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Beyond television and beyond the Internet: Public Service Broadcasting strategies for a multiplatform media scenario.

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ABSTRACT

What are the boundaries of public service television? Should it be limited to terrestrial broadcasting? Is there a place for PSB not only in the Internet but also in the new smart phones? How can the convergence between broadcasting and broadband (Hybrid TV) improve the fulfilment of public service remit? How is public television being repositioned in the new multiplatform media context?

These are some of the questions that Public Service Broadcasters are currently dealing with. Moreover, these are also the main issues addressed by a heated debate about the need for public service in a context where increased competition, a plentiful offer and technology innovation are seen as the solutions for some old market failures as well as the guarantees for satisfying the needs of the audience.

The announced media convergence is now a solid reality thanks to the digitalization of broadcasting. In the last years, we have witnessed a first convergence wave, which resulted in the migration of the broadcasters to the Internet. Nowadays, a second wave is taking place. It implies jumping to mobile services. Citizens are becoming full-time mobile online individuals thanks to their advanced phones. It is not only about accessing tv content at any moment but wherever. Moreover, broadband is already a new source for extra contents, data and services that can be displayed on tv sets with a LAN or WI-FI connection. These innovations imply a more fragmented and personalized consumption of television.

In that context, Public Service Broadcasters are forced to become multimedia institutions if they want to maintain their market relevance and their social legitimation. More diversified media consumption implies the duty for public broadcasters to explore in which way they can properly satisfy the new needs of their audiences. Consequently, offering television content on the tv set or in the Internet is not enough. 360° strategies are needed; new distribution platforms must be conquered. However, every step carried out by PSB operators is contested by market players, which see public initiatives as a threat to free competition and to their profitability.

Despite the mentioned debate, it is a fact that public service operators are developing multiplatform plans. In many cases, they are innovators and even first movers. Therefore, this presentation wants to contribute to the field of television studies and concretely to the research about the ‘post-broadcasting era’ by means of analysing those strategies. In order to do so, the new media services offering television content that are being deployed by public broadcasters in several European countries will be presented. This will provide a valuable state of the art, which is necessary to set the grounds for a rational debate on the role of PSB in the multiplatform scenario. Secondly, the presentation will reflect on how a global issue is locally faced. In that way, main trends and common obstacles will be identified..

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Keywords: Public Service, Media Convergence, Multiplatform strategies, international comparison.
