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Radio formats and social media use in Europe – 28 case studies of public service practice

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to report, summarize and spread the results of a large-scale European research project funded by EBU Radio in 2011 to map best practices in social media and European public radio, focusing on the way successful public service radio formats have incorporated social media in their production flow. The

KEYWORDS

radio studies
social media
Facebook
Twitter

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programmes have been selected for one of the following reasons: programmes that are audience leaders in their country, use innovative radio language or are youth-oriented productions. The survey has been carried out by a team of ten European researchers from seven countries on a sample of 28 public radio programmes analysed for two months between January and February 2011. The research team attempted to answer the empirical question: 'How social media are used by public service?'. Are there some common threads and shared practices among successful programmes in different countries? The team adopted an empirical approach based on social media content analysis and interviews with radio producers. This article will present the main results of this empirical research project. It will conclude with practical guidelines for public radio production and social media innovation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on the quality of radio and television programmes have a long tradition in the analysis of public service. Since its inception, the public service has had to study itself, in order to understand if the service it is providing to its citizens/editors is to their satisfaction. In contrast with commercial radio, which had already installed a quantitative rating system by the 1920s, based on the calculations of the total time listeners spent in the company of radio, the value of public service does not lie in the amount of listeners it is able to sell back to advertising investors, but in its ability to provide quality content to as much of society as possible. However, most of the research projects on quality have focused on receiving content, and not on 'texts' (the radio programmes). Studies by Silvey (1966, 1974) at the BBC aimed to measure programme appreciation. Nicholas (2008) has highlighted the influence of the sociological orientation that is at the basis of British research on audiences, as opposed to the American focus on statistics. Silvey was the first to experiment with qualitative analysis tools (in-depth interviews, ethnographic observations, mail panels on specific listener groups) in addition to quantitative tools (questionnaires and survey samples), and the effects of these first investigations had a great impact on the BBC's programming strategies. The study that this article presents is not inspired by research that investigates the quality perceived by listeners, but that instead, through quantitative and qualitative tools, aims to understand the use of social media by radio programmes that have already established their popularity and satisfaction rating. There are few studies, especially in the field of radio, that have simultaneously analysed sound content and the use of social networks in order to interact with this content. This study intends to investigate how these programmes extend their strategy onto the new social networking platforms. Furthermore, this study is one of the first to have access to such a vast collection of European data. Though it is true that some studies already exist that analyse the use of new media by individual radio stations (Ferguson and Greer 2011), so far no one has undertaken comparative studies among different countries, as this article proposes.

The analysis of radio stations' use of the Internet and social media is a very recent field, and has highlighted how traditional media, not only radio, have difficulties taking advantage of the connective potential of the Internet. One of the first to be interested in this was Robert Potter (2002), who demonstrated that radio underestimated the web as a tool for empowering the interaction with their listeners. 'Stations', claimed Potter,

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1.   seem to be using the web to deliver three primary types of informative
2.   content: information on how to contact the station, information on events
3.   being sponsored by the station, and information about station announc-
4.   ers. Listeners' desires seem to be different: they want to access interactive
5.   elements on station sites and to be able to express their opinion.
6.   (2002: 381)
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8.   In the same period, Pitts and Harms (2003) focused on radio websites as
9.   promotional tools. But the web has changed a great deal since Potter's survey,
10.   and the rise of Social Networking sites (SNS) gives listeners exactly what
11.   Potter said they lacked in the era of Web 1.0: interactive content and public
12.   spaces where they can express their feelings and opinions. Social media use
13.   by media institutions has risen very quickly. Messner et al. (2011) analysed
14.   the messages on Twitter (TW) from 100 newspapers and 100 TV broadcasters.
15.   Most of them have incorporated this microblogging service, but only for
16.   promoting the stories published on their websites. Likewise, 80 per cent of
17.   360 tweets analysed by Armstrong and Gao (2010) from nine American news
18.   organizations attempted to attract audience to their sites. Ferguson and Greer
19.   (2011) studied the TW profile of 100 American radio stations, and concluded
20.   that messages from music stations were mostly promotional.
21.   So far, scholars claim, social media have mostly been used by traditional
22.   media as promotional tools. Bonini and Sellas (2014) showed how Spanish
23.   and Italian public service radio failed to use TW as a public service medium,
24.   only focusing on promoting their content and raising web traffic figures, with-
25.   out connecting with the audience. Herrera Damas et al. (2012) reached the
26.   same conclusion about the use of TW made by Spanish public radio. Our
27.   study has aimed to understand how European public radio services is using
28.   social media. We have found several differences among the seven countries
29.   analysed, but also a common effort to find new ways of engaging with listen-
30.   ers. Public broadcasting companies have understood that broadcasting good
31.   content is no longer enough. Most of the producers we have had contact with
32.   are aware that social media can be a tool for fighting the progressive shrinkage
33.   of their audiences.
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36. ## PUBLIC SERVICE RADIO: IN SEARCH OF LEGITIMATION THROUGH
37. ## SOCIAL MEDIA?
38.   Public radio in Europe is going through a crisis of legitimacy, and many
39.   broadcasting stations are losing ground. The erosion of the audience is slow
40.   but constant, except for a few isolated cases of growth (Sweden, Norway,
41.   Denmark, Holland [EBU 2011]). Some countries still maintain large shares of
42.   the audience (the United Kingdom, Germany), but there is a general tendency
43.   towards an inescapable drop. Today, the inclusiveness idealized by Scannell
44.   (1996) is an illusion, and its decline risks becoming a political problem as well:
45.   some have raised the issue that it is difficult to justify public funding for a
46.   medium that is only popular with a minority of the population (Blumer and
47.   Gurevitch 1995). The BBC, which still holds 55 per cent of the British audience,
48.   legitimizes its request for the required licence fee for all with the reputation
49.   of a company that has always tried to adapt itself to the country's social and
50.   cultural changes. Over the years, it has changed and widened its program-
51.   ming, from the 1967 creation of BBC One in order to include youth who
52.   were migrating towards pirate radio, to the creation of BBC Asian in order to

