, briefs, extended reports, audio reports, informative appearances in front of a microphone, framing report, follow-up).
- Sport – does the newscast cover sport? Is sport read by the same presenter as news? Does sport have its own reporters?
- Weather – does the newscast have weather? Is weather read by the same presenter as the news?
- Traffic – does the news service have a traffic service? Is the traffic service read by the same presenter as the news? Does it have its own traffic service?

Research Sample

As of 1st January 2021, an amendment to Act No. 308/2000 Coll. on Broadcasting and Retransmission made it possible for one entity to own several radio stations, which was not legally possible until then. In the second half of 2021, there was a significant regrouping of multi-regional radio stations. A number of them changed ownership, which was made possible by the amendment of the law. The two strongest radio companies – *Bauer Media (Rádio Expres, Európa 2, Melody)* and *Fun Media Group (Fun Rádio, Rádio Vlna)* – were newly established. This also created new opportunities for the work of newsrooms, where it is possible to work efficiently with one newsroom and cover the news for several radio stations. Therefore, we decided to focus our qualitative research on the ‘flagships’ of the two largest radio owners in Slovakia. We chose *Rádio Expres* and *Fun Rádio*.

The research sample consists of the main news programmes, INFOEXPRES and FUN RADIO NEWS (in Slovak Správy Fun Rádia), broadcast by the two most listened-to commercial radio stations broadcasting under license in Slovakia, *Rádio Expres* and *Fun Rádio*.¹⁵ *Rádio Expres* broadcasts since December 1999. With the Hot AC music format, it mainly tries to reach listeners aged between 20 and 40 with secondary and higher education. In addition to music, the broadcasts include news, traffic service and other informative and entertaining features.¹⁶ *Rádio Expres* has been the most listened-to radio station in Slovakia for several years. *Fun Rádio* is the first Slovak private radio station, which has been broadcasting since June 1990.¹⁷ Initially, the broadcast from the studio in Bratislava covered 4 hours, for the rest of the day the signal from the French *Fun Radio* broadcast was used. Gradually, the broadcasts from Bratislava were expanded – from 4 hours to 12 and to 24 hours a day. Today, its musical profile places it in the CHR (Contemporary Hit Radio) category. In addition to music, it provides listeners with a full information service throughout the day – news, traffic and weather reports.¹⁸

15 *Kontinuálny multiklientský prieskum spotrebného správania, mediálnej konzumácie a životného štýlu*. [online]. [2022-01-14]. Available at: <<https://www.median.sk/sk/mml-tgi/>>.

16 *Rádio Expres*. [online]. [2022-01-14]. Available at: <<https://www.radio.sk/radio/expres>>.

17 *O nás – O Fun rádiu*. [online]. [2022-01-14]. Available at: <<https://www.funradio.sk/clanok/750-o-nas-o-fun-radiu/>>.

18 *Fun Rádio*. [online]. [2022-01-14]. Available at: <<https://www.radio.sk/radio/fun>>.

The research sample consists of the main news programmes, INFOEXPRES and FUN RADIO NEWS (Správy Fun Rádia), during prime-time, in the morning from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., and the afternoon news in blocks from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. In addition, we also include weekend coverage from the 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. block on Saturday and Sunday. We will focus on one selected week (7 days) in the date range of 1st – 7th November 2021.

3 Results

In total, we analysed 167 news blocks broadcast by selected radio stations (102 news blocks of *Rádio Expres*, 65 of *Fun Rádio*). We regularly listened to the news during the whole analysed week. The results were recorded in a coding book. The content analysis was preceded by a short pre-survey to validate the methods used and the categories selected for observation.

