

MUSIC ON THE SERBIAN PUBLIC MEDIA SERVICE PORTAL (RTS)*

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Abstract. *The aim of this paper is to explore how the portal of the Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) reports on music (musical works, musicians, and music events). Through a quantitative-qualitative content analysis, journalistic articles published in the Magazine/Music section of the RTS portal (<https://www.rts.rs/lat/magazin/muzika.html>) during the first half of 2023 were analyzed. The research questions were: which type of music is most represented, which articles are the predominant ones (on national or world music), how prevalent is music criticism compared to other journalistic genres. A specially created coding sheet was used in the analysis and a statistical method was applied to analyze the results. The research results show that the majority of articles published during the observed period focused on national music, with the most represented music genre being popular music. The main topic of these articles was most often music events, and the context in which music was discussed was positive or neutral. News and reports dominated the journalistic genres, while music criticism was lacking indicating a superficial approach to music coverage on the Serbian Public Media Service portal.*

Key words: *music, media, music criticism, culture, RTS online portal.*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper analyzes how the portal of the Radio Television of Serbia reports on music, including musical works, artists, and events. A combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis was used, examining articles published in the “Magazine/Music” section on the RTS portal between January and June 2023. The primary unit of analysis was a news article, defined based on visual and content criteria. Content analysis was chosen as the

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most suitable method for investigating media reporting, given its widespread use in the social sciences. A total of 125 articles published during the observed period were analyzed.

Due to the general trend of media tabloidization, with decreasing media coverage of culture and the arts, the aim of this paper is to determine how the portal of *Radio Television of Serbia* reports on music (musical works, musicians, and music events). The trend of media commercialization is also manifested in media regulations. The Rulebook on Conditions and Criteria for Issuing a License for Providing Media Services (Pravilnik o uslovima i kriterijumima za izdavanje dozvole za pružanje medijske usluge), adopted by the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) in May 2024, abolished a provision adopted in 2016, which required national electronic broadcasters to include more than twenty percent of cultural, children's, and documentary content in their program (Pravilnik o minimalnim uslovima za pružanje medijske usluge i kriterijumima za odlučivanje u postupku izdavanja dozvole za pružanje medijske usluge na osnovu sprovedenog javnog konkursa, član 29). The new rulebook mentions program diversity as a criterion for license issuance but lacks a specified minimum for quality content. It includes music program as a program type: "Music program is a type of program consisting of recordings or live broadcasts of concerts, music festivals, live musician performances, music videos, etc., which may include the publication of artistic music, folk music (contemporary folk music, traditional folk music, old town songs), popular music (pop and rock music), other contemporary music, dance music, etc." (Pravilnik o uslovima i kriterijumima za izdavanje dozvole za pružanje medijske usluge, član 21). Consequently, it is important to reiterate the significance of cultural and arts programming in the media, including music program.

Before the advent of internet portals and television, music was first broadcast on the radio. At the very beginning, music was aired, and the popularity of this new technology was significantly boosted by the live broadcast of the opera *Cavalleria Rusticana*, featuring world-renowned tenor Enrico Caruso from the Metropolitan Opera in New York on January 13, 1910. Two years later, in Minnesota (USA), the first news was broadcast" (Bjelica, Jevtović 2006, 123). Bjelica and Jevtović note that the first music program in Europe was conducted from the royal court in Belgium on March 28, 1914, and was broadcast every Saturday, with the first regular music radio program airing from the Dutch station PCGG on November 6, 1919 (Ibid.). In Serbia, regular radio broadcasts began on October 1, 1924, with the Belgrade Opera overseeing music quality. One of the first radio program studies from 1939 shows the following: "As for music, the most favorable representation was in classical music with 20.44 percent, followed by light music at 16.67 percent, which was the same percentage as folk music, while dance music was allocated 5.04 percent of the available time" (Ibid., 347).

Music was also an integral part of the first television program, which began airing in Serbia from the studio at the Sajmište building (Sajmište) on August 23, 1958 (Ibid., 386). Nowadays, music remains an essential part of television programming. "Music 'covers' show intros, gives a special tone and dynamics to programs that flow without text, and even enhances text to make it more dramatic, poetic, thoughtful, cheerful... Music creates atmosphere and mood..." (Ilić 2006, 153).

