

TELEVISION CHANNELS AND THE INTERNET: OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE IDENTITY AND THE FUTURE OF THE BROADCASTERS

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, public broadcasters, as well as the private ones, have placed their contents in the Internet. This has been a gradual process and not exempt from doubts and difficulties for the television channels. Simultaneously, there has been a rapid increase in the use of the Internet. According to the last research done by EGM (Estudio General de Medios), the Internet's penetration- the connection in the last few months- in 2011 was 57% and in 1996 only added up to 1%. In 2011, the average daily use of the Internet was 63 minutes, when the television surpassed it with 237 minutes and the radio with 110 minutes.

This reality brings about important issues related to the television business model and distribution of contents. The Internet can be a threat to the television channels or it can also become an opportunity for them (Dennis 2003). According to Jin (2013: 22), “for both network and cable television companies, finding a workable strategy in an increasingly digital environment has been significant issue, because they worry that the television’s role in the media landscape could diminish as Internet TV and social media, including YouTube, are taking a more important role as aggregators and distributors of information and entertainment content”. Some years later, Dennis (2006: 26) assures that “television has begun to redefine itself and its role in the media family. It is an industry, a technological platform, a content creator and distributor of information and entertainments and advertising”.

However, some authors show their doubts about the capability of new media to develop their own business independently from traditional television. According to Murphy (2011: 59), “television is central to new media”. Harries (2002: 207) questions if “new media can find its own voice, its own vision, detached from the traditions of the cinematic and the televisual”.

Some authors suggest that the term “television” needs to be revised (Rangone & Turconi, 2003; Toletti & Turba, 2009), because “the way television is produced and delivered, as well as how and where it is watched, is changing” (Roscoe, 2004).

In this paper, we will try to prove two hypotheses that question the identity and the future of the television channels in this new social context.

2. HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY

Before formulating the hypothesis, it seems necessary to establish the frame in which we understand the success of television contents. Following Kompare (2010) and Doyle’s (2010) ideas, we agree that the success of the television contents can be measured by the ability to engage the audience. We also

agree with Arrese (2004), that media products are attention goods that require experience to set their value, and they also generate economies of scale. Hence, their value should not be measured just by their production and reproduction expenses, but also by the high level of satisfaction and utility that it's given to the user.

The first hypothesis affirms that television channels, instead of developing its business around broadcasting, have moved to the web and developed cross-platform strategies (Doyle 2010). Throughout the first few years of testing, and learning how this new supply works, it becomes necessary to improve the quality of online contents and services, to get a higher speed broadband and a proper business model.

Secondly, the rapidly growing use of the Internet to access television contents drives everyone to question the future of the broadcasters as programmers and distributors. This is where literature becomes abundant (vid. among others Newman, 2012; Sewell, 2010; Hutchins & Rowe, 2009). For example, Kompare (2010: 83), after discussing the new activities the television is making in the new cross-platform scenario, reaffirms "television, as a major form of global popular culture that will last". Our hypothesis leads us to confirm that in a very near future, the television companies will be converted into "coaches" and promoters/prescribers of media content.

In order to prove the hypothesis of the research, our work will combine different methodologies. In the first place, we will carry out a review of the literature over the main subject in the research, such as cross-platform strategies, the economics of broadcasting and the economy of online media. Secondly, we will analyze the strategies done by two Spanish television companies during the analyzed time period (2010-2012). Finally, we will use data from a survey carried out in Spain. This empirical investigation will be centered on an online survey conducted in a sample of Internet user population of more than 1,000 people in 2012. The questions of this survey try to obtain the clearest profile of Internet user and TV viewer. Then, the questions will be debated about the amount of time consumed on television and on the Internet and the most commonly screens to enjoy the contents being watched.

By proving these hypotheses of the empirical research, combined with a revision of the literature, we will propose some recommendations for the television industry.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the characteristics of the audiovisual products are taken to the full in the case of their diffusion through the Internet. Their nature as public goods is reinforced, given the flexibility and universality of the Internet as a means of distribution, as well as the absence of geographical and legal barriers. The marginal cost is null, making it possible to develop economies of scale and windowing strategies in a more efficient way than ever before. Furthermore, apart from a free access to the Internet, a culture of free enjoyment of products was established since the very beginning, even more firmly for the Internet than for the television industry.

