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Study of the programming offer of the Spanish regional radio stations

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Abstract: This article summarises and presents the results of a research on the radio programme grid, contents and adaptation to new technologies of a total amount of eleven public radio stations of different Autonomous Regions of Spain. As a result, it is confirmed that all of them cover three areas of special interest: local information, entertainment, and sports. Also, it shows that most of them do not have get adapted to social networks and new Web 2.0.

Keywords: Radio; programme grid; information industry.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Programming models. 3. Methodology. 4. Results: description and analysis. 5. Conclusions. 6. Bibliography. 7. Notes.

Translation by **Cruz Alberto Martínez-Arcos** (University of London)

1. Introduction

This empirical work analyses the programming offer of the Spain regional radio stations with the objective of understanding in depth their programming strategies. Thus, the study aims to establish the functions of regional radio in comparison to national radio stations. Moreover, the emergence of new media (like the Internet) and radio consumption habits force the study to examine, very particularly, the websites of each regional radio station in order to establish what mechanisms, resources, and multimedia tools are used by regional radio stations to increase their audience shares.

Based on the previous, the research objectives that define the focus of this study are:

- a. To discover the programming offer of the regional state-owned radio stations.
- b. To compare the programming guides of each regional radio station to find out if there is a homogenization of contents in the programming offer for radio listeners.
- c. To analyse the predominant genres in the state-owned regional radio stations.
- d. To examine the websites of each regional radio station in order to determine the services they offer to Internet users as potential radio listeners over the Internet and, overall, to check whether radio stations take advantage of the potential of the Internet to communicate with their listeners in an attractive way.
- e. To describe the average number of journalists working in each regional radio station, while simultaneously making a distinction by gender.

Radio programming is configured as another part of the production process in this sector of communication, a part that involves strategy, research, and intuition for getting right the tastes and needs of listeners.

To deepen into the concept of radio programming and establish the definitions that better illustrate the concept, the study included a review of the manuals and authors of reference in this field. As it will be shown later, although the definitions are very disparate both in terms of extension and depth, all of the definitions have some substantial common elements.

Martí (2004: 21-22) proposes that to define programming efficiently, from both conceptual and practical points of view, we should analyse the three core characteristics that define it: consistency, planning and continuity. The first aspect refers to the coherence that must exist between the programming and the company's goals. Regarding planning, Martí alludes to the fact that programming is not an improvised activity, but a coordinated work between the conception, production, and transmission of a programme. And finally, Martí points out, continuity is an element that makes programming appear as a continuous broadcasting. In this sense, Martí says that "programmes are not arranged randomly and unconnectedly throughout the day, and therefore the programming activity is not reduced to a simple assembly of diverse parts; on the contrary, it is about building pertinent links among programmes to give a sense of homogeneity and marking a style that is readily identifiable by the listeners."

On the same line of thought, Muñoz and Gil (1986: 87) offer a very succinct definition of planning and continuity: "Radio programming is the forecasting of the programmes that will be transmitted for a given time through a radio station".

Martínez Costa & Moreno (2004: 20) define the programming work as a technique and, at the same time, also as an art: the technique and art of conceiving and executing certain contents that meet the objectives of the radio company, that suit the available technical and human resources, and that provide a service to the target audience.

From our point of view, perhaps the more holistic definition is the one given by Cebrián (1994: 419) because it collects all the elements that comprise radio programming, which according to this author "is conceived as the planning of a communicative relationship between a radio company and the audience through contents that are systematised organised in a harmonic groups according to certain criteria of selection, dosing and sorting, produced according to a duration and schedule that are conditioned by the technical, human and economic production resources, and planned to be transmitted for a given period of time".

Radio communication is a two-way communication process between a sender (company) and a receiver (listener) that share the same codes and time mediated by technology (radio or Internet). What the sender shares with the receiver is the content of programming, which will be determined by the contents of the programmes, which in turn will be inserted in a particular a genre and a format. The ultimate goal of radio programming is to capture the attention of the receiver to prolong that sender-receiver relationship for the maximum period of time.

In order for this process of communication between the station and the listener to exist, the former must have completed a systematic research on the tastes and tendencies of the audience, as well as a correct segmentation of schedule, programmes, and publics. Based on this type of research, programming directors design a programming strategy that meets the interests of the station and audience. This programming is embodied in a series of programmes that are assembled into radio genres and formats. Naturally, radio programmes are adjusted to the current social, technical, economic and legislative environment; in short, they are adjusted to the existing local, regional, national or global junctures.