include a vast minority of the country within the British public sphere, not to mention the continuous renovation of thematic channels in order to meet the fragmentation of the Nation-public, an ideal type that is now in crisis. This ability of the BBC to represent the changes in British society is also reflected in its citizens' support for the licence fee payment: 81 per cent of the British believe that it is right to pay the licence fee for the services offered by the BBC (Bardoel and d'Haenens 2008: 349).

The old hegemony of public life structured around the State, linked to a territory and mediated by the national radio (as well as by TV and newspapers) has been faltering for years. In its place, as Keane already stated seventeen years ago, at the dawn of the society of telematic networks,

> a multitude of interconnected spheres of communication have emerged, which are not immediately linked to a territory and that appear fragmented, divided, adrift. The conventional idea of one single unified public sphere, and its corresponding vision of a republic of citizens that fight for a common good, is obsolete.
>
> (1995: 1)

Therefore, the vision of a generalist radio public is also obsolete. The fragmentation of the national public sphere and the shrinkage in the audience's shares of almost all the European public radio broadcasters foreseen by Keane seventeen years ago is still more evident today. The rise of social network sites and the growing abundance of digital tools for creating our own media are hardly questioning the traditional values and meanings of public service. As Hendy claims in his work, 'public service broadcasting – originally conceived as a means of showing us a wider world, and shaping us into more cultivated, more informed, clearer-thinking humans – is losing whatever normative hold it once had' (2013: 107). Fewer and fewer of us, continues Hendy, 'are likely to see any point at all in having other people "dictate" what we watch and hear' (2013: 107). The broadcasting culture of 'sit back and be told', as Gauntlett calls it, is being replaced by a networking culture of 'making and doing' (2011: 223).

Another problem shared among the European public service networks is that of the constant ageing of listeners and the progressive escape of youth, not so much towards the commercial networks as to other technological platforms (53% of those aged 12–35 report preferring the Internet over the radio as the primary medium for the discovery and use of music [EBU 2011]). Still according to EBU data, from 2006 to 2010 in Italy, young listeners (ages 14–25) of the public broadcasting stations dropped by 13% (in France and Spain by 7%, in the United Kingdom by 17%, while in Sweden – land of the music streaming service Spotify – by 27%).

Some of these public stations are attempting to curb the escape of the prized young age range through custom-made offers of FM and digital thematic networks (BBC Six in the United Kingdom, Le Mouv' in France, Radio Tres in Spain, Radio Wave in the Czech Republic) and with an increased presence on social networking websites. A prime example is the Catalan regional station iCat which, as Bonet (in Bonet et al. 2011) affirms, has successfully repositioned its format based on the paradigm of *The Long Tail* (C. Anderson, 2007) and on the offer of different content on different platforms. All the success stories in public service lie in the theming and the investment of resources into the development of technological platforms.

As Enli Gunn (2008) suggested, public service in the age of social media should add a fourth dimension to the well-known Reithian principles (Inform, Educate, Entertain), that of 'participation'. Enli Gunn sheds light on the emergence of audience participation as a strategy for institutional legitimacy and platform expansion: giving space to listeners' feedback, to their comments, opinions, feelings, criticism and ideas, means connecting with listeners, nurturing and fertilizing them. Maintaining a rich and fertile networked public (Boyd 2010) means accomplishing this with the renewed function of public service emerging in the age of the network society, i.e. contributing to creating ties not only with listeners but also among listeners.

METHODOLOGY

The countries chosen for this research were the ones the EBU calls the 'Big Five' (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom), which represent the five largest radio markets in Europe, plus two other large European markets (Sweden and Poland, the latter being the only eastern country included in this survey). These seven countries have a total population of 360 million,[1] while the aggregated radio reach for the same countries is estimated at 241 million (67 per cent of the total [Eurostat 2011]).

Each contributor chose three to four case histories of public radio programmes and listened to them during the months of January and February 2011. They also chose, sampled and recorded a single episode for each case history. The methodology was based on a mixed system of investigation: a quantitative content analysis of audio and social media content and e-mail interviews with public radio producers. The audio content analysis consisted of coding how many different sound items (jingles, hosts' talking slots, phone calls, recorded songs, live music, advertisement, news) were present in each recorded episode and how much time was dedicated to each of them. The social media content analysis consisted in coding how many different activities happened on the social network profiles of the programmes during the selected time sample. Along with the quantitative analysis, each contributor provided us with his or her own critical analysis of the social media activity and strategy enacted by each programme, and with the reasons why, according to his or her abilities as a critical radio listener and social media reader, these programmes work. E-mail interviews with the producers of the programmes selected helped us to better understand the work flow behind each programme and to acquire data about them (amount of listeners, team structure and roles, history of each show).