Number of news block broadcast during the period under consideration

Total number during the working week (1st – 5th November 2021)

90 *Rádio Expres*

65 *Fun Rádio*

Total number of news blocks during the weekend (6th – 7th November 2021)

12 *Rádio Expres*

0 *Fun Rádio* (traffic information only)

TOTAL NUMBER: 167

A Short Summary of Fun Rádio’s News Show – FUNRADIO NEWS

FUN RADIO NEWS is mostly made up of agency news, sometimes also using information from various news websites. News is broadcast throughout the day. In the morning broadcast (6:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.), in addition to the main newscast at the full hour, a one-minute quick newscast ‘Slovakia and the World in 60 Seconds’ is broadcast. The main news on the whole has a structure of 4 important news stories from Slovakia and abroad and one sport news report. Also, sport news is taken from the agency’s coverage. The news presenters at *Fun Rádio* are not involved in the general broadcasting. Mostly they are only introduced by the hosts of the current block of the broadcast. It is the exception rather than the rule that a news presenter would appear in dialogue with the speaker. In addition, the news always starts with the traffic service only then the actual news service continues, supplemented by the weather. The news broadcast by *Fun Rádio* starts without headlines. Everything, traffic, news, sport and weather is read by one reporter – presenter. After 10:00 a.m., the newscasts are repeated only every full hour and contain mostly 4 news stories. The news tends to be repeated frequently, meaning that a listener who regularly listens to this radio station may be deprived of up-to-date information. At the weekend there is no news block, only traffic service. The radio provides it itself. It starts two or three minutes earlier than on other radio stations and therefore supports their claim: ‘*Fun Radio’s traffic service, always first.*’

A Short Summary of the News Programme Broadcast by Rádio Expres – INFOEXPRES

INFOEXPRES is made up of mostly agency news. The news is broadcast throughout the day, always on the full hour and during prime-time in the morning (6:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.); in addition to the main

news programme, the so-called INFOEXPRES PLUS is also always broadcast at half past each hour. The main news mostly contains 3 to 4 reports, plus one or two sport news pieces. Sport as well as news is taken from the agency coverage. The news always starts with headlines. Interestingly, *Rádio Expres* also uses so-called sound headlines, in that for important events they play a piece of audio recording directly within the headline, which aptly and thematically describes or complements the topic. Weather and the actual traffic service are also part of the coverage. The news tends to be repetitive, but to a very small extent. The presenters of INFOEXPRES are involved in the general broadcasts to a considerable extent, especially in the morning. They are questioned, they enter the broadcast also outside the news block. In this aspect, the listener may also perceive them differently, as people who interpret the facts and bring up-to-date news. The listener has the opportunity to form a relationship with them, as their communication with the hosts/speakers often relates to day-to-day issues and experiences. Indeed, *Rádio Expres* has full coverage throughout the day, even at night and at the weekend. They also have their own traffic service; this is read by a different person who is in charge of preparing and collecting information about traffic in Slovakia. It is also important to mention that there are separate contributions from the radio reporters in the news block, not just agency news that is read out.

If we thought the news block usually starts with headlines, we were wrong. Most of the time the news does not start with headlines but directly informs about what is happening. Even the weather or important traffic information is usually included at the beginning.

Does the news start with headlines?

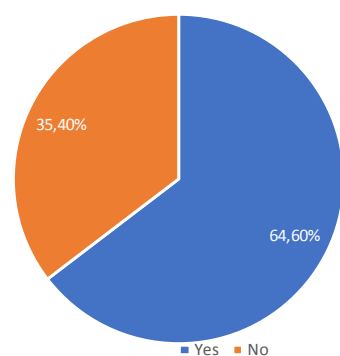


Figure 1: News and headlines
Source: Own processing

In our research we found out that **none of the news blocks we analysed included a report or other genre element that the reporter produced directly 'in the field'** (recorded by themselves outside of the studio, for example, a recording from a press conference, a report from a cultural event, etc.).

The basic source for the production of news in both radio stations is the agency news service and agency news or recordings. In more than 41% of the monitored news blocks, all the broadcast news stories were taken from the agency service. In only about 11% were the stories made up from non-agency sources (e.g., web, own sources, etc.). We can therefore conclude that **there has been a demise of traditional newsrooms**. In the past, the newsroom was the pride and backbone of any ambitious radio station. It was made up of a large number of staff (editors, newsreaders, reporters, etc.) who brought their topics, handled stories from the field and prepared news programmes. Today, commercial radio has only 'newsreaders' or news presenters, who not only prepare news texts from various sources,¹⁹ but also interpret them themselves. Thus, there is

