

Genres of Modern Mass Media

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ABSTRACT

The research investigates the problem of studying, universalizing, and integrating the genre system in modern multimedia mass media. The division of all genres into universal and special ones was substantiated; the substantiation of the theory of pre-convergent and post-convergent genres of mass media was commenced, the essence whereof is that considering the history of journalism, the genres of heterogeneous mass media in the pre-Internet period already contained prerequisites for the universalization and unification of genres regardless of the medium or presentation of information. The key methods used in this research were extrapolation of heteromorphic theories to the dimension of the syncretic (synergistic) paradigm, induction, analysis, synthesis of scientific theories and their epistemes, and verification methods of verbalization and evaluation of theoretical generalizations. The main result of this research is a detailed differentiation of the universal genres of modern mass media and the description of the basic principles of their functioning.

KEYWORDS

Genre theory; genre-forming factors; universal genres; special genres; multimedia

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Introduction

The issue of general genre-forming factors in various mass media remains a relevant and unsolved problem in modern media studies (Gorevalov & Zykun, 2014). The current classification of genres has a number of problems, the main ones being the arbitrariness of the genre, the secondary nature of the genre, the convergence of mass media, and the dependence of the genre on a number of key factors (type of mass media, journalistic intention and task, the function of the mass media, etc.) (Kroychik, 2000).

Therefore, it is expedient to develop a new classification of modern mass media genres, which would incorporate classic approaches, innovative trends

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and requirements, and epistemological and methodological challenges of modern social communication. The goal and the predicted scientific result of this research is the thesis that the integral classification of modern mass media genres can be done according to both the so-called vertical scale (informational, analytical, and journalistic) and the horizontal scale – genres of printed, radio, television, and other multimedia mass media, which have a technological impact on the specificity of the genre and its relevant characteristics (for instance, newspaper interview, radio interview, television interview).

This research is based on several key principles that clearly manifested in the modern journalistic practice and require theoretical investigation. The main principle is the integrational one – the virtual information space, integrated primarily in the Internet (Lavrov, 2014), facilitates the emergence of an averaged approach to the creation of multimedia content and, consequently, to the generalization and universalization of journalism.

The hypothesis of the research is based on the following theses:

1. The artifacts of heterogeneous mass media (text, photo, radio, and video stories) have general informational, compositional, narrative, and other characteristics.

2. Since the genre in modern journalistic studies is an arbitrary concept, it is possible to distinguish the invariant genre-forming factors for some classic genres (news item, correspondence, interview, review, etc.) (Kopystyanska, 2005).

3. All genres that exist in classic and modern classifications can be divided into two groups – universal (independent of the expressive specificity of mass media types) and special (distinguished only within the framework of certain mass media) (Selyutin, 2005).

The scientific value of this research is that its attempt to substantiate the theory of pre-convergent and post-convergent genres of mass media produced convergent, rather than divergent, conclusions, since the genres of heterogeneous mass media in the pre-Internet period already contained prerequisites for the universalization and unification of genres. The research also analyzed the universal genres of modern mass media in the context of general discourse.

Literature Review

This subject, in terms of the analysis of informational, analytical, and journalistic genres, as well as genres of specific mass media, was reflected in the media studies. The general genre theory was studied by L.Ye. Kroychik (2000) and A.A. Tertichny (2014). The specificity of genre differentiation in certain media was described by A.V. Kolesnichenko (2008), Al.A. Selyutin (2015), J. Mouriquand (1997), and W. Potter (2009), and others. However, the comprehensive analysis of mass media genres is still understudied. Consider certain theories that best suit the goals set in this research.

The studies of S.S. Raspopova (2015) analyze the classic approach to the genre theory. Raspopova argues that the number of attributes by which genres were differentiated included: a) the originality of the object of cognition and reflection that dictates the nature of the creative process; b) various functions and cognitive-educational tasks; c) the scope of the reflection of reality and the

appropriate scale of conclusions and generalizations; d) expressive and visual means, while taking into consideration the fact that the common and main functions of mass media is the informing function.