2. Programming models

As we saw in the previous section, programming refers to the strategic arrangement of programmes. But what is a programme? For Cebrián (1994: 443) it is "a set of contents systemised around a title, within a determined duration, according to a unity and coherence of treatment, structure, and time to be transmitted as part of programming". Muñoz and Gil (1986: 47-48) agree with the previous approach when they define a programme as a "group of contents that with a title and a determined time are broadcast on radio, and get integrated into the flux of general programming with an individual style". Rodríguez Borges (2006: 160-161), in an attempt to distinguish the concept of programme from other significant units, such as sections, blocks or the micro spaces, extracts the following defining characteristics of a radio programme: a) it has its own name and presenter, b) it has a determined duration, c) it has fixed location within the programme grid, d) it has an identity, e) it has its own expressive repertoire, f) it has its definition of contents, g) definition of audience and h) coherence with the general programming.

Programming models in the professional practice of the radio industry are primarily marked by two elements: their content and structure. Regarding the former element we could speak of a radio with generalist programming and a radio with specialized programming.

Generalist radio -also known as "conventional"- is characterised, in the words of Legorburu (2004: 47), "by the variety of contents, radio genres, and target audiences. Therefore, it includes in its programming offer very varied products and contents and uses the whole range of informative and entertainment genres". The objective is to reach and consolidate the largest number of listeners by offering them heterogeneous content, programmes and genres. Legorburu (2004: 47) lists the key features of this programming model: variety of content, variety of genres, variety of programmes (with the magazine type as the main programme), distribution of programmes according to ratings and defined in time segments established based on the listening habits of a heterogeneous and large audience.

The specialised radio station transmits thematic and specialised content for publics that are very segmented by the variety of content. Martí (2004: 33) considers that the specialised radio is the programming model defined by some mono-thematic content intended for a specific segment of the potential audience of the radio station that broadcasts it. Specialised radio is characterized by content sectorialisation and audience segmentation. Moreno (2004: 101) thinks it is appropriate to differentiate the terms of the formula and format in the mode of programming formula radio. Based on the studies made by Robert Todd Storz and MacFarland, Moreno discovered that during the 1960s in Spain the term *radiofórmula* was generalised to refer to thematic radio in general and in particular to the radio centred in the broadcast of music. Based on these considerations, Moreno (2004: 101-102) defines formula radio as "the set of musical, informational, and entertainment content, and the manner in which they are combined to create the programming unit of the format. The formula is the smallest unit of programming, in content and duration, of the specialized radio. On the other hand, the format is the model of specialised programming that results of the schedule combination of the formula during the 24-hours broadcast".

Other criteria that can determine the programming model is the structure itself. This classification can occur only in general or conventional radio. According to the structure, there are three types of programming:

- a. Mosaic programming: the programmes grid is formed by a sequence of programmes of various genres (informative, cultural, sports, entertainment, etc.) and determined durations. It is a succession of programmes throughout the broadcasting time (isolated from each other) which can be daily or weekly. Most popular

programmes will be aired in prime times.

- b. Block programming: is the programming format currently predominating in most radio stations. Martí (2004: 31) lists the reasons for the emergence of this programming format in the 1960s: the competition from television as a medium of entertainment, the crisis of economic resources as a result of the decline in advertising investment, and the application of the marketing techniques in order to achieve maximum audience shares, etc. Thus, continues Martí, the application of the principles of maximum efficiency of audience and the production costs lead to the fact that, once the segments of programming are determined, these are covered with one or two programmes maximum. This programming format manages to: 1) reduce production costs by reducing the number of programmes and 2) increase audience loyalty thanks to the dragging effect of the long-lasting programmes. This style of programming gives rise to a great radio genre called magazine (container programme), which accommodates all kinds of genres, blocks and/or sections.
- c. Mixed programming: arises from the combination of the two previous programming styles. It involves the concentration of human, technical and economic resources in news and magazine programmes, which are the radio spaces with greater audience levels. The rest of broadcasting hours is covered with low-cost programmes.

