What Have We Learned about Public Service Broadcasting in the World? A Systematic Literature Review and Suggestions for Future Research

¿Qué Hemos Aprendido sobre la Radiodifusión de Servicio Público en el Mundo? Una Revisión Sistemática de la Literatura y Sugerencias para Investigaciones Futuras

Tania Lestón-Huerta, Carlos III University. Spain.
tanialh96@gmail.com
[CV]
Manuel Goyanes, Carlos III University. Spain.
mgoyanes@hum.uc3m.es
[CV]
Barbara Mazza[1], Sapienza, University of Rome. Italy
barbara.mazza@uniroma1.it
[CV]

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ABSTRACT
This study provides a review of the literature published on Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) between the years 2009 and 2019. In total, 232 articles were obtained following a literature search of five databases (Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, ProQuest, Academic Search Ultimate, and Google Scholar), of which seventy-eight were deemed relevant, based on the study criteria. The article summarizes the objects of study, settings under analysis, methodological approaches, and principal

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[1] Corresponding author: Barbara Mazza, Department of Communication and Social Research, via Salaria 113, 00198 Rome, Italy.

thematic patterns of extant research, providing a critical assessment of the main findings and research directions. Based on this thematic summary, the study offers suggestions on how to move forward and identify some of the main challenges and limitations on this area of inquiry.

RESUMEN
Este estudio ofrece una revisión de la literatura publicada sobre Radiodifusión de Servicio Público (RSP) entre los años 2009 y 2019. En total, se obtuvieron 232 artículos tras una búsqueda bibliográfica en cinco bases de datos (Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, ProQuest, Academic Search Ultimate y Google Scholar), de los cuales setenta y ocho se consideraron relevantes, según los criterios del estudio. El artículo resume los objetos de estudio, los escenarios bajo análisis, los enfoques metodológicos y los principales patrones temáticos de las investigaciones existentes, proporcionando una evaluación crítica de los principales hallazgos y direcciones de las investigaciones. Sobre la base de este resumen temático, el estudio ofrece sugerencias sobre cómo avanzar e identificar algunos de los principales desafíos y limitaciones en esta área de investigación.

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1. Introduction

Public Service Broadcasters, commonly known by the English acronym PSBs, are public entities whose traditional mission is to provide a universal and democratic mass media service (Harrison and Woods 2001). The PSB is considered as a crucial pillar of democratic societies (Jacobs, Meeusen, and D'Haenens 2016)—mostly in Europe where its role "seems, however, wider than the purely political" (Harrison and Woods, 2001, 480)—as it also encompasses educational, social, and cultural functions. Since its origins, the PSB has been essential in fostering public and civic values, ensuring citizens access to verified information (Scannell 2005), and preserving the common culture and welfare of societies (Ibarra & Nord 2014; Jõesaar 2011; Scannell 2005; Suárez-Candel 2011).

In recent years, however, the traditional role of the PSB has been questioned because of growing challenges relating to its funding difficulties (Arriaza Ibarra 2013; Collins 2011; Herzog & Karppinen 2014; Huntsberger 2014; Jõesaar 2011), the raising market competition (Brink Lund and Edelvold Berg 2009; Dawes 2014; Donders 2010; García de Madariaga, Lamuedra Gravàn, and Tucho Fernández 2013; Johnson 2013), and new technologies and digital platforms (Debrett 2009; Ejbye Sørensen 2013; Kant 2014; Sjøvaag, Stavelin, and Moe 2015; Schwarz 2016) that have disrupted their long-standing business operations. In this turbulent context, the status of public media has urged broadcasters and governments to rethink PSB's business strategies and content output to preserve

citizens' rights and interests (Ginosar and Krispil 2015; Iosifidis 2011; Sjøvaag, Pedersen, and Owren 2019; Van Dijck and Poell 2015).