Moreover, regarding audiovisual products, some important limits of the television industry, such as the dependence of time, are overcome by the Internet. "Television schedule was structured to match the daily routines of life (meal times, leisure time)..." (Murphy, 2011: 99). With Internet, media consumption takes place anywhere, anytime, any device. In Bennet and Strange's words (2011: 4), "digital television is a fragmented experience in which we must all make our own choices, self-schedule, download, and fend for ourselves". Instead of a collective consuming in a living room, new technologies allow individual consuming with the chance of sharing the contents. We are passing from "sofa-TV" to "desktop TV" and "hand TV" where the viewers are more proactive and even TV can be viewed in the palm of the hand (Toletti & Turba, 2009).

This explains that broadcasters have seen the strategic importance of the Internet, since television and the Internet develop a symbiotic relationship with significant financial implications. As Chan-Olmsted and Ha pointed out in 2003, the Internet was first used to enhance the core product of the established business (Chan-Olmsted & Ha, 2003: 597). However, and following Doyle, the big question for broadcasters to answer is: "Is the migration to multi-platform enabling television companies to use their resources more effectively than before?" (Doyle, 2010: 432). And taking a step further, we would ask: are the complementarities between broadcasters and the Internet strong enough to be monetized and make the broadcasters' businesses more profitable?

As a consequence of the windowing strategies, the Internet makes it possible to spread audiovisual products, to repeat their consumption and to increase the audience's knowledge of them. Programmes distributed in this way have already been broadcast on television, and so have become a new type of rerun, but using different media (mobile phones, portable media players), and usually sooner than before. The Internet avoids the constraints of the traditional grid, not only by making it more flexible, depending on the wishes of the user, but also by rendering the media more flexible in terms of time and place (Herrero, 2009: 48). From the broadcasters' point of view, complex windowing techniques will play an increasingly important role in the exploitation of television content assets (Doyle, 2010: 445).

Those windowing techniques will require for the broadcasting industry and other industries to converge. Complementarities refer to the degree to which a bundle of goods provides more value than the separate consumption of those goods (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996). Convergence between different new media technologies can be viewed from this notion of complements. Dowling, Lechner and Thielman (1998) propose that, in a "complementary convergence" situation, additional synergistic products may emerge to form a larger market (a complement view). We could assert that the traditional economies of scope go beyond the broadcasting industry.

In that sense, many Internet-related opportunities will require the integration of skills and capabilities residing outside a traditional media company. This, in turn, will lead to structural changes in the media sector which may involve market boundaries (Dal Yong, 2013). That explains the increase in mergers and acquisitions among large media companies as a consequence of the emergence of the Internet (Sullivan & Jiang, 2010: 23-27).

Following this idea, Chan-Olmsted, Lee and Kin, regarding the convergence with mobile phones, assert: "The broadcasters, with a keen appreciation of the mobility and personalization value provided by the mobile platform and of its compatibility and complementarity with their current offerings, focus on enhancing mobile television content, finding ways to monetize the content beyond advertising revenues, and integrating the strategic value of mobile and fixed television to make their overall product portfolio more competitive" (Chan-Olmsted, Lee & Kim, 2011: 88). In the

same line, and looking for ways to monetize within a “free” culture, Hayes and Graybeal point out: “the mobile environment offers micropayment a clean sleight. Smart phones have ushered in a culture of paying, in fact, micropaying, for apps and games where the Internet fostered a ‘free’ culture” (Hayes & Graybeal, 2011: 39).

Convergence of industries and complementarities of products are very much linked to the brand communication of the broadcasters themselves and their products. Branding and engagement of audiences are also linked.

4. STUDY CASES

The Spanish television companies we have chosen for the case study are Antena 3, a private company, and RTVE, the public corporation. We will analyse their strategy related to digital media.

4.1 ANTENA 3

Since 2009, they have developed strategy 3.0, with the intention of delivering content through the three platforms: television, internet and smart phones. With this strategy, they tried to show the viewers that they were not merely a television channel, but that they had developed into a truly multimedia company with interactive services. In some cases, programmes were still release first on television, though other times they launched a program first on line and afterwards on TV.

Social media sites have become new tools to enable audience interaction. Through Facebook, Windows Life, Tuenti and Twitter, audience members can address comments to Antena 3 or share its content with other users. To participate with these networks, registration is required through a tool called Zona 3.

The company has also created blogs related to their own channels, including one related to the audiovisual industry (www.antena3.com/

objetivotv), and several others related to general topics such as fashion, current affairs, and sports. To increase interactivity and audience participation, video-meetings were created to chat with actors, singers, and writers, and to play online games related to the programs. For example, the series *Hispania*'s related game had 150,000 registered users. Antena 3 also created vertical portals such as *Celebrities*, where it is possible to find news, rankings and gossips about worldwide stars and celebrities. Furthermore, Antena 3 also created its own room in the second life site *Habbo*.