Programme overviews

The 28 programmes included in this survey cover most of the genres of radio programming, from *morning show* (seven) to *afternoon magazine/show* (seven); from *phone-talk/call in/talk show* (four) to *music-oriented formats* (four); from *cultural magazines* (three) to *sport* (two) and *documentary* (one). At the same time, we may also divide them into three main categories: talk-oriented, music-oriented and youth-oriented programmes. Apart from two programmes – *P3 Dokumentär* (SWE) and *L'ofici de Viure* (SPA-CAT) – that are recorded (with great podcast performances), all the other 26 programmes selected are broadcast live. The programmes have been selected for one of the following reasons: audience leaders, use of innovative radio language, youth-oriented productions, creative ways of interacting with listeners

1. Eurostat – Key Figures on Europe (2010).

through social media. 'Audience leader' means a programme that is one of the most listened to in its time slot, like *The Chris Moyles Show* broadcast by BBC Radio One until 2012, or the Swedish *The Think Tank*, a youth-oriented satirical talk show broadcast by P3 SR, which is audience leader in its airing time (5–6 p.m.). An innovative radio programme is a production that has disrupted traditional radio routines, like the Catalan *Ofici de la Viure*, which was first conceived as a podcast and then as a radio programme; youth-oriented programmes are those that, according to their producers, are mainly addressed to a young audience (between 15 and 35 years old). Most of the youth-oriented programmes selected for this study were music shows, like the Spanish *Hoy Empieza Todo*, a morning live music show. Programmes like the French *La Tweet-liste* and the Italian *RaiTunes* were selected for their creative way of interacting with listeners through social media, since they engaged with the audience by asking them to co-create the music playlists together with the authors.

Due to cultural differences and varying lengths, there are still great discrepancies, even among programmes belonging to the same genre.

A very general definition of 'genre' that is common to all is the following: 'a genre is a combination of distinctive traits that allow audience members to direct their expectations of a text or performance, associating them with previous experience' (Ortoleva and Scaramucci 2003: 3). This definition emphasizes three significant aspects:

1. The genre does not exist by itself, but as a category that is recognizable by the audience (decoding).
2. The genre forms (and transforms) itself over time (remix). This goes for the production – the author always refers to a genre that he or she is influenced by – and for the consumption – only the advancement of the experiences of consumption generate a real expertise of genre in the spectator/reader/listener.
3. The genre defines the conventions and regulates a horizon of expectations. It is a normative system at the basis of a 'communication pact' between the author and the audience. This does not mean that the rules are strict. The boundaries of genre change continuously, as does culture.

But every country has its own radio history and has developed its own definition of radio genres. Even if every contributor shared a common theoretical background on radio studies and the same definitions of radio genres, many differences could still be found among programmes belonging to the same genre. This difficulty in providing a clear definition of European radio genres is also due to the inner aesthetic status of contemporary radio: the concept of 'genre' has been transcended, since it is constantly *remixed* and updated, forgetting about traditional boundaries. For this reason we believe it is more useful to distinguish programmes by using a 'tag system', in order to give more than one definition per programme.

For a complete overview of the programmes involved in this study, see the table below:

The aim of this comparative analysis is to identify the underlying practices, trends and processes stemming from the individual programme analysis and case-studies. First, the social media activities of the surveyed programmes are analysed. Second, a comparison of the music playlists of the music-oriented programmes is performed.

Programme overviews	Broadcaster	On air since	Genre	Schedule	Tags
Le 5/7 boulevard (FRA)	France Inter	2010	cultural magazine	Every day 17.00–19.00	Talk, cult
C'est lenoir (FRA)	France Inter	1990	music show	Every day 22.00–23.00	music
Eclectik (FRA)	France Inter	2004	cultural radio/ interviews	Sunday 10.00–11.00	Talk, interview, culture
La Tweet-Liste (FRA)	Le Mouv'	2010	music show/ web interaction	Sunday 13.00–15.00	Music, Web 2.0 UGC content
Domian (GER)	1Live (WDR)	1995	talk radio, late night show	Mon.–Fri. 01.00–02.00	talk radio, simulcast, late night talk, social media, interactivity, help and support, psychology
KenFM (GER)	Radio Fritz	2001	satire magazine	Sunday 14.00–18.00	satire, political magazine, political commentary, live music performance, social media, cross-media, interactivity
Heute im Stadion (GER)	ARD	1963	Football live	Saturday 15.00–17.30	Sports, football league, hook up, conference circuit
Klassik à la carte (GER)	NDR Kultur	2003	talk radio, request programme, cultural radio	Monday–Friday 13.00–14.00	classical music, crossover, talk radio, request programme
Caterpillar (ITA)	Radio2 Rai	1997	infotainment, talk show	Monday–Friday 18.00–19.25	news, satire, social media, networked journalism, crowd-sourcing, UGC, interactivity
Fahrenheit (ITA)	Radio3 Rai	1999	cultural magazine	Monday–Friday 15.00–18.00	culture, books, science, jazz, cultural journalism, writers, art
RaiTunes (ITA)	Radio2 Rai	2010	night music show	Monday–Friday 22.40–24.00	new sounds, urban, DJ culture, music, night show, electronic
Il Ruggito del Coniglio (ITA)	Radio2 Rai	1995	light entertainment morning show	Monday–Friday 8.00–10.00	infotainment, soft news, phone talk, comedy, satire
Popoludnie z Jedynką/'Afternoon with Radio 1' (POL)	Radio1 Polish Radio	2009	news, talk	Monday–Friday 15.00–18.00	news, comments, features, press review, songs
Za a nawet przeciw/'I vote for, and even against' (POL)	Polskie Radio SA Programme 3	2002	talk show	Monday–Friday 12.05–13.00	talk show, phone talk, interactivity