¹⁹ Remark by authors: These include agency services, Internet sources and social media. In particular, foreign political and public figures use, for example, the social networking site *Twitter* to communicate their public statements. The Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky also reports on the situation in Ukraine during the war. See, for instance: *@ZelenskyUa*. [online]. [2020-03-27]. Available at: <<https://twitter.com/ZelenskyUa?>>>.

a culmination of individual positions within the editorial office, which implies that even the most successful commercial radio stations have small editorial offices. Currently, there are at most 5 – 6 people in the radio newsroom of commercial radio stations (even only in the biggest commercial radio stations),²⁰ who rotate in and out of duty. During the day, they may also prepare simple news genres for the news blocks. Their work is influenced by several factors, but as Radošinská and Višňovský point out, the Internet also has a certain influence on their work. *"Even though there is no generally accepted consensus that would explain how exactly the Internet has changed the ways we produce, disseminate and access news, scholars focusing on journalism and professional journalists agree that we are witnessing many shifts in the field of professional production of news and information."*²¹ During prime-time, that is, in the morning hours, the big commercial radios use two news presenters at a time. Most of the time, these people are assigned within the news blocks to the news and traffic service. During the day, only one person is needed to prepare the news blocks. In small regional commercial radio stations, the news presenter is completely absent. The speaker who hosts the broadcast also prepares the news and reads it themselves.

Estimated number of agency coverage in broadcast news

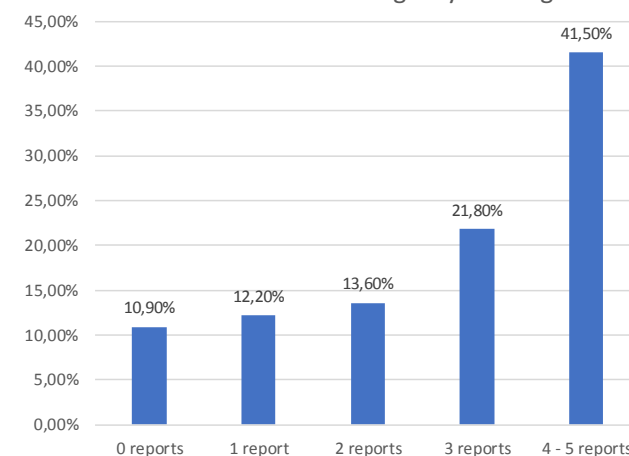


Figure 2: Estimated number of agency coverage in broadcast news
Source: Own processing

The messages tend to repeat throughout the day. More than 64% of the news content analysed had been repeated during the day. This means that news is 'recycled' throughout the day. This may be due to the fact that, according to surveys, radio is listened to for just over 2 hours on average.²² It is therefore logical that the important news of the day is repeated, because the listener wants to hear it. Up-to-date news is always prepared for the morning, noon and evening. For the rest of the time, news presenters mostly vary the form, adding information by continuing news. At the same time, they prepare material for the next news block. The most frequent repetition oscillates between 1 (43.3%) and 2 (26.7%) news reports. Occasionally, 3 (16.7%) or even 4 (8.9%) to 5 (4.4%) reports are repeated.

²⁰ Remark by authors: There are currently 11 editorial office staffers at *Rádio Expres*. In Slovakia, this number is extraordinary. See: *Moderátori/redaktori*. [online]. [2022-01-14]. Available at: <<https://www.expres.sk/kategoria/spravodajstvo/>>>.

²¹ RADOŠINSKÁ, J., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: Online Journalism: Current Trends and Challenges. In PEŇA ACUÑA, B. (ed.): *The Evolution of Media Communication*. Rijeka: InTech, 2017, p. 5. [online]. [2022-01-14]. Available at: <[>](https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/54896)>.

²² *The European Broadcasting Union. Europeans & Radio*. [online]. [2022-01-14]. Available at: <[>](https://aetter.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-07-EBU-MIS_PSM_RADIO_Audience_Trends_Infographic_2021.pdf)>.

Are some of the news from previous coverage being repeated?