Ye.V. Oleshko (2012) investigated this problem within the framework of convergence (merging and interpenetration) of modern mass media. Ye.V. Oleshko (2012) argues that it is common for media practice to have radio stations with websites containing articles, columns, and photo reports or newspaper or information agency websites with recorded audio news and video reports with flash animation. For instance, a talk show on the Internet with the support of multimedia articles with audio and video fragments, contextual links, infographics, and 3D animation is no longer a dream of top-managers that want to draw the attention of the audience – it is a reality that has already been done by a number of national and foreign mass media. The convergence of genres and forms implies that the merging of various media platforms (printed media with television, based on Internet portals) will result in genres that previously were specific to one media platform being assimilated by other platforms (for instance, the “Internet column” or “Internet media critics” concepts) (Oleshko, 2012).

The general and key element of any mass media genre is the media text as an inherently valuable artifact or foundation for the secondary product – radio or video story (Bell, 1996). Therefore, when determining the genre nation of mass media, many researches proceed from the modern functions of mass media while ignoring the expressive and visual specificity and arguing that the function prevails over the structure of a genre and, consequently, is primary (Schmidt, 2008). For instance, E. Black (1992) argues in favor of the dominance of informational genres, since the main function is that of informing and establishing a “communication channel” between the public and the representatives of public and governmental agencies, organizing public discussion of all relevant topics. Black notes that the technological of certain mass media and a market attitude to information causes a dominance of informational multimedia genres.

The semiotic school of mass media investigates the meaning of relevant texts, regardless of the genre, as a process of coding and decoding information, which affects significant meanings. For instance, S. Gol argues that the concept of genre is a formal provision that limits journalistic activity. The communicative goal and genre-forming attributes are secondary, while the main aspects are the coded texts that offer their own original interpretation down to manipulation of all available means – language, image, etc. This process is opposed by recipients that have their own opinions of the subject of discourse, which can even be contrary (Kazakov & Kuttyrev, 2015).

The problem of previous paradigms of the theory of genres and genre-formation in mass media was the text-centric position, which has been replaced by the universal and complementary paradigm in the modern theory of journalism (Pak, 2014). For instance, Ukrainian researcher S.I. Gorevalov & N.I. Zykun, (2014) proved that modern mass media genres were divided primarily into big and small and into independent and auxiliary by the ratio and dominance of the main means of expression. The ratio of the latter is affected by the dominance of text or audiovisual means of expression.

The French school of journalism studies and stylistics is based on the thesis that journalistic genres cannot be isolated into separate forms due to diffusion

and lack of homogenous criteria. However, proceeding from the prevailing informational and commenting (analytical) function of journalism, de J. Broucker (1995) noted that the problem of mass media genres could be solved in a coordinate system of three key parameters – enunciating, pragmatic, and semantic. With this approach, the complexity of genres depends on the intention of the journalist, who can convey, analyze or interpret facts regardless of the sensory means of their reflection (text, sound, photo or video). F. Antoine (1995) believed that the definition of the genre was the final stage in the evaluation of the information product, which, in turn, is the author's interpretation of the social request and creative concept through available means – formal (text, audio or video) or cognitive (informational, analytical or expressive). Within the framework of this theory, F. Antoine (1995) distinguished ten dominating macro-genres, the main ones being interview, article, critique, chronicle in the form of report, chronicle, and essay.

The intermediate conclusion is that modern schools are rejecting the dominance in journalism of genre, structural or other system-forming factors in favor of maximum support of the mass media functions.

Methods

Since this research is purely theoretical, a generalization of existing theories, and a development of an original integral theory on this basis, which should holistically unite the contradictions in modern media studies, the key used methods are extrapolation of heteromorphic theories to the dimension of the syncretic (synergistic) paradigm, induction, analysis, synthesis of scientific theories and their epistemes, and verification methods of verbalization and evaluation of theoretical generalizations. The future stages of the research can use practical methods – statistical, cultural, stylistic methods, and content analysis, with a view to evaluating the theoretical theses during the direct study of a multimedia product.