3. Methodology

Content analysis of the formal categories related to programming was chosen as the ideal research technique to achieve the proposed objectives. To develop the analysis we established the following aspects:

- a. Time period: The analysis was conducted during February 2010.
- b. Media: Spanish regional state-owned radio stations, belonging to FORTA (Federation of Organizations of Regional Radio and Television).
- c. Units of analysis: All Spanish regional radio stations (and their respective websites) with the exception of Euskadi Irratia, which offered all of its information in the Basque language.

After these elements were established, we conducted a transcript of content (number and type of programmes, number of presenters and characteristics of their websites) of the programmes guides of each of the regional radio stations that are part of FORTA.

4. Results: description and analysis

Figure 1 shows that the radio station that broadcasts the largest number of programmes is Catalunya Radio (52), followed by Radio Nou (39) and Onda Regional de Murcia (36). The radio station with the smallest number of programmes in its programming offer is Radio Castilla La Mancha, with only 15 programmes.

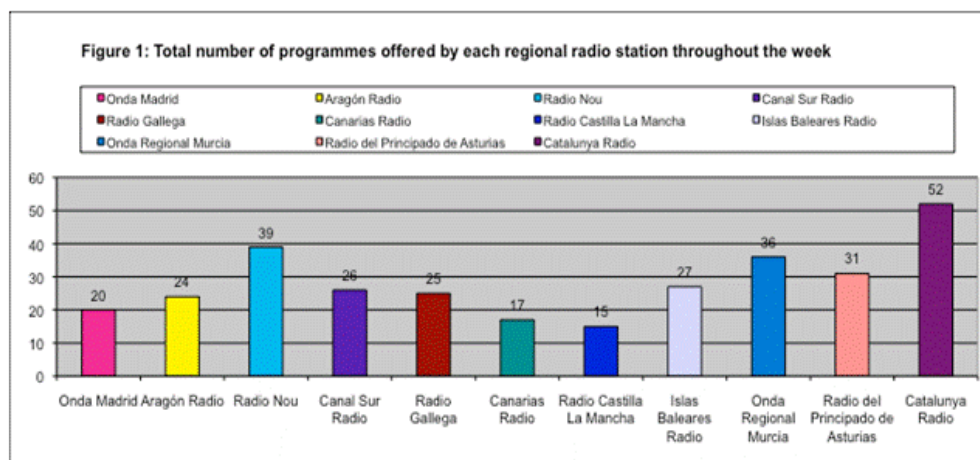


Figure 1: Total number of programmes offered by regional radio stations throughout the week.

The 1980 Statute of Radio and Television (Ley 4/1980) established the first normative framework that gives legal authorization to the future emergence of the third channels and highlights the public service role that must be met by the state-owned media. Thus, the second article, in its third section, states: The organization, competence and definition of the public service role and parliamentary control of the third regional channel referred to in the preceding section, as well as of radio and television broadcasting in the same territorial scope, will be organized organically and functionally in accordance with the criteria presented in the articles 5 [1] 12 and 26 of the present Statute, and according to the law of the Autonomous Community. Moreover, the fourth section of this law adds: in regards to television, initially RTVE will articulate in the form indicated by this Statute the specific programming destined for each nationality or region in a manner complementary to the national programming that is broadcasted by the two existing networks. Subsequently, once the technical coverage of both networks is extended across Spain, the Government, in

the terms established by article 2 of the present Statute, will authorise RTVE to take the necessary measures to launch a third regional channel for the territorial scope of each autonomous community.

Recently, on 31 March 2010, the General Law of Audiovisual Communication (Ley 7/2010) was adopted which, in line with the Statute, highlights the public service role that must be met by state-owned media. Thus, the article 40 of this Law states:

“The public service of audiovisual communication is an essential service of general economic interest that has as a mission to disseminate contents that promote the constitutional principles and values, to contribute to the formation of a pluralistic public opinion, to publicize the linguistic and cultural diversity of Spain, and to disseminate knowledge and the arts, with special emphasis on the promotion of an audiovisual culture. Likewise, the providers of public service audiovisual communication must pay attention to those citizens and social groups that are not recipients of programming aimed at the majority.

In accordance with the missions established in the previous section, the objective of the public service of audiovisual communication is the production, editing and dissemination of a set of radio and television channels, and information services in line with diverse and balanced programmes for all kinds of public, covering all genres, designed to meet society’s needs of information, culture, education and entertainment, and to preserve pluralism in the media”.