Since June 2010, all these services can be found on the new site of Antena 3, *www.antena3.com*. On the site one can watch both live television and entire TV seasons on demand using their 'salon' mode. Antena 3 inserts advertising spots before each episode and in six other spots where the episode is divided. According to Javier Bardají, General Manager of Antena 3 in 2012, many advertisers have started to invest only in internet spots such as these, and in 2010, the yearly income from multimedia was 7 million euros, while per week was 15,000 euros. They have also begun offering the option to pay per view episodes through micro-payments of 0.71€ per episode

Apart from this generalist site, they have launched other specialized sites for both news (*www.antena3noticias.com*) and radio (*www.ondacero.es* and *www.europafm.com*).

In 2010 the company incorporated a *Community Manager* to manage the entirety of its content and websites.

According to OJD Interactiva, Antena 3 websites had more than 600,000 users in 2010 and was ranked the 11th largest. Though ranking closely behind its competitors *www.rtve.es* and *telecinco.es*, the actual time spent on Antena 3's websites were longer than its competitor. According to Rubén Vara, the Director of Marketing of Multimedia, in 2011 its number of unique users increased 36 per cent to 8.5 million users, while their video streams doubled to 59.9 million streams per month. The number of visited pages was 90 million.

In June 2007, they launched a new project of IPTV called *teleporlared* with the signals of the digital television channels Antena 3 and the new ones Neox, Nova and Nitro. However, nowadays all of them are integrated in the site of Antena 3.

When considering mobile phones as providers of audiovisual content, a number of differences become evident. For one, online entertainment is

offered in free basics, while the telephone economy is based on payment by the user. It is necessary to make a distinction between mobile television and mobile video, although sometimes the two are interchangeable: mobile TV provides live television, while mobile video enables the download of videos on demand. While both markets are incipient, mobile TV is the newest. In 2009 Antena 3 signed an alliance with Vodafone, the second largest telecommunication company to deliver their news, series and other programs in 3G mobile telephones for 1.5 € a week (Vodafone, 2011). It has also signed with other significant telecom companies such as Movistar, Orange, Nokia, Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft, an agreement intended to integrate internet portals to mobile telephones in 3G devices. In 2010 they had 2.5 million of instances of access to *antena3.com* through mobile platforms, and 12 million video streams in *tvconnected* (Antena 3, 2010).

By 2010 most households already had a digital television set. Each company received a multiplex license, allowing them four separate channels. As a result Antena 3 developed three other specialized channels: Nova for adults, Nitro for young adults and Neox for children. The channels were commercialized by A3 advertising and developed what they called a 'unique price' that allows advertisers to contract time at the same commercial slot in all its channels.

The Group Antena 3 recognizes these new channels as good platforms to experiment with new projects, particularly interactive solutions. In 2009, Neox launched the first interactive show, *Dirígeme. El Rescate*, a weekly drama series with a duration of 8-10 minutes. The weekly episode was then repeated over several days. When the episode finished, there were two options for possible endings for the viewer to choose from, through the mobile or the web sites of Antena 3 or Neox. Thanks to the tool *Watch & Chat*, it was possible to comment and watch the programmes of Nova on the internet at the same time it was broadcasted on TV.

The biggest revenues and profits come from television, which is the core business of the company. In spite of the decrease in television advertising (7.5 per cent) in 2011 with respect to 2010, revenues from television increased thanks to the increase in audience share of the TV channels.

The 3.0 strategy of Antena 3 was to deliver contents through three platforms: TV, Internet and mobile devices. Furthermore, they produced

online shows, several social media related to TV programmes and specialized blogs. Hence, they multiplied their strategy through DTT, Web TV, IPTV and mobile TV, but the core business of the group was still free to air TV.

4.2 RTVE

Since 2006, the new board of RTVE understands that the interactive media is a key strategic department. Its General Manager, Luis Fernández, appointed in 2007 a new director of the division, Rosalía Lloret, who was an expert on Internet. She had worked previously with Terra.es, the website and online television division of Telefonica, and also participated in the launch of the website Ya.com.

In March 2006, RTVE created its own channel on YouTube: <http://youtube.com/rtve>. For the 2008 Spanish General Elections, it created the channel *Elecciones'08* in YouTube and invited citizens to participate by submitting videos with questions to be addressed for the politicians. The selected questions were posed to candidates on a talk show broadcast live on the television channel. RTVE also offered live and recorded coverage of the Beijing Olympics (2008), providing a platform for citizen participation called *La Villa*, through which fans could contact athletes participating in the competition. By January 2008, it had 1,358 videos. In April 2013, it had 92,292 subscribers. RTVE uses YouTube to enable previews of some of its most popular series, including those with 90 minutes long.