Despite the PSB's relevant role in nourishing important values (like pluralism or diversity) in democratic societies, scant attention has been paid to the potential research clusters that compose this important literature. We argue that a systematic review of studies on the PSB's role and functions is essential for various reasons. First, as the academic attention on the PSB has grown exponentially in recent years because of key digital and organizational transformations (D'Arma 2018; Donders, Van den Bulck, and Raats 2019; Evans 2018; Keinonen and Klein Shagrir 2017; Värk and Kinds 2019), there is a growing pressure to systematize and provide a holistic vision on the main findings and research streams. Second, given the different research communities interested in illustrating and problematizing the main social, political, and economic challenges of the PSB, there is a growing need to scrutinize its research traditions and provide new avenues of research that address currently overlooked methodological and thematic gaps. This study aims to address these research gaps by providing an overview of the current development status of PSB research in the communication field. Ultimately, it is expected that this study will contribute to future research in this domain.
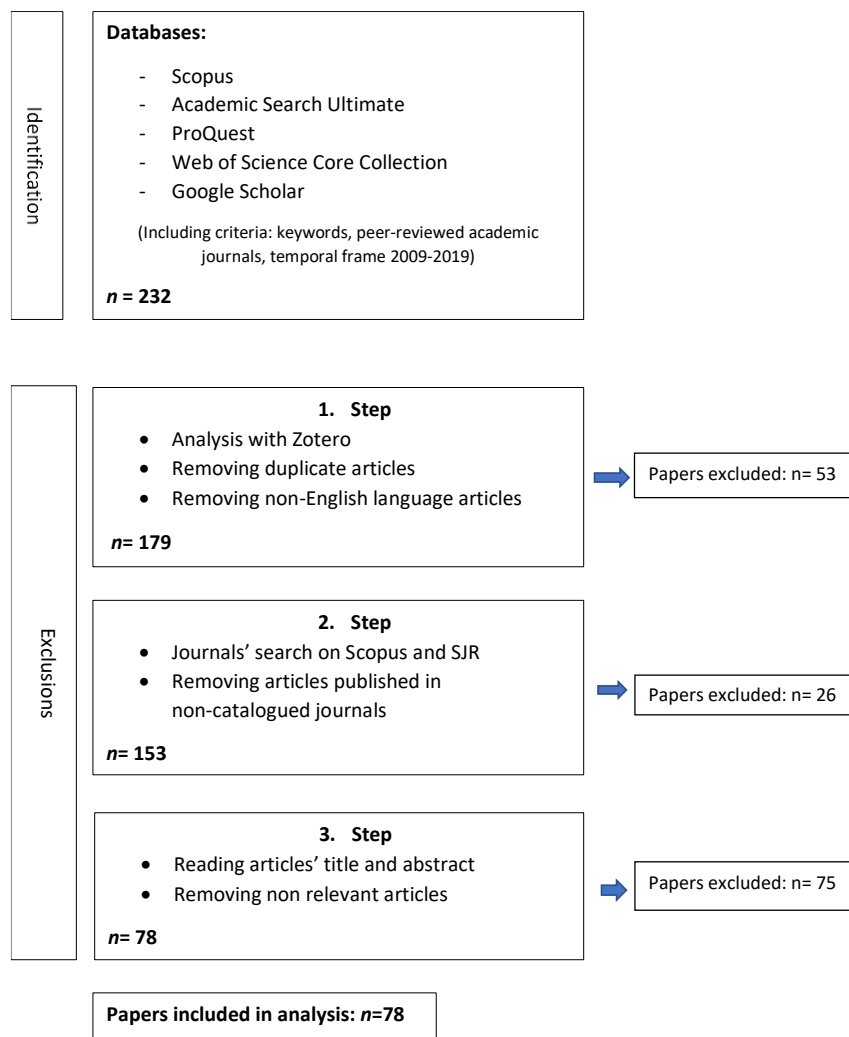
2. Method

2.1. Literature search procedure and databases

The articles analyzed in this literature review have been collected by a systematic search in five different databases and following PRISMA guidelines, which were established to retrieve relevant articles and "improve the transparency, accuracy, completeness, and frequency of documented systematic review and meta-analysis protocols" (Shamseer et al. 2015, 1). The literature search was conducted in October 2019 using the following databases: Scopus, Academic Search Ultimate, ProQuest, Web of Science Core Collection, and Google Scholar. The reasons these five different sources were employed for article selection were to make the review as complete as possible, relying on datasets commonly used in the communications field.