Within this public service role, information [2] is one of the essential functions that must be met by the media in general and, more particularly, those who are economically dependent of any public organization. We note that all analysed stations offer informative programmes. The stations that offer this type of spaces the most are: Catalunya Radio (10 programmes), Aragón Radio (9) and Onda Regional de Murcia (9). It is striking that the regional station of the Community of Madrid, Onda Madrid, only offers two informative programmes in its programming schedules.

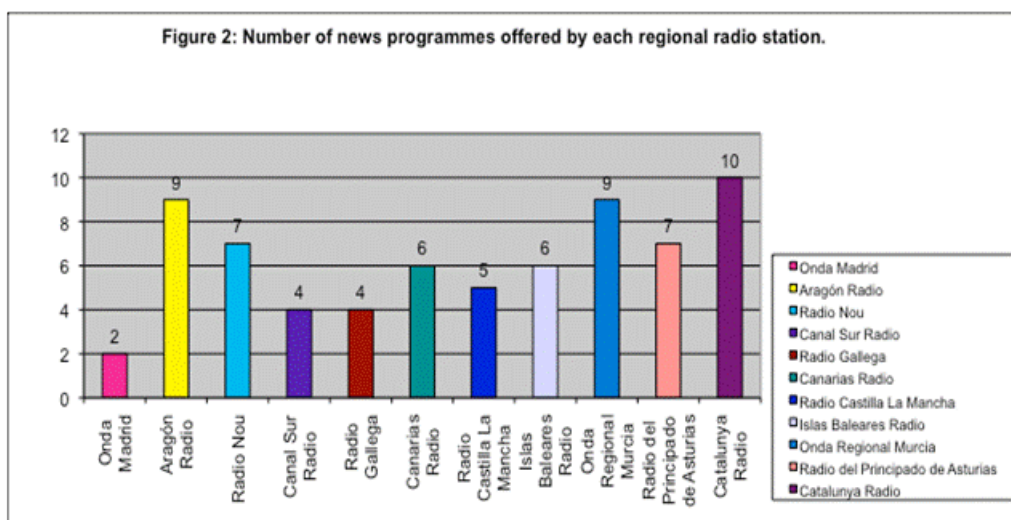


Figure 2: Number of news programmes offered by each radio station.

Another variable analysed in this study is the number of cultural programmes (see Figure 3). Again, in this case, Catalunya Radio continues to take the lead, since it offers 19 cultural programmes, 11 more than the radio stations placed in second place, Aragón Radio and Onda Regional de Murcia, with 8 programmes of this type each. Radio Castilla La Mancha is the only station that does not offer any kind of cultural programme in its content offer.

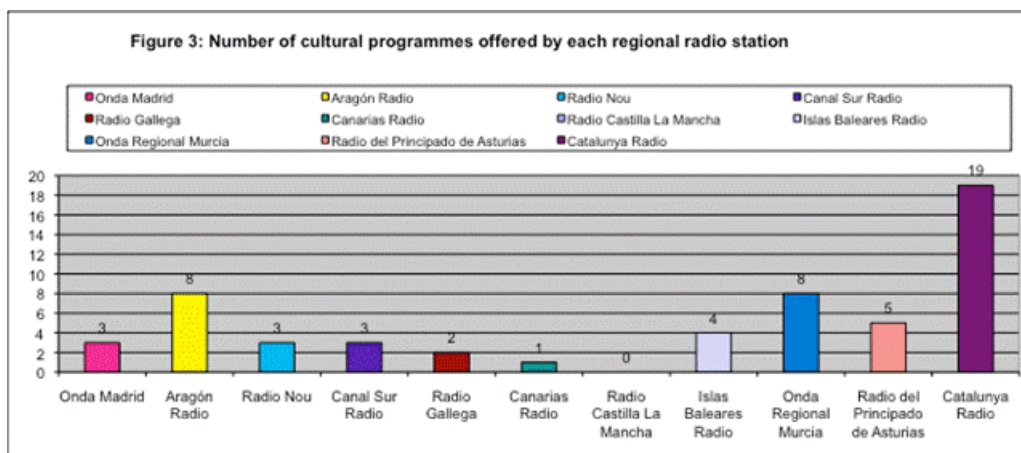


Figure 3: Number of cultural programmes offered by each radio station.