The object of analysis was the leading mass media of Kazakhstan – the newspaper “Kazakhstanskaya Pravda”, the magazine “Big Secret”, and the content of radio stations “Kazakh Radio” and “Europe+Kazakhstan” and television channels “Kazakhstan” and “STV”.

Data, Analysis, and Results

The practical application of the results of this research is targeted at two fields of activity in journalism studies and journalism – educational (development of new programs and special courses for mass media integration, media convergence, genre theory, etc.) and practical (multimedia and Internet journalism, self-development of practicing journalists).

The integral reflection of the nature of modern mass media genres requires a separate analysis of the typology of modern mass media within the framework of media convergence and multimediazation and the determination of genre-forming attributes that a common to all types of journalistic products on the basis of common characteristics. A comprehensive analysis of mass media genres requires outlining some key concepts and their definitions, ontological, cultural, and informational essence. The basic concept of the genre and genre-forming attributes, which presumably can be common not only for various mass media, but also for any artifacts of human activity.

Journalistic genres mean sustainable groups of published items with common conceptual and formal attributes. These attributes are called genre-forming factors. The modern theory of journalism generally distinguishes the following main factors: object of reflection, target function of reflection, and method of reflection.

Mass media are traditionally divided into newspaper and magazine (printed) and multimedia (radio, television, and Internet media). The objective of this research is to generalize as much as possible the forms and genre-forming attributes of these heterogeneous mass media and identifying their common compositional, structural, and expressive means.

The general groundwork for the analysis of modern information products are the theses about the common nature of artifacts (including those based on media text – video and radio stories, and printed forms) and about the systemic relations within any genre.

In terms of history, one can argue that all mass media genres originate from literary genres and borrow their compositional, structural, esthetic, and other macro-elements. The difference (distinguishing features) lies in the expressive means that focus on sound, image, etc. The modern synergetic paradigm focuses on the syncretic nature of any natural or social systems. For instance, A. Bell argues that the modern journalistic text cannot exist by itself: it is a media text – a technological conglomerate of words, music, infographics, images, effects, etc. (Black, 1992).

Considering the essence of any perfect genre, it is possible to hypothesize that its micro- and macrostructural elements comprise of an elastic hierarchy that allows for interpretative, receptive, and other transformations, while part of the elements, including genre-forming ones, are related to a general ontology of mass media or culture, while another part remains dependent on a specific system of mass media – radio, television, printed media, etc. Ukrainian researchers N.Kh. Kopystyanska (2002) argues that although the genre systems of literature and journalism are based on different principles, the laws and regularities of their operation and development are often similar. For instance, arguments regarding a dynamic system are encountered in both literary studies and journalistic studies. The genre system is dynamic because not only is it constantly supplemented by new components, but also transitions are constantly taking place in it and its components are unequal as factors that constitute the system. Some play the main role in a specific period of development of literature and become elements of its frame, while other elements remain temporary or “random” elements of that period, but serve as the foundation for the new system of the following period. This research offers a combined vertical-horizontal classification of the universal genres of mass media (see Table 1).

Table 1. Vertical and horizontal classification of genres

Syncretic genres of mass media →	<i>Informational</i>	<i>Analytical</i>	<i>Journalistic</i>
↓Types of modern mass media			
Newspaper and magazine periodicals	1	1	1
Radio journalism	0.6	0.7	0.9
Television journalism	0.6	0.8	0.9

The table shows that considering the fact that most genres and genre-forming attributes originate from printed media, if they are taken as an identity (1) then the “specific gravity” of these partially transformed genres and their attributes in other mass media will be preserved (not less than 50% in informational genres and growing in analytical and journalistic genres).

Journalism historians emphasize the fact that the emergence of new types of mass media (radio in the early twentieth century, television in the 1930s) first caused intense competition and certain non-acceptance of new media as complete and multifunctional ones. However, after a while, old mass media began closely cooperating and developing new complementary techniques of interaction (Westley & MacLean, 1957). This means that the concept of unity of a general information space in the twentieth – twenty-first centuries a priori features a synergetic potential of complementarity, mutual alignment, and syncretization.