Although television remains the most popular medium in Serbia, this paper examines the RTS internet portal, a new medium that also holds a dominant position. Research by CRTA (Centar za istraživanje, transparentnost i odgovornost), shows that citizens most frequently get information about current events in the country and abroad from television (83 percent), followed by online newspaper editions and internet portals (74 percent). One of these portals is the RTS Internet Portal, which, unlike RTS television with its leading

position in Serbia's media landscape, has a smaller influence on public opinion in Serbia (Analiza medija, prepoznavanje relevantnosti i značaja medija, 2023). The RTS internet portal began operations in 1999. The site was updated once a day after the main news program, Dnevnik 2 (News of the Day 2), and included the most important news. The redesigned Internet portal of Radio Television of Serbia was launched at the address rts.rs in 2008. Today, the RTS portal is among the most visited online media in Serbia, with millions of users. The internet portal covers numerous sections, including the Magazine/Music section, which is the focus of this analysis.

Both radio and television use the internet to distribute media content. Ercegovac (2022) examines radio as an integrated part of the internet and takes an optimistic stance that radio will survive in the modern technological environment. Many global and domestic radio stations recognize the internet as an advanced means of program distribution and are increasingly using live stream broadcasting on their websites. The internet, as a new medium for mass communication, finds its advantage over traditional media primarily in speed and accessibility. Internet portals provide easy access and instant information.

Out of all media before the advent of the internet, television played a major role in encouraging musical creativity and popularizing musical art worldwide, particularly in the field of popular music. National television also held significant importance in nurturing domestic creativity. "Television Belgrade, throughout its half-century of development, embraced the best music content produced elsewhere in the country and abroad, while simultaneously supporting local artists and achieving a remarkable scope of its own music production" (Ilić 2006, 154). However, Ilić also highlights the danger in the media's power to shape musical taste. "It must be acknowledged that the so-called newly composed melos has taken deep roots, as persistent media support of false values has fostered pseudo-needs among citizens, behind which lies the overt tendency to create a cult of singing stars that generate profits for record industry producers" (Ibid., 156–157). On the other hand, Ilić notes the significant role of television in promoting and developing rock and roll culture in our region (Ibid., 157). Television Belgrade, like the Public Broadcasting Service of Serbia today, played an important role in promoting classical music, through coverage of the work of composers, other musical artists, and musical events.

Maglov (2022), in her doctoral dissertation titled *The Media Turn in Music: Production and Reception of Music in the Context of Media Culture in the 20th century* (Medijski obrt u muzici: produkcija i recepcija muzike u kontekstu medijske kulture u 20. veku), examines the transformation of music production and reception within the framework of 20th century media culture. Instead of viewing music as content transmitted by the media, she analyzes the media as active agents in the musical experience. She considers music as a dynamic practice in interaction with the media and perceives the media not as mere technical devices but as networks of social relations. She recognizes the active role of listeners and artists in shaping musical practices.

The law regulating the operations of the Public Broadcasting Service of Serbia mandates that its primary role, in addition to serving the public interest in the area of public information, is to provide "general and comprehensive media services, which include informational, educational, cultural, and entertainment content intended for all segments of society" (Zakon o javnim medijskim servisima, član 2). This also includes the obligation to produce, acquire, process, and publish cultural and artistic media content that is in the public interest for citizens, aiming to inform about current cultural events, develop culture and artistic creativity, present cultural heritage and artistic achievements in the country and

abroad, and preserve radio and television recordings as cultural heritage of national interest (Zakon o javnim medijskim servisima, član 7, član 8).

According to the report by the Supervision and Analysis Service of the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (Služba za nadzor i analizu Regulatornog tela za elektronske medije), titled Public Broadcasting Service Radio-Television of Serbia - Methods of Meeting Legal and Program Obligations – Report for the Period from January 1 to December 31, 2022 (Javni medijski servis Radio-televizija Srbije - Načini ispunjavanja zakonskih i programskih obaveza – Izveštaj za period od 1. januara do 31. decembra 2022. godine), music program accounted for 1.05% of the total broadcasting time on the First Program of Radio-Television Serbia, marking the lowest share since 2017. Despite the small share, a high percentage of original production was recorded (89.90%). The most represented formats include those dedicated to folk music (Crazy Folk Night, Collage, Gathering of Folk Music, Most Beautiful Folk Songs), recordings of concerts by domestic musical performers, as well as broadcasts of music events and festivals. Artistic and classical music are represented to a lesser extent. However, music program is the most prominent type of content on the Second Program of Radio-Television Serbia, making up 13.92% of the total broadcast time, which is the highest share in the last six years for which data is provided in the report. Original production accounts for 87.02% of the music program, covering concert recordings (popular, classical, and folk music) and music shows, with the most prominent being Three Colors of Sound, focused on the rock and pop music scene, and Golden Record, a TV reminder of the greatest folk music hits. On the Third Program of Radio-Television Serbia, music program absolutely dominates with a 40.1% share of the total broadcasting time, the highest percentage since 2020 (Javni medijski servis Radio-televizija Srbije – Načini ispunjavanja zakonskih i programskih obaveza - Izveštaj za period od 1. januara do 31. decembra 2022. godine).

