

Radio “Echo of Moscow” (Ekho Moskvyy) as a Multimedia Project

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The paper deals the popular news-talk radio station “Echo of Moscow” which is one of the most interesting and successful one in Moscow FM range. It provides thorough analysis of different previous and nowadays programs and web projects in comparison with main multimedia sphere trends. A particular attention is paid to “Echo of Moscow” web page as multimedia portal strongly packed with different functions such as its integration with social nets.

Keywords: radio, radio station, Echo of Moscow, Ekho Moskvyy, radio program, audience, interactivity, web page, multimedia, social nets

More than 25 years ago a new era in the development of Russian broadcasting began. In 1990 the USSR Press Act was adopted. A year later Russian Mass Media Act was promulgated. At the same time the State monopoly for mass media and Government censorship were canceled. The commercial radio segment of media market started a very fast developing. Today this segment in Moscow counts more than 50 stations. However Echo of Moscow is still taking a special place in this sphere.

History of Echo of Moscow

Echo of Moscow radio station started broadcasting on August 22, 1990. Its founders wished to create a completely new product in domestic output: a fast dynamic independent radio which responds with the public interest in its information policy, but not the directions or restrictions of authorities. First of all, it was related to complete audience awareness on current affairs and the prohibition of important news blackout.

This young station broke through the wall of information blockade constructed by old Soviet media system. Echo of Moscow had a completely new method of presenting news, comments, opinions. Muscovites had got a new quality radio station operatively broadcasting verified information from different sources. The audience appreciated a lack of formal manner in station broadcasts, presenters’ disengagement, comfortable atmosphere of discussions and dialogues not only for listeners, but also for journalists and guests, conversational style of Echo of Moscow news bulletins and other programs. Each presenter became an absolute “master” of his broadcast: the choice of guests and conversation or discussion topics became presenter’s functions. The degree of creativity freedom which had been already demonstrated in the early years of the young station existence. As Lomonosov Moscow State University Faculty of Journalism President Yassen Zassoursky said,

Echo of Moscow was the first democratic radio station opposed to the conservative forces which tried to prevent the movement of progress, development of democracy. Echo of Moscow performed its duty and it became the very important institute of new democratic information area. (Zassoursky, 2004, p. 359)

Echo of Moscow is “the most famous child of Perestroika”, The General Newspaper wrote¹.

Echo of Moscow started as the author’s radio with implementing the slogan “Free radio for free people”. After 1991 had to be involved in the free market. These conditions made station to ask for serious investment. As a result, Echo of Moscow became a part of The Media-Most corporation. At that time the station’s “set of rules” had been adopted. This document ensured the journalists corporation with major shareholders and guaranteed the editorial policy independence. All these provisions had been retained in the Charter adopted after The Media-Most Producing and Broadcasting divisions (including Echo of Moscow) moved into another holder Gazprom Media.

Then, despite of all attempts of the top-managers of Gazprom Media to influence the program policy, entire editorial problems and decisions. The Echo journalists prevented all the attacks on media’s independence, team and editor-en-chief Alexey Venediktov.

Reliable, swift and comprehensive information is a trademark of Echo of Moscow radio station. At the periods of crisis not only in Russian, but also in the world history such as wars, acts of terror, catastrophes etc. everyone could find the advantage of the mechanism for receiving, processing, and delivering information to listener created by Echo of Moscow. The station’s entire work process is being rebuilt, the normal broadcasting schedule is being interrupted, news goes on air as soon as it comes, including messages from domestic and foreign news agencies such as exclusive information from eyewitnesses of the events found by Echo of Moscow staff.

Along with traditional sources Echo of Moscow is widely using the Internet: different web sources and web media such as blogs as a source of news (Bolotova, 2011). Any kind of information provided not by journalists as themselves values a lot when a professional for any reason is not able to fall into the center of the event. The evaluation of Echo of Moscow is related to the objective changes in the mass media system in Russia, the development of new technologies and—that’s above all—the Internet which has turned out to be the most fast media.

Contemporary Echo of Moscow Program Policy

Now Echo of Moscow is generally recognized leader of Moscow news & talk broadcasting. According to Medialogy company research, it has the rating twice higher than other that format Moscow stations have². The quotation index is higher than federal radio and TV channels’ one. Station’s informational prestige is still high not only in Russia, but also abroad. Everyday Moscow audience of the station counts about 1 million listeners. Weekly audience counts 2 million listeners. The number of listeners in whole Russia is 7.1 million³.

Evolution of radio station’s program policy takes in account the objective changes in the mass media system in Russia such as web technologies fast development. News from websites are available for the bigger number of people in the whole world and so, society is also changing. That’s why Echo of Moscow has significantly increased the amount of analytical problems as a response to the modern challenges.

¹ The General Newspaper. Published on Mar. 26, 1996.

² Retrieved from <http://echo.msk.ru/about/ratings/index.html>.

³ Retrieved from <http://www.tns-global.ru/services/media/media-audience/radio/radio-index/information>.