Among the most popular contents stand out all contents associated with sports, especially football and Motorsports: formula 1 and motorcycle. The growing interest of the audience in sports information has become a social phenomenon that has not gone unnoticed for programming directors. Sports programmes have been identified as an opportunity to attract listeners and potential advertisers. Brands that sponsor sports in its different forms are abundant and diverse. In short, the advertising revenues related to sports are more than attractive to most stations. As figure 4 shows, in this regard Radio Nou took the lead in the number of sports programmes, with a total of 12, above Catalunya Radio, which offers 7, and Onda Madrid, which offers 6. Following the same trend of the previous graphics (number of programmes by genre), Radio Castilla La Mancha occupies the last place with only one programme dedicated to sports.

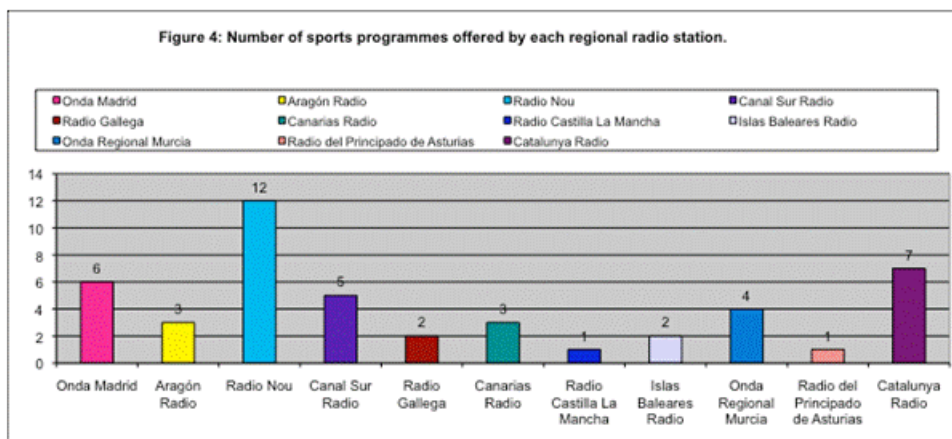


Figure 4: Number of sports programs across regional radio station.

Since its emergence in Spain, Radio was used as a medium for protest and propagandistic purposes. This propagandistic use was made by various associations and groups to disseminate their ideas and beliefs. Radio, fruit of this social commitment, gave rise to free and pirates stations [3]. The medium of Radio, due to its proximity and low cost of broadcasting in comparison to other media such as television, has been configured as the medium that accommodates all minorities and social groups. The study found that the most-socially committed radio stations, through their programming offer, are Canal Sur Radio (South Channel Radio), with 7 programmes, and in second place, Radio del Principado de Asturias (Radio from the Principality of Asturias), with 6 programmes. Radio Castilla La Mancha and Aragón Radio do not offer any programme of social content, as we can see in Figure 5.

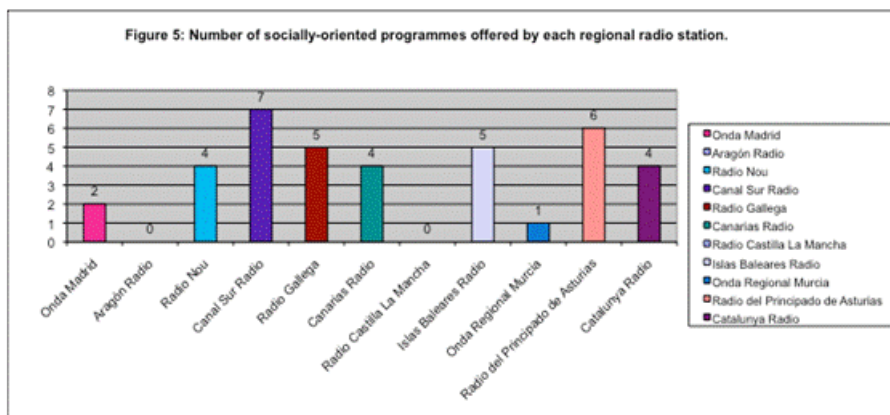


Figure 5: Social programmes offered by each radio station.