(Continued)

Sygnaly dnia/'Signals of the day' (POL)	Radio1 Polish Radio	1973	news, current affairs	Monday–Saturday 06.00–09.00	news, comments, feature, interview, press review
Zapraszamy do Trójki/'Welcome to the Three' – *morning edition* (POL)	Radio 3 Polish Radio	1974	news, talk, music	Monday–Saturday 06.00–09.00	news and talk, features, music
Zapraszamy do Trójki/'Welcome to the Three' – *afternoon edition* (POL)	Radio 3 Polish Radio	1982	news, talk, music	Monday–Friday 16.00–19.00	news and talk, features, music, inter-activity
Asuntos Propios (SPA)	Radio Nacional de España	2007	magazine	Monday–Friday 16.00–19.00	magazine, comedy, RNE
Hoy empieza todo (SPA)	Radio 3 (Radio Nacional de España)	2008	morning music show	Monday–Friday 07.00–11.00	music, Radio 3, acoustic
L'ofici de viure (SPA – Catalonia)	Catalunya Ràdio	2007	psychology and personal development magazine	Saturday and Sunday 13.00–14.00	talk radio, interac-tion, public service, psychology, spiritual-ity, emotional health
El Matì de Catalunya Radio (SPA – Catalonia)	Catalunya Ràdio	1983	morning magazine	Monday–Friday 06.00–12.00	morning magazine, news and current affairs, entertainment, culture, interaction, public service
P3 Dokumentär (SWE)	Sveriges Radio P3	2006	documentary	Saturday 20.00–22.00 + Sunday 18.00–20.00	Features, music, documentary, young audience
P4 Extra (SWE)	Sveriges Radío P4	2005	infotainment	Monday–Friday 13.00–15.00 + Sunday 14.00–15.00	Talk, infotainment
Tankesmedjan/'The Think-Tank' (SWE)	Sveriges Radio P3	2010	humor/satire	Monday–Thursday 17.00–18.00	Humor, satire, talk, drive time
Today (UK)	BBC Radio 4	1957	news and current affairs	Monday–Friday 06.00–09.00 + Saturday 07.00–09.00	news, current affairs, agenda journalism, interviews, national, international
Fighting Talk (UK)	BBC Radio 5 Live	2003	sport discussion programme	Saturday 11.06–12.00	sport, debate, quiz, discussion, competi-tion, prizes, national, international, football
The Surgery with Aled (UK)	BBC Radio 1	1999	social-action advice and phone-in help	Sunday 21.00–22.00	advice, help, health, sex, relationships teen-agers, drugs, alcohol, smoking, phone-in
The Chris Moyles Show (UK)	BBC Radio 1	2004	music and chat breakfast show	Monday–Friday 06.30–10.00	breakfast, music, chat, zoo format, comedy, celebrity gossip, young people, teenagers

Table 1: Radio Programmes involved in the study.

FINDINGS

Social media activity

A total of 22 of 28 programmes analysed included social media, blogs, Facebook (FB), TW, YouTube, Daily Motion, Anobii, My Space, Spotify. Eight of them have a blog (*Caterpillar* and *Il Ruggito* in Italy, *Asuntos Propios*, *Hoy Empieza Todo* and *L'ofici de la viure* in Spain, *P4 Extra* in Sweden and *The Chris Moyles Show* in the United Kingdom). One French programme and five Polish programmes are not present on social media. In the cases from Poland, the broadcasters have opened a social media profile of their own. Twenty of them have a personal FB page, sixteen have a TW profile of the programme, fourteen have both FB and TW, six only FB and three only TW.

In December 2011 FB had 845 million monthly active users[2] and TW 100 million[3]. They are, so far, the most popular social media platforms in the world.

We find the same difference of reach between FB and TW in the analysed programmes. FB is far more used by radio producers than TW, most certainly since it was integrated into radio production routines before TW. Collecting FB friends and TW followers involves time; for this reason we will find great differences in social media audiences among programmes in the table below. We must also say that some programmes are brand new formats, while others have existed for many years, so a comparative analysis of these data needs to be done carefully and seen in a wide perspective: its only aim is to provide some information that must be carefully read and interpreted. *The Chris Moyles Show* in the United Kingdom is by far the most successful programme on social media (one million and 294 thousand fans on FB and around one million followers on TW). The best-performing programmes on social networks are obviously those addressed to younger audiences. Great radio audiences are not an automatic guarantee for high levels of social media activity. Social media managers play an important role in boosting social media audiences, but on-air presenters can also work to invite radio listeners to take part in social media.