Although the web started in 2000, until 2008, TVE did not take it seriously. In May 2008, the new RTVE website was introduced, which includes video, audio and photos, television and radio on demand, blogs, part of the archives of RTVE and news. Through the web, it is possible to watch the programs you want, have access to *24 Hours Channel* with live information such as the Council of Ministers, some football matches, the program *Tengo una pregunta para usted* [I have a question for you], and some others. TV news programs are offered once broadcast on television and based on it, a news product was created – *Telediario en 4 minutos* –, a four-minute summary of the main news of the day, very adjusted to web and

mobile consumption. Thus, Internet users can watch, but not download, episodes from series, such as *Los gozos y las sombras*, *Verano azul*, *La bola de cristal*, *Anillos de oro*, *Historias para no dormir*, *Turno de oficio*. The new website will allow access to historical contents of TVE, after the images have been digitized by RTVE.

The web has proven to be a useful means of establishing contact with the audience, functioning as live-chats with public personalities, famous actors and actresses, and other figures. The blogs are a good example of the closeness between RTVE professionals and the corporation's users. In October 2009, there were 17 blogs related to cinema and television, 22 to music, 15 to radio, 21 to sports, 33 on current affairs, and 22 from the international correspondents. Viewer responses help to know their tastes, although this has not yet been systematized. In 2006, the ombudsperson's online program was created to attend to complaints and comments of radio, television, and web users. Once a month, the Ombudsperson has a television program, *RTVE responde*, where Elena Sánchez talks about the complaints, recommendations, and suggestions of the public. In 2008, she received 4,954 inputs.

RTVE also signed agreements with Facebook and MySpace, although this last one was terminated at the beginning of 2009. With Facebook, RTVE implemented some unique ways of participation never before seen on a public broadcasting company, creating real interactivity between web users/TV audience and the programs hosts. With MySpace, for two consecutive years, they organized the presentation and pre-selection of candidates to the Eurovision Song Contest. They have also developed social media in Twitter and Tuenti.

TVE a la Carta enables viewers to watch streaming content. The limit of availability is seven days. The most viewed on TVE are those of the series, *Muchachada Nui*, sporting events, both pre-recorded and live coverage of certain topics, the radio sites and blogs. RTVE is working on offering the archives for the last fifty years of television and radio to the users. Their intention is to make all the audiovisual treasure of RTVE available to users in the shortest time possible, but there is some concern that it may take several years to digitize the material, as well as to value, classify, and document it and to establish what licenses are owned. There is also a plan

to prioritize the material, so as to know the most popular shows that users would like to watch.

Moreover, the site has special divisions related to sports, children, and shop, where merchandising products are sold. The radio sections offer several podcasts from the radio channels: Radio Nacional, Radio Clásica, Radio 3, Radio 4, Radio 5, and Radio Exterior. Other innovation was *Mobile Match Tracker*, a mobile phone application enabling the download of video-clips of goals and match highlights from the UEFA Champions League directly to a mobile phone. It also enables mobile phone access to the latest news, results, standings, party meetings, and incidents as they occur. Furthermore, RTVE broadcasts on iPhone its 24-hour news channel as well as Champions League's matches whose rights have been acquired. In June 2009, the new children's site, *Clan TV*, was launched, where children of different ages may watch many programs, games, and activities. There is also a section for parents to inform them about the contents. Parental control is provided for those registered and logged in. Nowadays, there are some live events online.

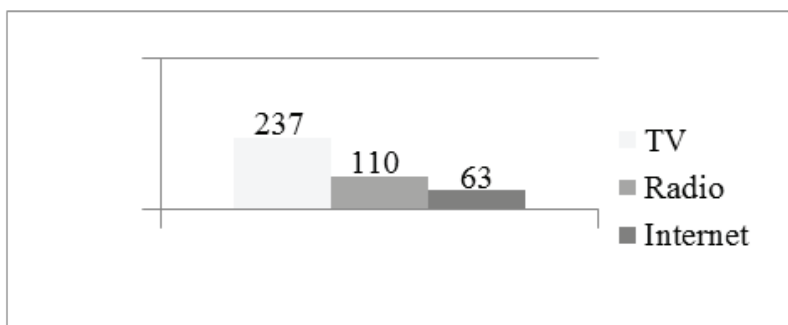
To promote innovation, in June 2009, the Corporation launched the International Award "INVI" for Online Audiovisual Innovation to look for and encourage talent on the web.

5. MARKET INSIGHTS

The last part of our research will combine some data from the market with the results of the online survey.

Next graph shows the average of time media consumption in 2011. Citizens spend more time on television than on the Internet.