As we know, the radio language involves spoken words, music, special effects and silence. Music and spoken words are the two elements present the most within the radio grammar. As figure 6 shows, the number of musical programmes in programming guides is vast. This type of programmes occupies the second place just above the informative programmes (see figure 1). The stations that offer the largest variety of musical programmes are Radio del Principado de Asturias and Onda Regional de Murcia, both with 9 programmes. In the last positions are Canarias Radio and Radio Islas Baleares (Balearic Islands Radio) with 2 programmes each.

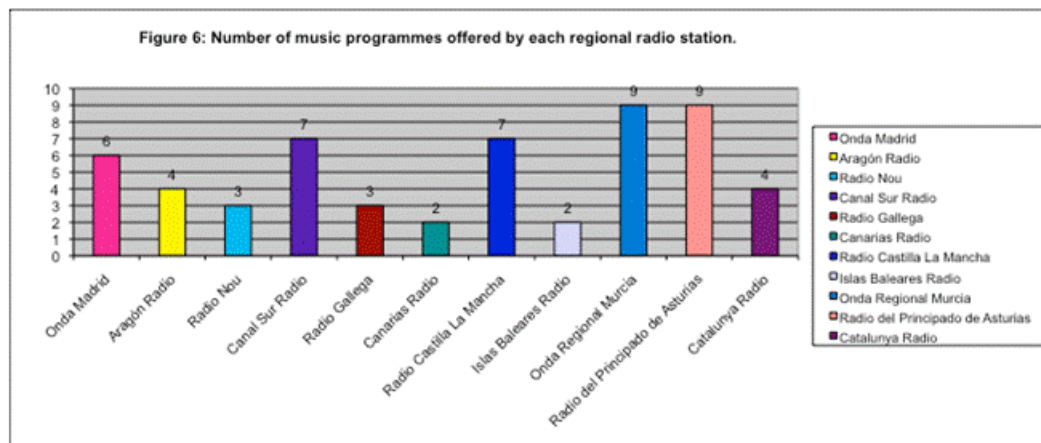


Figure 6: Number of musical programmes offered by each station.

Analysing the following summary table (figure 7), we can establish a ranking of the number of programmes produced in regional radio by content. The results are: 69 news programmes, 56 music programs, 56 cultural programmes, 46 sports programmes, and 38 social programmes. The category others includes those programmes that do not belong to any of the abovementioned categories and that are related to health, environment, etc.

Radio stations	News	Cultural	Sports	Social	Music	Others	Total programmes	Number of male voices	Number of female voices
Onda Madrid	2	3	6	2	6	1	20	19	3
Aragón Radio	9	8	3	0	4	0	24	16	7
Radio Nou	7	3	12	4	3	10	39	40	20
Canal Sur Radio	4	3	5	7	7	0	26	26	5
Radio Gallega	4	2	2	5	3	9	25	18	7
Canarias Radio	6	1	3	4	2	1	17	28	11
Radio Castilla La Mancha	5	0	1	0	7	2	15	9	6
Islas Baleares Radio	6	4	2	5	2	8	27	21	12
Onda Regional Murcia	9	8	4	1	9	5	36	32	7
Radio del Principado de Asturias	7	5	1	6	9	3	31	21	10
Catalunya Radio	10	19	7	4	4	8	52	37	25
TOTAL	69	56	46	38	56	47	312	267	113

Figure 7: Summary table of the total number of programmes offered by regional radio stations in Spain.

Programmes are presented and directed by broadcasters (journalists) and collaborators who are involved in their production. The spoken word occupies a major position in the medium of radio. For this reason, we analyse the number of male and female voices offered by each radio station. Figure 7 shows that the radio station with the largest number of male voices is Radio Nou (40), followed by Catalunya Radio (37). Radio Castilla La Mancha is the station which use male voice the least in its programmes, since it only uses 9.