While FB largely prevails almost everywhere, in the cases of France and Britain, TW is more widespread, as we can easily note from the following table:

If we go beyond the quantitative analysis, we may notice great differences in the way the two social platforms are used. While FB pages represent the programme as a whole, TW is a more personal medium, more often linked to the attractive personality of the presenter than to the transmission (i.e. in *Eclectik* with Rebecca Manzoni, one of the cases from France). As a general trend, we could say that listeners are FB fans of a programme and/or TW followers of a single person (the host/presenter/public figure). On FB, the brand value for the fans is the entire programme. On TW, the brand value is represented by a human being. TW works better when it is personalized, since it is, as a medium, more top-down oriented than FB. On TW, what works is the dynamic of 'following the leader': many people follow the feeds/tweets broadcasted by a single mind and comment on them; while on FB, the networked-peer-to-peer dynamic is more prevalent. FB is an easier platform to use for user-generated content, as friends/fans can upload notes (texts), photos and video in a very fast and intuitive way.

TW fits perfectly with talk shows and news programmes, since it enhances listener's quick feedback and opinions wherever they are. FB fits better with infotainment, comedy/satire and music shows (for the easiness of publishing music video clips on FB: see the Italian case of *RaiTunes*). A very peculiar

Facebook vs. Twitter (%)

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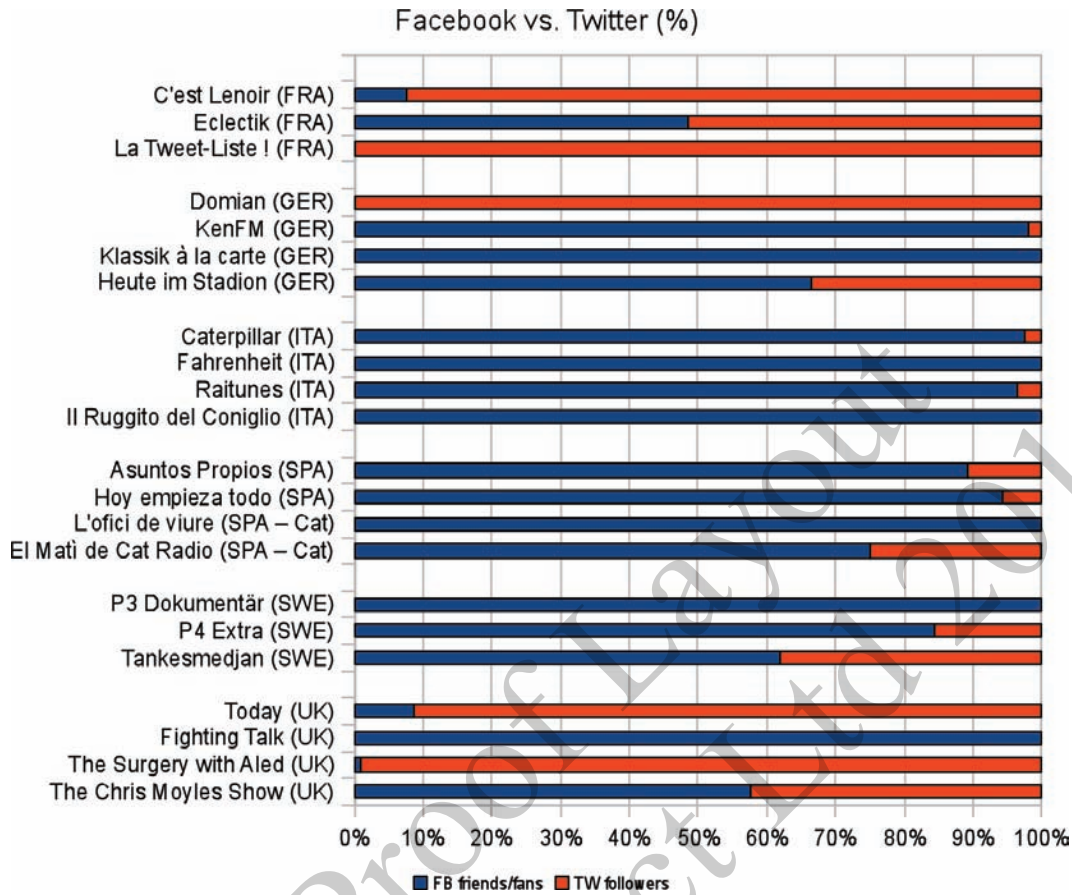36.
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exception is represented by the French show *Le Tweet Liste*, a music programme based on the interaction with listeners through TW, a brand new format, innovative and successful.

Blogs

Web logs are a bridge between Web 1.0 and 2.0. Most of them were created before the explosion of social media, in order to add 'social' value and interaction to the programmes' websites. But the advent of social media like FB and TW and their rapid growth have made most of the blogs immediately seem like old-fashioned tools from a previous geological era. Listeners spend more time on the social media profiles of their favourite programmes than on the official websites: at the 2011 EBU Multimedia Meets Radio event in Rome, Claire Wardle, from the BBC College of Journalism, claimed that listeners spend one minute on BBC radio websites and 55 minutes on FB. Official blogs are the most useful tool to increase the time listeners spend on official websites. The blogs of the programmes centred on strong presenters personalities are the ones that are working the best. When blogs are personal, informal and frequently updated, they gain audience, as in the case of *Asuntos Propios*, whose author Toni Garrido is able to generate a sense of intimacy among

his readers. Along with photos and videos, blogs are the best Trojan horse to attract listeners from social media profiles onto official websites. All of the eight programmes with a blog publish the links to fresh blog posts on their FB walls and TW profiles, in order to draw fans from social media to them. Social media are push-technology,[4] while blogs are a pull one. A good strategy for broadcasters is to hybridize these two different technologies.