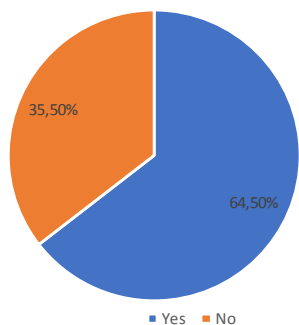


Figure 3: Repetition of news
Source: Own processing

Number of recurring messages in news blocks

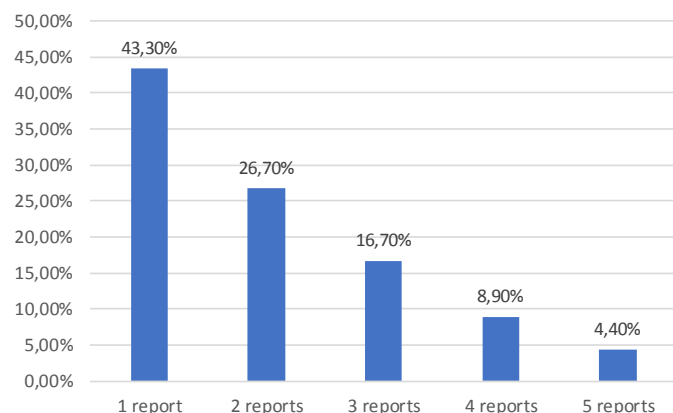


Figure 4: Number of repeated news
Source: Own processing

The news presenter is also involved in regular, non-news radio inputs along with the programme hosts. They announce what is about to be said. We are talking about ‘teasing’, or outlining the information to be presented, which is the radio’s way of preparing the listener for what is going to be said in the next few moments for keeping their attention.²³ This type of information comes in various forms, such as:

- *monologue* – the news presenter informs the audience about what to expect in the next few minutes. As a rule, they choose the most interesting piece of information and elaborate on it, which may be information from the news, traffic service or the weather. This type of ‘teasing’ is also used to announce other events, such as columns, contests, etc.,
- *dialogue* – the presenter of a specific broadcast block, together with the news presenter, outlines one or more topics that are further elaborated in the news block. The conversation is conducted in a semi-formal to informal manner. In radio practice, ‘teasing’ is also used in a dialogised form between a host and a news presenter, most often before the end of a programme or a broadcasting stream,

23 BRNÍK, A., KAPEC, M., BŔTOŠOVÁ, L.: *Rozhlasová tvorba a prax*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2020, p. 15.

In commercial radio broadcasting, the news presenter is often heard in regular input along with the hosts, in addition to news blocks or ‘teasing’. Newsreaders often discuss current affairs after the news programme is presented and are actively involved in the broadcast outside the news blocks. They are used as equal partners by the hosts who frequently ask for their opinion. Such a trend is most visible in morning prime-time.

Is the news anchor also involved in broadcasts apart from the news blocks?

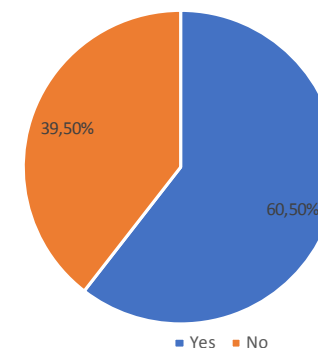


Figure 5: Participation of the news anchor apart from news block
Source: Own processing

Elements of infotainment are also part of the news coverage broadcast by commercial radio stations in Slovakia. Commercial radios also try to present news in a simple, comprehensible form. In doing so, they often use a variety of methods, thus disrupting the original, historical formalities of radio news. Our analysis revealed the most common elements of infotainment, namely underplaying the news programme, references to other programmes (self-promotion), informal speech, brevity of contributions, teasing of the weather, voiced headlines, and traffic information moved to the beginning of the news programme (*Fun Rádio*). As these are the most listened-to radio stations in Slovakia, the aforementioned elements of infotainment have the ambition to be applied to other, smaller, national or regional radio stations as well.