The trends in modern genre formation and genre development are, firstly, arbitrariness and secondary nature of genre definition in respect to the creative concept and informational social request, secondly, diffusion and mutual migration between heterogeneous texts, video and radio stories, thirdly, penetration of non-journalistic elements (images, infographics, holograms, statistical visual means), fourthly, the hybrid nature of genres (mutual correction). In terms of the latter, the standard and rule to include correlation methods of such genres as commentary, interview, review, etc. in any informational or analytical genre of medium-sized or large printed and audiovisual mass media.

While in the pre-Internet era the hybrid and arbitrary nature of mass media genres was explained by insufficient development, outlining or expediency of canonical or standardized genre forms, modern media studies consider genre definition possible only post factum, after the creation of an informational artifact, which, based on its communicative goal, combines informational, analytical, and visual means (horizontal, according to the classification of this research); textual, audio, graphical, and video means (vertical).

The offered concept of horizontal-vertical classification of mass media genres (as independent phenomena or elements) proceeds from the classic philosophical and methodological theory of content and form. At that, sensory means (text, audio, and image) are the form, while the ratio of cognitive means (informational, explanatory, and illustrative) are the content.

The convergence of modern media genres and forms in mass media in general is understood as the realization of their potential in one informational environment (usually the Internet) and on one informational platform. Therefore, the terms “genre”, “text”, and “work” are replaced by the term “multimedia product”. Nowadays, work on video editing, color, computer processing of photographs, animation, infographics, and work with sound have achieved great heights. All these artistic and visual means are freely integrated into media. Nowadays, the technological level of mass media product creation enables realizing any creative idea. Nowadays, multimedia has become one of the most successful concepts for the development of the media industry and relationships between mass media and the audience. Experts define it as an integration of two or more means and channels of communication with the computer. Now the word “multimedia” implies the conveyance of information by

several channels of communication simultaneously: audio, video, and virtual communication. Therefore, one can image multimedia as a holistic information system that serves as a foundation for the operation of any mass media, the information products whereof often merge with each other (Gorevalov, Zykun & Starodub, 2010).

In this respect, L. Kroychik's (2000) integral classification of mass media genres is of interest. According to Kroychik's theory, the main criteria of genre division are the aspects of news value, promptness, analyticity, and imagery. There is a hierarchy, in which each group of genres (informational, analytical, and journalistic) is the lowest rank, while the top rank incorporates the qualities of the lower rank. Therefore, journalistic text, as the most integrated one, includes the news item (or the problem setting), comprehension, analysis of the situation, and means of emotional and visual influence on the audience. Based on the above theses, text as the foundation of the genre of any mass media can represent one of four groups: news, research-news, research, and artistic-journalistic (research-visual) (Kroychik, 2000). The first group of genres includes small ones, while the following groups, respectively: report, interview; commentary, column, correspondence, review; essay, pamphlet, and digest. One of the through attributes of all genres is the research or analytical intention.

Another approach to the universalization of intermedia genre classification is based on the domination in each genre of certain features of the object or means of reflecting reality. For instance, D. Kh. Samadova in her thesis titled "The Evolution of Informational Genres in Modern Journalism" presented and substantiated the key features of informational genres; Russian researcher A.A. Tertichny (2014) provided a similar description of analytical genres, etc. Despite the fact that such fundamental studies primarily focus on printed media, they allow distinguishing intermedia attributes. The table below lists the most common universal genres used in newspapers, magazines, radio, television, Internet mass media, and, sometimes, photojournalism as a complementary mass media and identifies their attributes that are common in all media (table 2).

Table 2. General media genres

<i>Common media genre</i>	<i>Its key characteristics</i>
note	brief
account	information about the course of an event
report	information from an eyewitness
interview	answers of competent persons to the journalist's questions specific and limited material
correspondence article	interpretation, comprehension, and generalization of the problem
critique	evaluation and interpretation of artifacts
review	information, analysis of similar events over the course of a certain period
investigation	search and analysis of facts hidden from the general public
sketch	impression from an event
essay	description of an image
satirical article	description of the comical essence of negative facts

Thus, the genres of heterogeneous mass media can be divided into universal and special (closely related to the technological features a specific medium's means of reflection) (see Table 3).