For an article to be eligible, four specific criteria needed to be met: 1) published between 2009 and 2019; 2) written in English; 3) published in peer-reviewed academic journals; and 4), as literature and research on PSBs is extensive, the journals must be indexed on JCR or Scopus Journals. Even though PSB research has been conducted for many decades, the last ten years were selected as the specific period because we are interested in providing an up-to-date perspective on how PSB scholarship has evolved, including the research trends within recent academic discourses, themes, and issues. To identify relevant articles, different keyword searches were deployed: "PSB," "public media," "television," "public television," and "public service broadcasting." By definition, the keywords must be part of the article's title, abstract, or text.

2.2. Title and abstract screening

Initial search yielded 232 articles, which were subsequently screened for duplication and relevance through title and abstracts. Literature search results were uploaded to Zotero to remove duplicates. Following the removal of repeated articles, 122 articles were collected. Titles and abstracts were read and classified as relevant or irrelevant for the literature review. False positives (n = 44) were discarded as some keywords employed in the search were mentioned in the article's title or abstract but the research focus was not on the PSB. Ultimately, seventy-eight articles were found to meet this criterion.

Identification

Databases:

- Scopus
- Academic Search Ultimate
- ProQuest
- Web of Science Core Collection
- Google Scholar

(Including criteria: keywords, peer-reviewed academic journals, temporal frame 2009-2019)

n = 232

Exclusions

1. Step
- Analysis with Zotero
- Removing duplicate articles
- Removing non-English language articles

n= 179

Papers excluded: n= 53

2. Step
- Journals' search on Scopus and SJR
- Removing articles published in non-catalogued journals

n= 153

Papers excluded: n= 26

3. Step
- Reading articles' title and abstract
- Removing non relevant articles

n= 78

Papers excluded: n= 75

Papers included in analysis: *n*=78

Figure 1: Search procedure

2.3. Synthesis and analysis

A standardized, pre-piloted form was used to extract data from the included studies for assessment of study quality and evidence synthesis. Extracted information was grouped among the following variables: journal, date, first-author affiliation, land of data collection, setting under analysis, article type, analytical approach, and methods. Therefore, we followed a qualitative research synthesis by grouping the data according to the previously identified variables. Qualitative research synthesis has shown to provide effective means of producing an actionable knowledge base to inform further policy and practice (Denyer and Tranfield 2006). After data extraction and synthesis, the findings were recorded in Table 1 and summarized as narrative answers to the research questions.

3. Results

RQ1. What are the main characteristics of the studies analyzing the public service broadcasting?

In total, studies on PSBs were published in eighteen different journals, the most frequent being *Media, Culture & Society* (n=11), *European Journal of Communication* (n=7) and *International Journal of Digital Television* (n=7). Although articles based on any country were considered, many studies on

Europe—especially the United Kingdom—were located, which, as we shall see, implies a prevalence of Western countries and addresses the importance of delving deeper into non-Western geographies. Regarding the date of publication, the vast majority of studies were conducted between 2014 (n=10) and 2015 (n=9) and 2010 (n=8) to 2012 (n=9).

Germane to the first's author country of affiliation, fourteen authors were located in the United Kingdom, followed by Belgium (n=10), Norway (n=9), and Spain (n=8). Scholars' geographic background is mainly positioned on western countries, especially in Europe and North America, including Canada (n=1) and the United States (n=3). Only a few authors originate from Asia (n=4), and one is from Africa. The land of data collection reflects a more pluralistic vision, with cross-country comparisons as the first source of data (n=29). From these 29 studies conducted in more than one country, the most frequent countries were the United Kingdom (n = 20), Belgium (n=7), Norway (n=6), and Spain (n=6). Regarding single-country studies, the main source is the United Kingdom (n=12), followed by Norway (n=5) and Spain (n=4). Although the articles analyzed are located in forty-eight different countries, most were industrialized geographies such as European countries, the United States, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand, with studies based on Asia, Africa, and Central or South America at a rudimentary percentage (less than the ten percent). This implies that the study of PSB research remains underdeveloped in most non-Western geographies.