Table 1: The most used elements of infotainment in broadcasting

Elements of infotainment	Occurrence	Percentage
Advertising before the weather or traffic info	151	90.4
Background music	134	80.2
Teasing weather and traffic before the news block	96	57.5
Brevity	85	50.9
Weather information at the beginning	78	46.7
Sounded headline	63	37.7
Read text only	44	26.3
Promoting own programme	35	21.0
Slang words	24	14.4
Sound effects added to some sport news	24	14.4

Source: Own processing

Among the most widely used and dominant genres that we find most represented in commercial radio news are the short (flash) news and extended report. We will rarely hear radio montages or reportages on commercial radio stations. This is especially the case when there is a guest in the studio during the day who

is on a particular hosts's show and they use the material for the news block (for example, excerpts from the show Braňo Závodský Live on *Rádio Expres*, which is hosted by Braňo Závodský and the news block is read by another presenter). However, to a greater extent they are in the form of an audio report, i.e., the reporter prepares the announcement, which is accompanied by an audio report, a recording of the respondent.

Table 2: Journalistic genres in selected radio news

Journalistic Genres	Occurrence	Percentage
Short reports	95	56.9
Extended reports	67	40.1
Flash news	61	36.5
News audio montage	52	31.1
Audio report	44	26.3

Source: Own processing

As part of our analysis, we also noted the occurrence of audio feedback in the broadcast, which may be prepared or broadcast live and in which a responsible or competent person intervenes or responds to the presenter with their statement.

It is important to notice categorising messages to be included in the broadcast. The selection of the importance of news depends on the focus of the individual commercial radio stations we study. However, there is always foreign news and sport news in the newscasts. The news content is mostly made up of two domestic reports (a short and extended report, accompanied by audio, and included on the basis of importance) and two foreign reports (a short and extended report, sometimes accompanied by audio). The news block ends with a weather and traffic service, which is a fixed part of commercial radio broadcasting (it may also be placed elsewhere within the news structure). Within the news coverage, sport, weather and traffic service are also a fixed part of it. To sum up, as this is a regular phenomenon, sport, weather and traffic information are a regular part of the news units of both radio stations involved in this study.

Table 3: Sport during news block

Radio	Sport in the News Block	Sport Is Read by the Same Presenter as the Rest of the News	Having Own Sport Editorial Office
Rádio Expres	Yes	Yes	No
Fun Rádio	Yes	Yes	No

Source: Own processing

Table 4: Weather forecast during news block

Radio	Weather in the News Block	The Weather Information Is Read by the Same Presenter as the Rest of the News
Rádio Expres	Yes	Yes
Fun Rádio	Yes	Yes

Source: Own processing

Table 5: Traffic information during news block

Radio	Traffic Info in the News	Traffic Info Is Read by the Same Presenter as the Rest of the News	Having Own System of Collecting Information about Traffic
Rádio Expres	Yes	No	Yes
Fun Rádio	Yes	No	Yes

Source: Own processing

Weather and traffic services are also advantageous from a commercial point of view, as these news components are allowed by media law to be combined with advertising. This advertising space is considered to be the most expensive in radio in terms of broadcast cadence. For example, in *Rádio Expres*, a week of 10-second traffic service sponsorship (146 broadcasts) costs 12,100 € according to the new price list;²⁴ the same service in the second most listened-to radio station in Slovakia (110 broadcasts) costs 8,550 €. ²⁵ That is why traffic services and weather are a fixed part of radio broadcasts even at weekends. Both radio stations even collect their own traffic information using phone numbers or mobile apps.

4 Summary

Based on the data collected, we can now clearly answer the stated secondary research questions and attempt to answer the main research question as well.

RQ1: *How often is the news broadcast on private radio stations?*

News is broadcast on private radio stations mainly during weekdays, at times that we can define as prime-time (6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.). Weather and traffic services are also included in the news programmes, which, especially in the morning prime-time, forces a news programme to be broadcast every half an hour (these are shorter, quick news blocks). On *Rádio Expres*, the news is broadcast 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. On *Fun Rádio*, at weekends there is no news, only traffic services.

RQ2: *How many reports are included in the news block during the day?*

As the news blocks on commercial radio stations are shorter in terms of time – about 5 – 7 minutes long, they are composed of shorter news reports; together with the sport news, they contain about 4 to 5 news reports in total.