Social media strategy

The presence of public service radio on digital social networks has begun, but it is not yet predominant. The latest available data state that 60 per cent of European public radios have a FB profile, and 53 per cent have a TW account (EBU 2011). The five reasons why the use of these means should be supported, despite the high costs for management that are not immediately monetizable, have been clearly expressed in research by the European Broadcasting Union: (1) to strengthen connections with regular listeners (keep the faithful audience); (2) to reach new audiences, most of all youth (stop the ageing of public service listeners); (3) to modernize the concept of radio, transforming it into a cross-media platform; (4) to increase opportunities to interact with the audience; (5) to increase the distribution of content, making it accessible for a longer time and more easily.

On one hand, the overview of all the social media strategies employed by the seven public broadcasters on the 28 programmes analysed reveals that most of them have understood the importance of social media in nurturing their relationship with the audiences. As pointed out by the Head of the BBC Newsroom, Mary Hockaday, public service broadcasters are 'shifting to a new formulation: Inform, Educate and Connect', which means that they are 'no longer just trying to draw people in, but also more confidently reaching out on social networks, and a full range of distribution platforms that work for audiences, and that some of our journalism is done in partnership with the wider world' (2012: 7).

On the other hand, not all programmes fully enjoy their potential. We found many differences in levels of interaction from programme to programme, due to their different aims and genres, or, sometimes, to a simple underestimation of the tools at hand.

But we can still learn quite a lot from the different ways these programmes have integrated social media within their daily production routines. Having compared these 28 case histories in depth, we may now put together the best practices discovered during this research and describe some important features of social media strategy that have emerged from this study:

1. Differentiate

Disseminate different contents on different platforms (blog, FB, TW, YouTube, Daily Motion, etc.). All content has a primary medium where it is published and consumed. Make some contents available only on your official website, and use TW or FB to redirect followers/fans to that content (a new blog post, a new video uploaded, etc …). Software such as Tweet Deck facilitates the work of spreading posts on different platforms.

2. Go where the listeners are

One good practice we have noticed on talk shows is to give the same importance to listeners' feedback, no matter which platform they come from (e-mail, phone call, sms, FB, TW).

4. Push technology describes a style of communication where the request for a given transaction is initiated by the publisher or central server, as in the Television or Radio model. It is contrasted with pull technology, where the request for the transmission of information is initiated by the receiver or client.

Whichever new platform listeners move onto, be there. Then, start colonizing. Sometimes what happens is that a colony declines and ends up being abandoned. This is part of the game. The social media audience is nomadic, it has no strategies, but only tactics. Broadcasters have to follow them and accept playing on different fields/platforms with different rules. Sometimes you will discover that an individual podcaster has received more downloads than your show. Maybe it is time to co-opt the podcaster and offer him an air-slot, like BBC 1 did with pirate DJs in the sixties.

A great example of multiplatform integration is the French programme *Le Tweet-liste*, where radio and TW are both necessary for the programme, and one nurtures the other. The same thing occurs on the Italian *RaiTunes* with FB. Music programmes are, of course, the best genres for experimenting cross-media interaction. Television cross-interaction with radio and social media is still an underrated field of experimentation, but here it is well represented by the cases in Germany of *Domian* (the programme being simulcasted on TV and radio channels) and *KenFm* (where four live cameras shooting and streaming through a Ustream platform provide a real-time video portrait of the live radio show), as well as the Italian *RaiTunes*, which uses a motorized camera to shoot the live show and streams through the official website.

3. Bring listeners back Home

This strategy could seem to be in contrast with the previous one, and it is. Broadcasters have to do both: go where the listeners are, and at the same time to capitalize on social media activity that can attract traffic to their websites, by embedding social networks into their official sites, as many of the Swedish, English and German case histories have shown. Do not let presenters gain fans, followers and credibility while using your air time and production resources, and then leave you for another broadcaster, taking with him or her all the precious treasures accumulated on social media.

4. Pay (attention to) the Social Media Manager

Behind the most successful social media that have been analysed, there always was a social media manager/multimedia producer. He or she is a hybrid figure: technologically skilled, but also creative, friendly and able, as we have confirmed in our research, to involve and guide presenters and the rest of the team into the social media communication flow.

5. Be creative and curious

We are still in the first stages of the social media age. All the successful practices mapped so far are the products of different efforts and mistakes. An empirical approach is needed, along with a lot of curiosity, imagination and love for listeners. New practices still remain to be explored.

PODCAST: THE KINGDOM OF TALK AND STORYTELLING

Podcast audiences are growing in every country analysed. Asynchronous listening is becoming part of the everyday life of radio listeners who, due to changing work routines or lifestyles, can no longer tune in live. Even if on-demand listening has existed since 1996, only with the outburst of podcasting in 2004 has this listening option become industrialized and