Concerning the setting under analysis, we have distinguished fifteen different scenarios, with Media Policies (n=17) being the most prevalent, followed by the Regulatory Framework (n=14) and the PSB model (n=10). Media policies differ from regulatory framework as the former only concerns the legal and economical procedures imposed by governments or institutional bodies. However, the regulatory framework implies the direct implementation of such guidelines, as well as different media challenges and audience and content's regulation. It is clear that the majority of studies analyzed concern either the political or financial nature of the public media. The second main setting of research was the platform type for PSB research, with Digital Media (n=10) the being most prevalent, followed by Television Schedule (n=7).

Table 1. *Characteristics of the selected articles*

Items	Frequency
Journals	Media, culture & society (n= 11), European Journal of Communication (n= 7), International Journal of Digital Television (n= 7), The International Communication Gazette (n= 6), International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics (n= 5), Journalism Studies (n= 5), Television & New Media (n= 5), Nordicom Review (n= 4), Javnost – The Public (n= 4), Journalism (n= 2), Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media (n= 2), Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly (n= 2), Journalism Practice (n= 2), Media International Australia (n= 2), Communication, Culture & Critique (n= 1), Convergence (n= 1), Critical Studies in Media Communication (n=1), Critical Studies in Television (n= 1), Digital Journalism (n= 1), El profesional de la Información (n= 1), Global, Media & Communication (n= 1), Info (n= 1), International Journal of Cultural Studies (n= 1), Journalism & Communication Monographs (n= 1), Middle East Journal of Communication (n= 1), Mobile, Media & Communication (n= 1), Observatorio (OBS*) (n= 1), Trames (n=1).
Date	2014 (n= 10), 2015 (n= 9), 2011 (n= 9), 2012 (n= 9), 2010 (n=8), 2016 (n= 8), 2009 (n= 6), 2013 (n= 6), 2018 (n= 5), 2017 (n= 4), 2019 (n=4).
First author's origin	United Kingdom (n= 14), Belgium (n= 10), Norway (n= 9), Spain (n= 8), Germany (n= 5), Finland (n= 4), The Netherlands (n= 3), USA (n= 3), Italy (n= 2), Australia (n= 2), Estonia (n=2), Greece (n= 2), Israel (n= 2), Serbia (n= 2), Sweden (n= 2), Austria (n= 1), Bahamas (n= 1), Canada (n= 1), China (n= 1), Denmark (n= 1), Macedonia (n= 1), Jordan (n= 1), Tanzania (n=1).

Land of data collection	Cross Comparison (n= 29), United Kingdom (n= 12), Norway (n= 5), European Union (n= 4), Spain (n= 4), Belgium (n= 3), United States (n= 3), Arab countries (n= 2), Germany (n= 2), Finland (n= 2), Serbia (n= 2), Australia (n= 1), Canada (n= 1), China (n= 1), Estonia (n= 1), Greece (n= 1), Italy (n= 1), Sweden (n= 1), Switzerland (n= 1), Tanzania (n= 1), The Netherlands (n=1).
Setting under analysis	Media policies (n= 17), Regulatory framework (n= 14), PSB model (n= 10), Digital media (n= 10), Television schedule (n=7), Audience participation (n= 4), Social networks sites (n= 4), Business model (n= 3), Stakeholders (n= 3), Media convergence (n= 2), News content (n= 2), Journalist work (n= 1), Media assistance (n= 1).
Article type	Empirical (n= 61), Conceptual (n= 17).
Analytical approach	Qualitative (n= 40), Conceptual (n= 17), Quantitative (n= 15), Mixed (n= 6).

Regarding the article type, the vast majority of papers were empirical (n=61) and, therefore, evidence based. Seventeen studies were conceptual, based on theoretical descriptions of the public media's model or the financial or structural challenges of the television systems of different countries, especially those underdeveloped. Qualitative methods were the main analytical approach (n=40), while fifteen studies implemented quantitative methods and six applied mixed methods (combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches). Significant to the methods employed, the main methodological procedure was the combination of different techniques (n=20). Regarding single method studies, Comparative Case Study (n=9) was the most frequent technique, followed by Content Analysis (n=8), Single Case Study (n=8), and Expert Interviews (n=7). Finally, the survey instrument (n=7) was implemented in combination with other techniques, such as Expert Interviews (n = 2) or Content Analysis (n = 2).