RQ3: *Which elements of infotainment are present in the broadcasts?*

The basic features of infotainment are the underplaying of the newscast, in addition to teasing other shows that are part of the broadcast structure of a given radio station, brevity, the use of voiced headlines, and the informal speech of the news presenters, who may also be involved by the speakers in their moderated parts of the broadcast.

In conclusion, we can establish the current trends in commercial news broadcasting in Slovakia. We can say with certainty that news coverage, in terms of scope, is short and does not get much space. It is mostly composed of 4 to 5 news reports. It may start with headlines. The news service also consists of weather forecasts and traffic services, which are placed in different positions within the news, which means that the news service may start with weather or traffic information and continue with social events from home and from around the world. The most commonly used genres in news production are the short and extended reports, but we also encounter the acclaim or montage. The main source of information for news production on commercial radio is the agency newsroom, from where sound recordings are also drawn, which has contributed to the shrinking of newsrooms in radio stations and the accumulation of duties. There are also strong elements of infotainment in commercial news such as underplaying the content, brevity, and the informal speech of the news presenters. A presenter who reads the news may also be involved in the production of the stream broadcasting and is a

²⁴ *Cenník sponzorov* a súťaži platný od 1.10. 2022. [online]. [2022-01-14]. Available at: <<https://bauermedia.sk/uploads/cennik.pdf>>.

²⁵ *Cenník celoplošnej a regionálnej reklamy vo Fun Rádiu a Rádiu Vlna platný od 1.10.2021*. [online]. [2022-01-14]. Available at: <<https://www.funradio.sk/static/files/mlmi6iopcrow.pdf>>.

full part of the broadcast team. The programme hosts usually have a dialogue with them before the news. The weather and traffic services are also part of the news coverage. Large commercial radio stations have their own systems to collect traffic information data through phone numbers or mobile apps.

5 Conclusion

Radio broadcasting is constantly changing and adapting to the times we live in, trying to bring listeners closer to the topics, but also processing the necessary information. This statement is supported by Višnovský and Bielik: “Over the years, communication has been constantly evolving, transforming and adapting in relation to the author (journalist/presenter) and recipient (reader/listener) with the advent of modern technologies, the Internet and online platforms.”²⁶ News is an important part of radio production, and in the case of the selected subjects we observed several significant changes that affect the quality and level of information provided to listeners. These include the human factor, where, due to shrinking newsrooms, one person has to concentrate not only on finding, gathering and processing information, but also on interpreting it. “The fundamental challenge is that newsgathering, production and distribution can now occur simultaneously across different media platforms, and this instant nature of distribution has led to the streamlining of editorial processes, requiring journalists to learn multi-media production techniques.”²⁷ The fast-paced lifestyle and the need to report the facts in the barest possible form is also reflected in the use of journalistic genres. Pravdová and Hudíková note that the genres of news are clear for their compositional structures, language and style in the form of certain stereotyped schemes. But they are also affected by continuous developmental transformations. These are based, for example, on the type and typological characteristics of the medium, relevance, the preference for certain topics manifested within the newsroom or society, but also changes influencing the editorial process, the popularity of the media at a particular time of publication of information, or mental outlook, as the latter is closely related to the journalist’s approach to the representation of reality. Other factors are the editorial priorities and the degree of professionalism of the journalist.²⁸ Order, however, reminds us that radio practice has always been dependent on skill, training, practice, and perseverance so that individuals working in radio achieve the best possible results.²⁹ By getting closer to the listener’s needs, there is an increase in infotainment elements, such as underplaying the news block, involving the news presenter in non-news inputs, as well as informal speaking or voiced headlines, which are the so-called earcatchers or something that catches the listener’s attention.³⁰ The quantity of news is around 4 – 5 per news block, with radio stations trying to follow a structure of domestic, foreign and sports coverage. Traffic information is also an important component. Radio stations have managed the task of remaining an important media platform despite an increasingly complex media environment. This is due to radio’s ability to adapt to dynamic changes or its accessibility to different individuals and communities around the world.³¹ On the basis of the analysis of the broadcasts of the two most listened-to private radio stations in the Slovak Republic, we can conclude that the aforementioned trends will likely be adopted by other private radio stations in Slovakia as well.

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