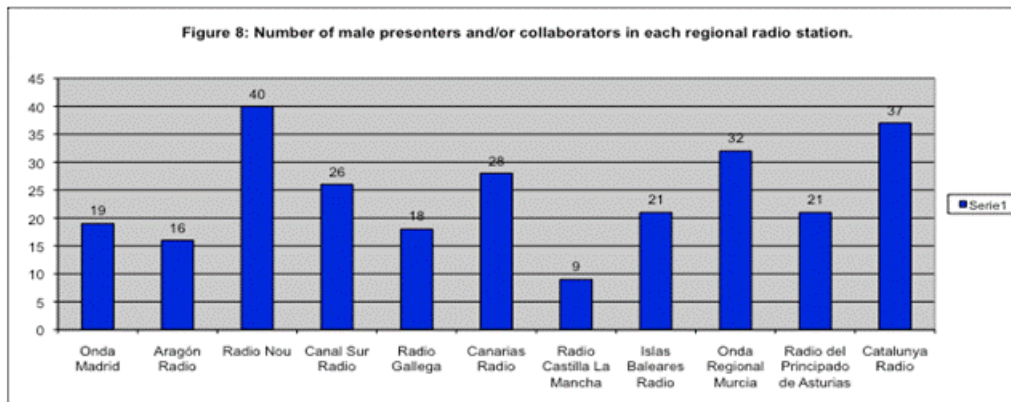


Figure 8: Number of male presenters and/or collaborators in each station.

Regarding the use of female voices, the radio stations that use female collaborators and presenters the most are Catalunya Radio and Radio Nou, with 25 and 20, respectively. So although, as we saw Figure 7, these two radio stations were the ones with more male voices, they are also the stations that proportionately integrate more female journalists and collaborators. Onda Madrid is radio station that integrate professional women the least.

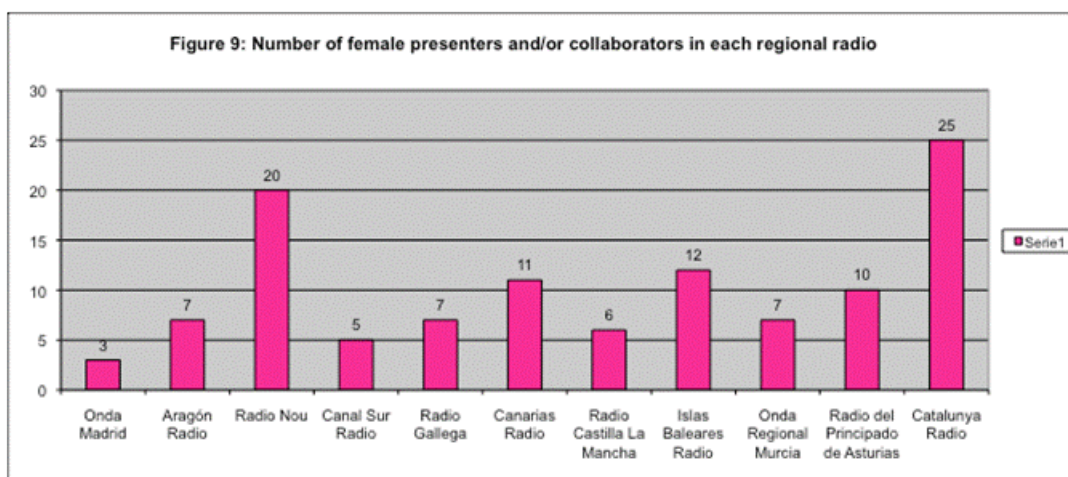


Figure 9: Number of female presenters/collaborators in each station.

Based on the obtained results (figures 7 and 8), we can see that there is significant gender inequality in regional radio. In most cases, the number of men doubles the number of women, which may indicate that the latter group has more difficulty to access the media.

Technological convergence and integration are forcing many media to redesign their strategy to reach audiences, which are increasingly segmented and specialized. The emergence of the Internet, the technological development of the Web, the increase of broadband, and the price reduction in computing technology have led to the emergence of a greater number of people connected to the network. In this context, many radio stations have seen a business opportunity on the Internet (the possibility of increasing their potential audience to the whole world) and have looked for the most effective way of maximising their radio content [4]. This issue was raised as a research objective at the beginning of this work. The following table lists the results of the analysis of the websites of the studied radio stations [5].

Radio stations	Podcast	Forums	Chat	DirectRadio	Historical archives	Corporate information	Links of interest	Breaking News	Possibility to vote topic	Social networks
Onda Madrid	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	Facebook
Aragón Radio	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Radio Nou	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	Twitter, Yahoo, Facebook, Netlog
Canal Sur Radio	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Radio Gallega	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
Canarias Radio	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	Facebook
Radio Castilla La Mancha	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	Facebook
Radio de las Islas Baleares	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0
Onda Regional Murcia	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Radio del Principado de Asturias	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0
Catalunya Radio	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	Facebook

Figure 10: Resources offered by the websites of the regional radio stations.