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1. institutionalized. Podcast downloads are growing at a faster pace than live
2. streaming listening (mobile phone applications have something to do with
3. this growth), and in the last few years public broadcasters finally seem to
4. have understood the importance of offering a wide, on-time podcasting serv-
5. ice. Some broadcasters, such as RAI, have also started to sell podcast time to
6. advertisers, embedding some commercials at the beginning and end of the
7. most successful podcasts.
8.   According to EBU (2011) the majority of the European Public broadcasters
9. offer podcasts of between 30% and 50% of their entire programming, while
10. four companies (RAI-Italy, Yle-Finland, RTBF-Belgium, Cech Radio) over-
11. take 50% and only three (Hungary, Cyprus and Lithuania) do not produce
12. podcasting. Podcasting download is growing in every country. In Italy podcast
13. downloads faced a growth of 56% between 2009 and 2010 (Sipra 2013),
14. from 21 million in 2010 to 48.8 millions in 2012 (Sipra 2013). In the United
15. Kingdom, the country with the highest number of podcast downloads, listen-
16. ers download 21 millions podcasts per month (Spencer 2013).
17.   Nevertheless, the podcast audience is still underrated, since we must admit,
18. the proportions between the live radio audience and the podcast audience heav-
19. ily reward live radio. From a traditional point of view, live radio continues to be
20. the real mass medium, while the podcast still seems to be a niche medium.
21.   Podcasting is not only a prerogative of young audiences, because traditional
22. listeners are also slowly shifting to asynchronous listening, as it becomes
23. easier to access. In Italy, for example, the most downloaded podcasts – apart
24. from the mass-morning-drive-time show *Il Ruggito del Coniglio* – are cultural/
25. talk programmes with a very high age profile, like *Fahrenheit* (the most-down-
26. loaded podcast of the cult-oriented Channel 3) and *Caterpillar*. Of course,
27. radio shows that are most listened to also generate a great number of podcast
28. downloads, but in order to fully grasp the potential of the podcast, we have
29. to look to what we have called the 'radio/podcast ratio', i.e. the proportion
30. between the radio and podcast audiences.
31.   These proportions are shown in the table below, even if we cannot
32. cover all the programmes taken into account, since not all the broadcasters
33. involved have been able to provide podcast statistics or, more often, not all
34. the programmes have podcast versions, due to music copyright infringement
35. issues or editorial choices.
36.   For example, if we look at the cases in the United Kingdom, we
37. can easily note that the 'r/p ratio' (radio/podcast ratio) of *Fighting*
38. *Talk* (average listener's age: 49) is four times higher than that of *The Chris*
39. *Moyles Show* (average listener's age: 32). Both are talk programmes, and
40. neither lose their value when listened to in an asynchronous mode, but
41. *Fighting Talk*, even with half the radio listeners of *The Chris Moyles Show*,
42. is able to generate around 25 per cent more podcast downloads than the
43. younger programme.
44.   Even if podcast audiences will probably not overtake live listening anytime
45. soon, podcasts will become increasingly common as a listening habit and
46. more important in terms of quantitative numbers.
47.   We owe a special mention and in-depth look into the case of *L'ofici de viure*
48. in Spain, the real great surprise and exception of this survey. This weekend
49. programme has a tiny radio audience of 33,000 people per episode (around
50. 9 per cent of the total Catalunya Radio listeners per day), but has a surprisingly
51. wider podcast audience of 54,667 downloads per episode (437,337 monthly
52. podcast downloads for eight episodes).

According to Spanish contributor Toni Sellas, *L'ofici de viure* is a talk radio programme about psychology and new spirituality. It is broadcast by Catalunya Ràdio, the talk radio station of the public broadcaster in Catalonia. With more than 50 specialists, *L'ofici de viure* provides tools for listeners to achieve greater emotional well-being. In just three seasons on air it has generated a loyal following which, rather than quantitative terms, stands out for the special link it has established with listeners and for the community generated around it. When it started in 2007, it was a risky decision taken by the Catalan public broadcaster. However, the strategy has produced results. Now, *L'ofici de viure* is considered to be a pioneer programme and a reference point in its thematic area. It is the most downloaded of all Catalunya Ràdio group programmes, ahead of such important shows as the morning magazine or the midnight sports magazine. It was awarded the European Podcast Award 2010 in the professional section. Why is it so widely downloaded? One reason is because its contents perfectly fit with a personal and intimate asynchronous listening. Another reason is that the current edition is recorded, so there is no advantage in listening live. Even so, the programme was broadcast live during the previous season, and still produced great podcast performances. This case from Spain is the perfect example of how the listener of the future could appear.

Without falling into sterile futurologist premonitions, these first results lead us to a conclusion: the podcast is the realm of brilliant human talk, it is the kingdom of the alive, radiogenic, intimate, fascinating human voice. Valuable contents for listeners, packed into a lively and friendly radiogenic language, still make the difference on-air and online. One thing that must not be forgotten is that podcast listening is often linked to a mobile and headphone-listening mode: in the aural protected sphere produced by our headphones, human voices resonate closer to our soul, and all the characteristics of the human voice are amplified. Headphone listening is a sound experience that is quite complex, and the most intimate of the different ways of listening to radio. On our mobile platforms, we will only take with us those sounds and voices that make us feel at home in the public and often alien space, no matter if they are music playlists or radio podcasts.

A fair psychological support like the one provided by the *L'ofici de Viure* (Spain) cultural programme, or by the late night show *Domian* (Germany), can both satisfy the public radio service's mission and the listener's need for an intimate listening.

MUSIC PLAYLIST

Music seems to be the most important tool for segmenting the audience, by programming different genres in different languages. Music still remains one of the most powerful identity languages; for this reason, in every country (except for the United Kingdom), the music analysed resulted as being a mix of national pop/folk music and international (English-language) contemporary and classic hits. Adult contemporary and independent pop/rock music (national and international) seem to be the two most diffused music formats, but it would be unfair not to add that it is impossible to find a real general tendency in the playlists analysed, since, fortunately, public radio service has confirmed its advocacy for a wider and more free musical offering than commercial channels.