The program policy of Echo of Moscow concentrates on the actual political, economical and social problems which are discussed in different interactive and multimedia programs such as talk morning and daytime broadcasts Turnout (Razvorot), very popular Special Opinion (Osoboje Mnenie) etc. which are the multimedia projects where well-known journalists and guests (politicians, economists, writers, analysts) talk about actual events and hot problems. Among analytic programs there're a lot of journalists and experts commentary broadcasts such as Access Code (Kod Dostupa), 48 Minutes which are very popular. All named broadcast as well as news bulletins are streaming live on the website.

World and Russian history is a special and beloved topic of the station. Big slots of Saturday and Sunday programming are devoted to different formats of history broadcasting, such as Nothing Is So (Ne Tak), All Is So (Vsio Tak), That's How: The Sound of History (Vot Tak: Zvuk Istorii), cycles The Price of Victory and The Price of Revolution which are dedicated to the most controversial periods of our history, the 1917 Revolution and WWII.

Some segments deal with Russian language: Speaking Russian, How to speak it right. Programs about different problems of culture, theater, movies, sports also exist. Dithyramb, Culture Shock, Non-past Time, Little Books use the interviews with famous artists, writers, musicians, actors. Station also has special morning children programs such as Playground, Otkryvashka. The staff permanently offers its audience new programs and new presenters such as Downed Focus or Dilettantes.

Almost all these programs have the multimedia platform on Echo of Moscow web page. Journalists give the audience the opportunity to make the call-ins, to vote and comment every broadcast by SMS or by website live. All this possibilities make the potential audience take a number of about 47 million listeners.

Echo of Moscow as a Multimedia

In 2014 current—the 5th—version of Echo of Moscow website was launched to transfer the way of contact with the audience into maximum degree of interactivity. It is necessary to note in 2006 echo.msk.ru web page was licensed as a registered mass media. It passed a giant way since its first days. Now Echo of Moscow web page is a huge news, entertainment and education portal with different functions and opportunities for users. It gives station's listeners possibility not only to comment every broadcast, but also post their own texts and take part in some surveys, create their own profiles and pages. Forum page is also included in this portal. The aggregation of the users' content and developing of work methods can be named the specific feature of modern time.

Echo of Moscow website allows users to watch live video from station studios. This opportunity is provided by Setevisor company. Photos, audio and video archive, additional information is also published. Users can take part in discussions and debates, polls and quizzes, ask guests and journalists questions, read blogs, articles, and documents which have no direct to the station, but which are of big public interest (e.g., InoPressa, Rain TV channel).

Web page also allows to listen to live broadcast, using mobile devices possibilities. All broadcasts and news are available for mobile users. Users can also share all posts and publications using special button which is connected with all popular social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, VK etc.

One of the modern main global trends is the social nets development which creates the new communication instrument and very plain platform for the news from different sources and users' articles. In this way social networks and civil journalism become a real challenge to traditional mass media.

Echo of Moscow has formed an effective system of work with the information from social networks using Twitter. Twitter messages are integrated with news agencies' streams. So, social networks become a new source of information as well as a new information sphere which must be verified and then aggregated. Radio station also uses social networks for content distribution. Today Echo of Moscow has accounts in Facebook, Twitter, VK.com and Odnoklassniki.ru nets. Radio station uses five Twitter pages including editor-in-chief Alexey Venediktov's account. Some Echo of Moscow broadcasts such as A Person from TV, That's How: The Sound of History have their own Facebook accounts.

Radio station keeps increasing its presence in social networks considering it as a way of attraction for the audience, mostly its younger part (Bolotova & Vershinina, 2014). The social networks ensure the considerable part of users' web traffic, e.g., in January 2014 20.85% of social nets users visited Echo of Moscow web page whereas in March 2014 this indicator increased to 34.96% of users (Bolotova & Vershinina, 2014).

Inherently Echo of Moscow website it turned to be a real and popular kind of social network. A lot of attention is paid to the new mobile applications elaboration. It is highly defensible because in coming 3-4 years mobile media is staying the most developed sector of media market.

“New technology has made Echo of Moscow the unique”, Prof. Yassen Zassoursky said⁴. Considering the diversity of its services such as online broadcasting, podcasting, video blogs, sound and text archive, RSS streaming, mobile applications and connection with social nets, Echo of Moscow web page is a substantive media which is fit the bill of modern worldwide media industry.

Nowadays Echo of Moscow works in news/talk/opinion format offering its audience top news and qualified analysis in multimedia formats. In fact, Echo of Moscow radio station performs the functions of public broadcaster which does not actually exist formally in Russia (E. Bolotova & L. Bolotova, 2010). Obviously, there is a need for this broadcaster in national society. High station ratings both in the capital and in the regions serve as a pure evidence of it. It must be admitted Echo of Moscow is more than just one of the ordinary radio stations. It is a culture, information and politics brand. Echo of Moscow is a kind of “school” for broadcasting journalists respected and recognized by their colleagues. The station has a unique editorial programming which cannot be confused with another one, competitors have. This makes Echo of Moscow the most bright element of contemporary media landscape in Russia (E. Bolotova & L. Bolotova, 2010).

The echo.msk.ru web page with its variety of services such as online audio and video broadcasting, podcasting, different kinds of blogs, sound and text RSS archives, solutions for mobile devices, PDA versions etc. is a multimedia and actually a social network that meets modern challenges of global media industry.

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⁴ No Fools. Aired by Echo of Moscow on Jan. 22, 2010.

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