In his publication *Most-Watched Shows by Program Type in 2022* (Najgledanije emisije prema vrstama programa u 2022. godini), Mihajlović lists the most-watched music shows on RTS's First Program, based on Nielsen Audience Measurement. The most-watched broadcast took place on the evening of August 7, 2022, featuring the 61st Dragačevo Trumpet Festival in Guča – National Orchestra (Dragačevski sabor trubača u Guči – Narodni orkestar) of RTS and Guests Ana Bekuta, Snežana Đurišić, Cakana, with a viewership share of twenty percent. In fact, broadcasts and recordings from the 61st Dragačevo Trumpet Festival in Guča make up seven of the top ten most-watched music programs on RTS's First Program. As for RTS's Second Program, the most-watched show was 60 Most Beautiful Folk Songs – Collage (60 najlepših narodnih pesama – kolaž), aired on December 1, 2022, with a viewership share of 4.5 percent. The Second Program offers larger variety in its shows, featuring folk, popular, and classical music (Mihajlović 2023).

Research into the representation and quality of music program in Serbian media is rare. Mitrović and Vulić examined how the media reported on the largest jazz festival in the region, Nišville, in 2019. They concluded that the media coverage was insufficient and superficial (Mitrović, Vulić 2019). Nada Torlak investigated the presence and representation of music in the media and its influence on shaping musical culture, value systems, and idols among audiences. Torlak concludes that “media content mostly boils down to commercially profitable material, often offering a distorted view of values, including musical ones” (2013, 29). Reporting on art music is marginalized. Furthermore, Torlak notes that media reporting on music is superficial, lacking presence of experts in the field of music.

Media reporting on music should be extensive, encompassing all musical genres and diverse origins of music. Additionally, reporting should not be superficial but rather analytical. Music criticism should take precedence, even though “globally, the era when criticism determined whether a particular work would be accepted by the cultural public is behind us” (Domazet 2011, 280).

As pointed out in the literature on music criticism, media reporting is to be pervasive. “In criticism, the means of expression is words, and with words, we should evoke the full richness of emotions and meanings in music. Musical communication, which deeply enriches the human soul, is ultimately reduced to spoken language” (Životić 1988, 124). Music criticism intersects with literary, theatrical, film, and ballet criticism (Radović 2007). Music can also be covered through other journalistic genres, highlighting the seriousness of the approach to this art form in the media.

2. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this paper is to investigate how the portal of the Serbian Public Broadcasting Service reports on music (musical works, musicians, and music events). Using a quantitative-qualitative content analysis method, journalistic articles published on the RTS portal in the “Magazine/Music” section during the first half of 2023 (January – June 2023) were analyzed.¹ The unit of analysis was a news article, clearly identified visually and by content. Content analysis was chosen as the most suitable method for examining media content, being one of the most commonly used methods in social sciences (Branković 2009, 89). The analysis covered 125 journalistic articles published within the observed period.

The research questions this paper seeks to answer include:

- Which music genre is represented the most?
- Which articles dominate (on national or international music)?
- How dominant is journalistic music criticism in comparison to other journalistic genres?
- What is the most common topic of a journalistic article?

The RTS portal was selected for analysis due to its significance in Serbia’s media space, both as part of the public service and because of the tradition the Serbian Public Broadcasting Service upholds in cultural reporting. During the analysis, a specially designed coding sheet was used, consisting of the following categories: publication date of the article, article title, origin of music (national music, international music, mixed), music genre (popular music, folk music, art music, mixed), topic of the article (musical work, musician/music group, music event), journalistic genre (news, report, interview, feature, commentary, art criticism, article) and location of the music event. In processing the results, a statistical method was applied using the SPSS software (version 20.0).

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

In the observed period from January to June 2023, a total of 125 articles about music (musical works, musicians, and music events) were published on the Serbian Public Broadcasting Service portal in the “Magazine/Music” section.