These are the results for each of the units of analysis:

- a. Podcasts: all the radio stations, with the exception of Radio Castilla La Mancha, Radio de las Islas Baleares and Radio del Principado de Asturias, offered the service of downloading the audio files of programmes that had been aired (podcasts).
- b. Forums of opinion: of the 11 stations, only four - Radio Nou, Radio Castilla La Mancha, Onda Regional de Murcia, and Radio del Principado de Asturias – did not offer listeners the opportunity to express their views on any topic, since they did not have any tool to interact with their audience over the Internet.
- c. Chats: only Radio de las Islas Baleares offered their users/listeners the possibility of chatting in real time with a presenter or collaborator while the radio programme was on air.

- d. Direct radio: all the websites of the radio stations offered the possibility to listen to live radio to attract a greater number of Internet listeners.
- e. Corporate information: the websites of all the radio stations, with the exception of Radio Nou, offered important information about the company, like launch date, directors, presenters, technical, economic and human resources, etc.
- f. Links of interest: Only the websites of Onda Madrid, Radio Gallega and Radio Castilla La Mancha did not provide links to other websites of interest.
- g. Possibility to vote on any subject: Only the websites of Radio Nou, Canal Sur, Radio Islas Baleares and Catalunya Radio offered users/listeners the possibility of voting on a variety of topics.
- h. Social networks: we examined this aspect to determine whether the stations used the social networks to connect with their audiences and generated interactivity through these new forms of relationship. In this regard, Facebook is the most widespread network among the radio stations that use social networks. The stations that use this network are: Onda Madrid, Radio Nou, Canarias Radio, Radio Castilla La Mancha and Catalunya Radio. Here it is worth noting the work of Radio Nou, which is present, in addition to Facebook, on Twitter, Yahoo, and Netlog.

5. Conclusions

Based on the obtained results, we can draw the following conclusions about radio and the programming strategies of the regional radio stations of public ownership:

1. All regional radio stations employ a generalist or conventional programming strategy. They design a programming by blocks whose star macro-genre is the magazine show. This genre is used mostly in the morning and afternoon blocks with the objective of pulling the highest possible audience ratings.
2. The regional radio stations offer a significant number of programmes, but more than 80% of them are under the umbrella of three types of content: general information, music, and sports information.
3. The programmes guides of regional radio stations favour the provision of informative and music programmes over other types of contents.
4. There is significant gender inequality privileging men, since the presence of male voices is greater than female ones in all the examined regional radio stations.
5. Regional radios are aware of the fact that the Internet is changing the traditional patterns of consumption, design, programming and citizen participation. In this sense, the radio stations are exploring, but still timidly, new technological scenarios and are already testing new formulas to create a new model of radio and programming according to the new realities. However, from our point of view, they are not taking enough advantage of the creative and communicative possibilities enabled by the Internet and the phenomenon of the social networks.

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7. Notes

[1] This article reflects the public service role of (national, regional or local) radio and television of public ownership. Some of the most interesting aspects of the public service role are: the production and emission of balanced generalists and thematic radio and television programming schedules, which integrate diversified programmes, of all kinds of genres, with the objective of attending the democratic, social and cultural needs of all citizens; ensuring citizens' access to quality information, culture, education, and entertainment... (); facilitating the access of everybody to the different genres of programming, and to the institutional, social, cultural and sporting events; addressing all segments of audience, ages and social groups, including minorities with disabilities.

[2] Article 20 of the Spanish Constitution includes the fundamental right to information.

[3] To better understand the origin of the pirate radios, we recommend reading the article written by Montes Fernández, F. & Sierra Sánchez, J. (2009). "Origen de la radiodifusión pirata comercial" (Origin of commercial pirate broadcasting) in *Ámbitos*, nº.18, pp. 41-50.

[4] One of the ways to make content profitable was the on-demand radio format. Most of the generalist national radio stations offer these services. That is, they offer people the possibility to download audio files of the programme so that users listen to it whenever they want or consider appropriate.

[5] In the table, 1 stands for "it has it" and 0 stands for "it does not have it".

[Appendix 1. Radiography of the programming offer in the state-owned regional radio stations](#)

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