RQ2. What are the main topics and thematic patterns of the studies analyzing the Public Service Broadcasting?

Concerning the main thematic patterns, four different research streams were identified: 1) digitalization and new technologies development, 2) business model and funding, 3) policies and regulation, and 4) public value and citizen interest. The research questions outlined below are not representative of all included articles but illustrate the main research interest of each research stream.

Digitalization and new technologies development: Questions on this strand of research include the following a) What challenges and threats are facing PSBs due to the new media landscape and technological development?; b) To what extent do the new media system and SNS have an impact over PSBs?; c) What are the implications and consequences for PSBs being on digital platforms?; and d) How public broadcasters manage to add value in the multi-platform media without losing commercial interests?

Business model and funding: Questions on this strand of research are as follows: a) What are the PSBs' main financial models in a free market landscape; b) What are the consequences and requirements of adopting a commercial approach?; c) What are the globalization and privatization impacts; and d) How do PSBs compete with private broadcasters?

Policies and regulation: Questions on this strand of research include the following: a) What are the government's role in the PSB remit?; b) What are the social and democratic obligations and restrictions of the PSB?; c) Who is responsible for the PSB regulations?; d) To what extent is the political influence legitimate?; e) What are the consequences of adopting a deregulation model?; f) How can PSBs survive without any governmental intervention in a competitive market?; and g) How does a PSB maintain their traditional and democratic principles while competing with private broadcasters?

Public value and citizen interest: Questions on this strand of research are as follows: a) What is the role and definition of the PSB goals, mission, and values?; b) What are the pillars of PSBs?; c) How important are viewers and citizens to PSB?; d) What are the characteristics of the PSBs' content?; and e) How does a PSB ensure democracy?

For each thematic cluster, we have identified the following themes:

3.1. Digitalization and New technologies

Digital transition and switchover: Five articles analyze the transition from analogical broadcasting to the digital retransmission or DTT (Candel 2011; Evens, Verdegem, and De Marez 2010; Iosifidis 2011; Michalis 2016; Taylor 2016). Since the early 2000s, new technologies and digital developments have challenged the PSB, which had to constantly adapt to new formats, services, and production routines. Transition to DTT is a clear example of the PSB's challenges because of the several political and financial decisions implied in its deployment. The switchover required a huge economical investment and rapid technological innovation, which many countries were not prepared for and, therefore, could not handle it properly. However, the main problem PSBs had to face was the arrival of multiple private broadcasters, which has led to an increment of the competition and a free-market logic dominance over the media landscape—conflicting with the traditional PSB's goals and obligations (Candel 2011). More specifically, PSBs must find innovative and sustainable ways to introduce the public value in a more competitive environment in which commercial broadcasters can reach larger audiences through popular programs and the entertainment genre. "The often dry and technical debate on radio spectrum management cannot obscure what is really at stake: how to adapt and secure PSB values in the emerging media environment, irrespective of which transmission platform(s) will succeed" (Michalis 2016, 348). Previous studies have proven that—considering the new market-oriented logic—the PSB needs more regulation and supervision to avoid commercial and advertising activities and ensure its traditional principles and stakeholders' benefits (Evens, Verdegem, and De Marez 2010)

Use of social media: As previously explained, digitalization has challenged PSBs in several important ways. In this category, the papers included have observed the challenges faced by public broadcasters trying to maintain an accurate and balanced social media presence: "with the potential for networked multimedia, the Web has challenged journalism to adapt to its capacities by, for instance, incorporating audio and video and adding polls, quizzes, comments or games to the text based news reporting" (Sjøvaag, Stavelin, and Moe 2015, 11). Certain studies (Horsti and Hultén 2011; Evans 2018) have analyzed the impact of the competition created by social media, which has led to the development of new strategies and practices to reach and attract more viewers and obtain enough revenue to maintain financial stability. According to some studies (Moe 2013; Stollfuß 2018; van Dijck and Poell 2015), the PSB's main social media challenge is the conflict between their public character and the commercial and private interest that dominate digital platforms. According to Stollfuß (2018), the configuration and algorithm processes of social media have transformed the informational conditions and communication forms of a democratic citizenship.