¹ <https://www.rts.rs/lat/magazin/muzika.html>

The research results are presented graphically.

The most represented music genre is popular music, with 75 articles, followed by art music with 25 articles, and folk music with 22 articles. There were also articles covering several music genres simultaneously, totaling 3 (Fig. 1).

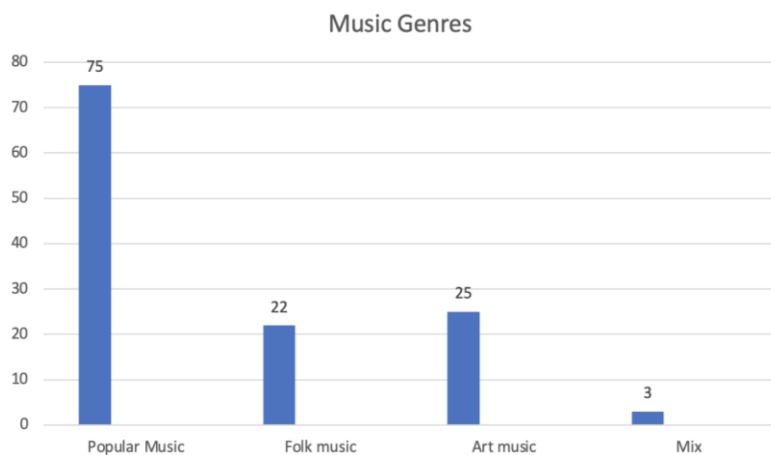


Fig. 1 Music Genres on the RTS Portal, January-June 2023

Writing on national music was published in 81 articles, writing on foreign music in 20 articles, and 24 articles were classified as undefined, while the origin of the music is not indicated in the journalistic text (Fig. 2).

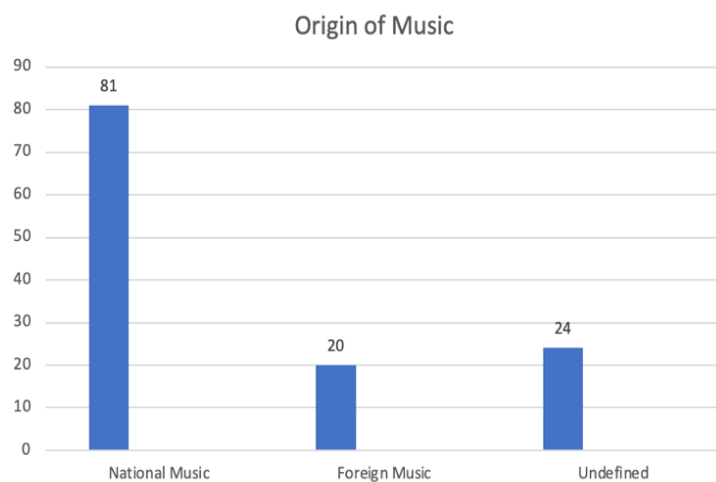


Fig. 2 Origin of Music, RTS Portal, January-June 2023.

When it comes to national music, Belgrade is the site of 67 musical events, followed by Novi Sad with 6, Kragujevac with 3, Čačak with 2, and Užice, Vranje, and Lučani each with 1 event. These results show a dominant centralization when it comes to music and its representation in the media (Fig. 3).

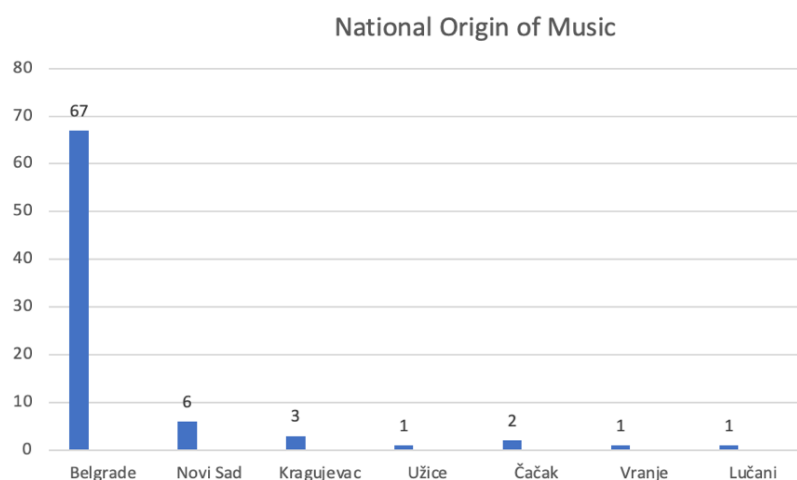


Fig. 3 National Origin of Music, RTS Portal, January-June 2023

Regarding foreign countries, the most frequent musical events are from the United Kingdom – 6 articles, the United States – 5 articles, and one article each from Italy, the Netherlands, France, Sweden, Croatia, Brazil, Australia, Canada, and China (Fig. 4).