Among the case histories presented in this research, there are eight programmes mainly addressed to a young audience. Most of them share similar features. If we do not consider *C'est Lenoir*, which is not specifically

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	radio audience (daily listeners)	podcast audience (daily downloads)	r/p ratio %
5/7 Boulevard (FRA)	1238000	4057	0,30%
Eclectik (FRA)	1246000	1505	0,10%
Caterpillar (ITA)	733000	7801	1,00%
Fahrenheit (ITA)	533000	3887	0,70%
Il Ruggito del Coniglio (ITA)	1584000	15501	0,97%
L'ofici de viure (SPA – Catalonia)	33000	54667	165,00%
El Mati de Catalunya Radio (SPA – Catalonia)	353000	15844	4,50%
Today (UK)	1105000	28868	2,60%
Fighting Talk (UK)	669000	42045	6,20%
The Chris Moyles Show (UK)	1620000	28747	1,70%

Table 3:

created for young listeners, all the other shows have been conceived recently, in the last ten years. This is good news, since it means that public radio still experiments with new formats tailored to young audiences. Audience statistics tell us that public radio can also be successful in this audience sector, if it is able to differentiate itself from the market through original and high quality formats, such as the ones presented here.

Music is the most prevalent content of these programmes (between 40 and 70 per cent of the total) except for those belonging to 'talk', as in the cases from Britain. Most of the music playlists of these programmes are indie-rock/cutting edge-pop/new-folk/electronic-oriented, marking a great difference from the music formats played by commercial radio, which are mostly based on contemporary hits or adult contemporary. Brand new live music is another common factor among these music shows.

Of course, social media use is massive in these programmes. They are the most active on social media among all the programmes analysed. Cross-media interaction with young listeners is a must in many of these programmes, like *RaiTunes* and *La Tweet-Liste!*. More in general, interaction – either real-time through phone calls and sms, or online via Internet and social media – is one of the most important factors of success of youth-oriented programmes. A very peculiar case is that of the Swedish documentary programme *Dokumentär*, which has been able to attract a young audience thanks to the restyling of an old-fashioned radio genre based on a youth-oriented music playlist, new contemporary issues and fast-paced digital editing.

New music formats, rhythm, fast-paced sound design, interaction, community, cross-media formats, comedy, young and empathetic presenters, have revealed to be the key success factors in these youth-oriented programmes.

CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this large-scale European research project, we should be able to answer the most important question: are social media a useful tool for public service radio? Even if every case enacted their specific strategies, and despite all the differences of genre and culture that divide the 28 cases, it is possible to find some common features among all the programmes analysed.

The most engaging programmes were those who invested time and human resources into nurturing the relationship with their listeners through social media.

Most of the 28 programmes analysed did a great job of framing the listening experience of their followers, reminding them before the beginning of a show

what they were going to offer and then, during the show, reporting in real time what was going on, what opinions were emerging, who was talking in that very moment, what kind of book was being read, etc. As Lazarsfeld already discovered (1940), listeners informed in advance about the contents of a 'serious listening' programme were far more likely to listen to it. The proper frame of reference, including a list of information about the contents of the upcoming programme, can positively influence the listening of what Lazarsfeld called 'serious' programmes (educative, cultural). As far as we know – as Greer and Ferguson (2011) demonstrated by observing more than 100 US radio stations' activities on TW – the average quarter hour share and the number of followers show only a weak correlation. Greer and Ferguson (2011) pointed out that TW is not performing well in widening the FM audiences, but Lazarsfeld told us that a good frame of reference could help listeners to be prepared and to better understand 'serious' programmes. What we can learn from Greer and Ferguson is that radio stations do not benefit from TW in a quantitative way (increase of FM listeners), but their benefits in using it could be qualitative: putting the listeners in the right frame of mind for experiencing, listening and engaging directly with the show.

Social media are probably not a powerful tool of audience building yet, but they can still be an important tool for serving audiences, connecting listeners among each other, letting them join the conversation and, most importantly, increasing the brand awareness.

For social media to serve as a public service medium they should not only be used as a loudspeaking tool, an amplifier room for the broadcaster, but also as a platform where publics can meet and connect with each other. Giving space to listeners' General Intellect, to their comments, opinions, affects, criticism and ideas, means – as Gauntlett highlighted in his book Making is Connecting (2011) – shifting from the culture of 'sit back and listen' to the culture of 'making and doing'.

Bracken and Balfour suggest that we should no more talk of 'public service media' but of 'public service interactivity' and highlight the need for a user-created mandate. David Hendy adds that a contemporary public service media should be able to: adapt itself to the new technological context; be a trustful information filter; nurture the digital public sphere (2013: 110–26). Adaptation to the new media environment is fundamental. Hendy offers three examples of this adaptation: (1) the degree to which the public service is enabling listeners to create their own schedule; (2) the degree to which it is abandoning a proprietorial attitude to its own programme material and allowing it to be shared and manipulated in ways it doesn't control; (3) the degree to which it 'crowdsources' by drawing on the creative efforts of 'ordinary' people. We believe that among the programmes we analysed, the ones that enacted the best practices of social media use perfectly match these three criteria of public service media adaptation to new digital media world.

Serving the audiences has always been the aim of public service. Now it can be updated and improved with a little help from social media.

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