Table 3. The separation of genres to general and special types

<i>Universal genres</i>	<i>Special genres</i>
Information (news)	version
message (information, communique)	letter
extended information	column
note	summary
extended note	questionnaire
commentary	article
correspondence	essay
extended correspondence	
event interview	
report	
chronicle	
obituary	
investigation	
story	
interview	
rating	
list	
report	
review	
critique	
article (investigation)	
monitoring	
experiment	
conversation (except photojournalism)	
sketch	
essay	
survey	
digest	
memoires	
pamphlet	
satirical article	
lampoon	

It is worth noting that despite the fact that the article is an original and specific newspaper and magazine genre, its homologue exists in other types of mass media in the form of journalistic investigation. In general, one can argue that there are many more universal genres than special ones, the specificity whereof is dictated by the sensory channel of conveyance of the medium. For instance, essay belongs only to printed genres due to its amorphous expressive nature and the word is the most subjective and plastic means of expression.

Based on the above table, it is expedient to emphasize the specificity of photojournalism, which is becoming increasingly influential despite not being a standalone medium. Its distinguishing feature is the lack of dynamic or change in discourse (this can only be achieved in complex photo genres – photo story, photo report, etc.). Nevertheless, ideas of the prevailing role of civil video- and photojournalism, which is usually supplemented with text commentaries, blogs, etc., are beginning to circulate in the social and scientific environment.

Discussions

The most relevant modern theories that correlate with this research come from the field of communication – B.H. Westley & M.S. MacLean (1957) integral

concept of social communications, and genre studies – the opinions of French media researchers. These discourses should be investigated in relation to the subject of this research. The Westley & MacLean communicative model implies interaction as the key element of the utilitarian essence of means of mass communication. In the light of this theory, the genre is a functional entity that can satisfy the informational needs of recipients regarding the orientation in the reflected subject. Thus, the elements of the internal (analysis, expressive means) and external (fact, interview, commentary) components of the journalistic text within the framework of the genre are compiled to maximize effectiveness. This means that the genre is a concept that establishes the information product post factum; it is an aspect of the mechanical, i.e. secondary, approach.

The opinions of French researches are closer to the genre theory. They believe that the genre is a formal post-characteristic of an expedient effective text that is implemented after the goal setting, expedient structure, pragmatic potency, etc. (Mouriquand, 1997). Consequently, it is formal and secondary, as in the Westley & MacLean theory. In this research, the principles are slightly shifted towards the convergence of genre-forming factors of various mass media. In other words, the determination of the genre definitely is a secondary characteristic of the media product, but it is worth bearing in mind the key inter-genre attributes inherent in text and multimedia mass media: comments, interviews, facts and their confirmation, analyticity, journalistic organization, etc. The intermediate conclusion is that the true essence of modern mass media genres implies the combinability of the formal western approach and the clearly structured classic approach.

Conclusions

The values of the results of this research is that they bridge the existing approaches, according to which the genre is considered either the defining factor in the creation of a multimedia product (classic and Soviet paradigms of journalism) or a secondary and formal factor, which corresponds to the borderline essence of social communication that should take into account the textual (linguistic), social, technological, and psychological aspects of any informational artifact. The reliability of the obtained results is confirmed by their universal reference to all genres of mass media, in which visible genre-forming factors can be reduced to a common functional and, to a lesser extent, formal denominator, and by the validity of the theory with respect to the leading mass media of Kazakhstan.

The conclusions of this research are as follows:

1. Modern practice of using media genres and their theoretical investigation showed that the main structuring factor of a media product is its functionality.
2. A multimedia product of heterogeneous mass media has invariant informational, cultural, compositional, and other characteristics.
3. Modern mass media genres can be divided into two groups – universal (used in all types of mass media) and special (used in specific mass media).

4. A specific universal genre can be determined by a single key genre-forming attribute, regardless of the type of mass media.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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