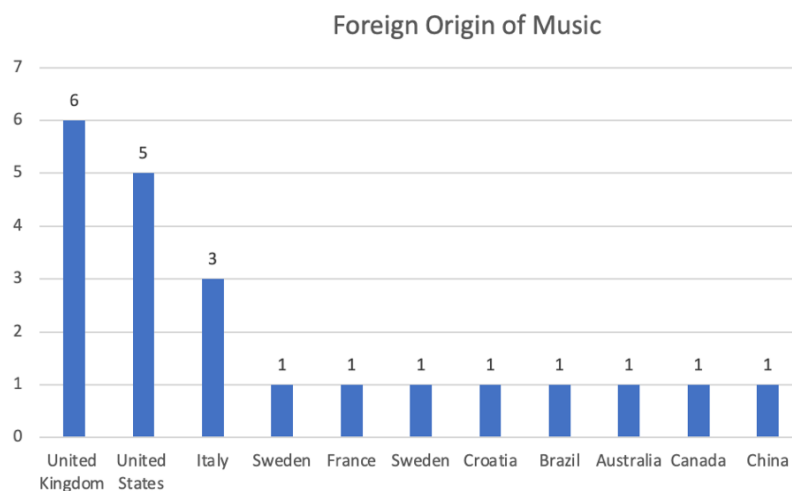


Fig. 4 Foreign Origin of Music, RTS Portal, January-June 2023.

During the period observed, the most common genres were news – 67 journalistic texts, and reports – 53 journalistic texts. This result reflects a superficial reporting on music, the dominance of informational genres, and the complete absence of analytical genres. From January to June 2023, only 4 articles and 1 interview were published, and journalistic music criticism was completely neglected (Fig. 5).

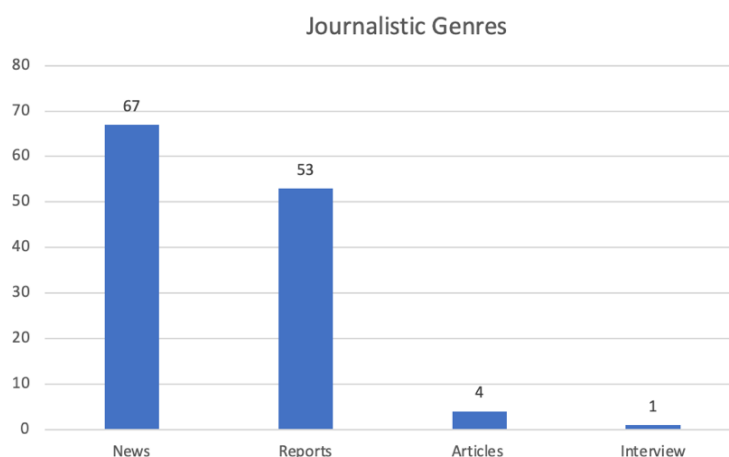


Fig. 5 Journalistic Genres, RTS Portal, January-June 2023.

The most common topic of journalistic texts was a musical event – 90 articles, followed by texts about musicians or musical groups – 20 articles, and about musical works – 15 articles (Fig. 6).