Graph 1
 MINUTES OF CONSUMPTION (2011)



Source: Kantar Media

On the other hand, advertisers spend more money in television than on the Internet (see Graph 2).

Graph 2
 ADVERTISING REVENUES (000)

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Internet	482	610	654	748
TV	3,468	3,082	2,368	2,516

Source: Infoadex

From the online questionnaire, we obtained that 42% among Internet users watch TV on the Internet.

Next graph shows the reasons why citizens access to TV contents on the Internet. More than 90% did it because they couldn't watch them on TV when they were scheduled.

Graph 3
REASONS TO ACCESS TO TV CONTENTS ONLINE

I couldn't watch on TV	90.6%
I missed the completed programme on TV	68.1%
I like to watch them without advertising	66.1%
I like to decide how to watch them	62.4%
I couldn't find them on TV	62.8%
I like to watch them again	39.0%

Source: own questionnaire

On the other hand, it seems interesting that the profile of the Internet user who watches TV on the Internet is different from the profile of general TV viewer: 56% are male and 43% are female, and that is the other way around of general TV viewers. From the educational point of view, more than half of the users have high education, diploma and university level.

Graph 4
SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE INTERNET USER
WHO WATCHES ONLINE TELEVISION

Male	56.3%
Female	43.7%
University	28.6%
Diploma	24.0%
High school	43.9%
Primary education	3.5%

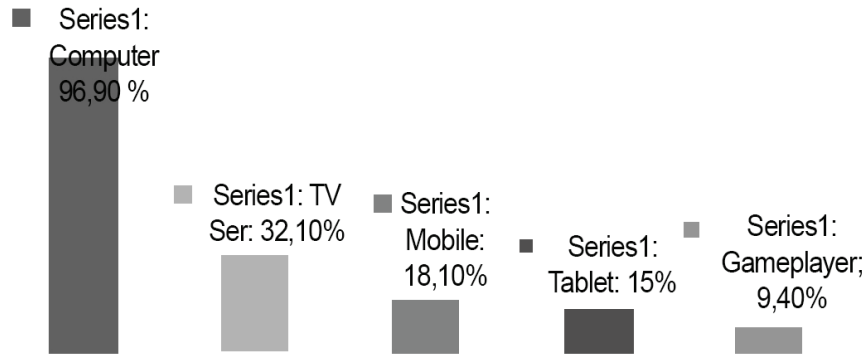
Source: own questionnaire

If we ask users about the first platform by which they access to online audiovisual contents, they do firstly on computer and secondly on TV screen.

If we focus on the youngest population, we find that 68% of people from 10 to 18 prefer spend time on the Internet than on the TV set (Foro 2010).

Graph 5

THE MOST COMMON SCREENS TO WATCH TV CONTENTS



Source: own questionnaire

Finally, if we ask them why they did not access to the contents on the Internet is because they prefer to watch them on TV. Some of the reasons for not addressing audiovisual contents online is the bandwidth potential and that they cannot find the contents they want.

Graph 6

SOME DIFFICULTIES TO WATCH ONLINE TV CONTENTS

I prefer to watch them on TV	83.0%
I don't have any interest	65.5%
It's difficult to find the contents	51.0%
I have small bandwidth	34.7%

Source: own questionnaire

6. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this paper was to explore some elements (literature, empirical data, etc.) to define the identity of the broadcasters and to foster their role in the near future. Our main conclusion is that television is still the favorite medium to watch audiovisual contents. One of the most important consequences of the digital development is that there are more screens and devices where watching broadcasting television contents. But television is still the core business of the media groups.

In the new digital scenario, television can assume the following roles: to be the promoter of live events, to become an intermediary, prescriber and commissioner of contents, or to create communities united by interests, that is to say “fan builder”. There is still an issue that has to be solved by the industry and the academic reflection: what TV will be and its position in the value chain. Following Evans (2011: 1), “television is now bigger than TV”, but television has not died at all (Evans 2011: 175). It might be a programmer and aggregator, a distributor, a producer, or just an acquirer of audiovisual contents. The only disadvantage of TV as a platform is that not portable as the other screens. However, as Evans (2011) affirms, audiences engage with contents no matter the platform that distributes them and who produces them.

Cusumano (2010: 181) proposes that media firms should concentrate “on services, dominant technologies, standards and platforms”. Whatever will be TV as a medium, it seems clear that branding and engagement and high audience satisfaction will become extremely important. As Griffiths (2003: 182) says “networks must, at the very least, think of themselves as content brand builders or they are doomed”. In television companies, tools of new media have to be implemented to increase audience knowledge and personalize its services to achieve personal interests.

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