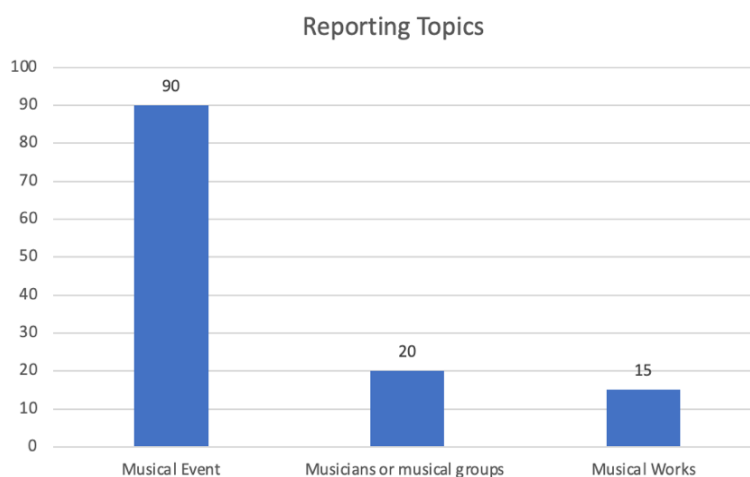


Fig. 6 Reporting Topics, RTS Portal, January-June 2023

4. CONCLUSION

The research results show that the most prominent music genre during the analyzed period from January to June 2023 on the RTS portal was entertainment music. The public broadcaster primarily airs entertainment music because it attracts a wider audience. Although the public broadcaster is funded by subscriptions, higher viewership of entertainment programs can contribute to additional revenue through sponsorships and advertisements. The majority of journalistic texts were about national music. One of the tasks of the Public Media Service in Serbia, according to the Law on Public Media Services, is the preservation of the national identity of the Serbian people and the fulfillment of citizens' requests for program content that ensures the preservation and expression of the cultural identity of the Serbian people. There are no journalistic music reviews, and the genres that dominate are news and reports. The absence of music reviews in the media, in general, may be the result of several factors. Music review is a niche and specialized field, and editorial teams often lack journalists specialized in this area. As a public broadcaster, the RTS portal may avoid critical reviews to maintain neutrality and avoid bias toward certain artists and genres. In an era in which digital media favors short, easily consumed content, analytical and critical texts may attract smaller readership. The most common topic of journalistic texts was a musical event.

At the time of developing the methodology and conducting the research, the Rulebook on Minimum Conditions for Providing Media Services and the Criteria for Decision-making in the Process of Issuing a Permit for Providing Media Services Based on a Public Competition was still in effect. This rulebook imposed an obligation on national electronic broadcasters to have more than 20 percent of cultural, children, and documentary content in their programs. Meanwhile, in May 2024, this obligation was abolished by the new Rulebook on the Conditions and Criteria for Issuing a Permit for Providing Media Services, adopted by the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media, which no longer mandates a minimum of quality content. For this reason, works that highlight the importance, as well as the position, of music programs become significant, as music is, as Ilić states, “an enriching factor of human existence” (Ilić 2006, 154).

Music program falls under cultural and artistic programs. It seems to be the program most affected by the transitional changes in Serbia. The commercialization and tabloidization of the media has made them dependent on the market and sponsors, leading to the favoring of commercial music over artistically valuable content. Additionally, there is no systemic support by the state for the development of high-quality music programs. With the rise of the internet and social networks, audiences have become exposed to global music trends, often turning to the simplest and most readily available content instead of genres that require more attention and cultural context. All of this has led to a decline in the quality of music programs. Music has a significant meaning in society. Limited media coverage reflects the media's attitude toward culture.

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MUZIKA NA PORTALU SRPSKOG JAVNOG MEDIJSKOG SERVISA (RTS)

Cilj rada je istražiti na koji način portal Radio-televizije Srbije (RTS) izveštava o muzici (muzičkim delima, muzičarima i muzičkim događajima). Primenom kvantitativno-kvalitativne analize sadržaja analizirani su novinarski tekstovi objavljeni na portalu RTS-a, u rubrici „Magazin/Muzika” (<https://www.rts.rs/lat/magazin/muzika.html>) u prvoj polovini 2023. godine. Istraživačka pitanja bila su: koja vrsta muzike je najzastupljenija, koji tekstovi dominiraju (o nacionalnoj ili svetskoj muzici), koliko je zastupljena novinarska muzička kritika, a koliko ostali novinarski žanrovi. Tokom analize korišćen je posebno kreirani kodni list, a u obradi rezultata korišćen je statistički metod. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da je najveći broj novinarskih tekstova tokom posmatranog perioda objavljen o nacionalnoj muzici, a najzastupljeniji muzički žanr bila je zabavna muzika. Tema novinarskih tekstova najčešće su bili muzički događaji, a kontekst u kome se o muzici piše je pozitivan ili neutralan. Od novinarskih žanrova dominiraju vest i izveštaj, a muzičke kritike nema, što svedoči o površnom izveštavanju portala Javnog medijskog servisa o muzici.

Ključne reči: muzika, mediji, muzička kritika, kultura, RTS onlajn portal