These sites are characterized by their universal access and free, public distribution; however, to ensure their stability, SNS—or other platforms including Google or YouTube—allow third-party companies to advertise their products and services, which is against the traditional principles and publicly funding of PSBs:

> Apple and Google have offered to share revenues with content providers, but the offered terms
>
> have not yet proven attractive. Further new business models may emerge [...] But such a

business strategy depends on viewers being addressable […] and may not do much to fund

public content. […] In consequence, advertising revenues generated from video on demand

and/or sport or movie channels may not flow to fund news and public information. (Collins,

2011, 1210).

Audience participation and engagement: This theme refers to the steady transformation of the audience's consumption and viewing habits. The new media landscape has turned the audience's role into a more active and participative one: "multi-platform productions only provide television with new forms of interactivity as the one-to-many medium is accompanied by other many-to-many mediums" (Keinonen and Klein Shagrir 2017, 72). One PSB strategy (and of the private broadcasters) to reach and engage more viewers is to develop more participatory and interactive contents in which spectators act as participants (Enli and Ihlebæk 2011). The aim of this tactic is to give viewers a voice and include them in the content's production, achieving loyalty and universality: "this new socio-technical landscape is empowering the *viewser* with both a voice—mobilized largely through social media networks—and choice— providing a plurality of content and tools that allow *viewsers* to map their own self-directed trajectories through this multi-platform environment" (Kant 2014, 383). However, some studies have proven that this strategy actually responds to private and economic interests as the audience's participation and interaction does not directly lead to a more democratic and horizontal production, but to a competition increment—a rise of the funding revenues and the audience's fragmentation. Only one of the aforementioned studies (Millanga 2014) has demonstrated that the use of new technologies, such as the mobile phone, has resulted in a more horizontal and reciprocal communication, because citizens from different population sections and conditions are able to openly discuss public and local issues. However, it is important to note that this study was conducted in undeveloped countries in Africa, where the traditional broadcasting service is characterized by complete state control. Therefore, the addition of interactive technologies has provided a voice to the different minorities and ethnicities, which does not mean that broadcasters and producers, in fact, hear these new voices.

Convergence: Five of the articles address the convergence processes and models imposed by the digital development and the multiplatform formats:

the communication field has for years been defending a transmission model that is capable of

bringing together the best of the old and new media, with the result that, in the present stage,

the relation of online with traditional media has ceased to be understood in terms of replacement

and subordination, and has given way to new conceptions based on complementariness and

coordination. (Larrondo et al. 2012, 790).

Two studies included in this section focus on the convergence's impact over the journalists work and practices (Larrondo et al. 2016; Värk and Kindsiko 2019). The confluence of different mediums, such as merging radio, television, and newspaper's headquarters in one single company, implies new routines and professional habits characterized by collaboration, cooperation, and multi-skilled attitudes, suggesting fewer degrees of specialization and higher levels of competition and workload

(Larrondo et al. 2016). The other three articles (Larrondo et al. 2012; Puijk 2015; Vanhaegh and Donders 2016) focus on the European countries' challenges to transform the PSB into PSM, or Public Service Media, which are, in essence, the need for more interaction and co-creation and the adaptation of their traditional routines and formats to the new media to reach viewers. However, this change implies more competition: "audiences of traditional media, especially the press, are declining, habits of news consumption have changed, and advertising revenues are diminishing, while there is increasing competition to retain them" (Larrondo et al. 2016, 278), since public and private broadcasters have access to the same services and technologies.

3.2. Business model and funding

Competition and conflict with commercial broadcasters: digitalization and technological evolution have brought several challenges to PSBs, regarding not only formats and services but also funding and financial revenues. The contemporary media environment is defined by the media's privatization:

> As more and more media content is accessed through the broadband internet, public broadcasters such as the ABC and SBS face the issue that — in contrast to their broadcast services — each incremental increase in demand for online content brings additional delivery costs, so they can face the 'curse of rising popularity' as it increases costs without increasing revenue. (Flew 2009, 10).

As some articles exemplify (Curran et al. 2009; D'Arma 2018), the media privatization stimulates the economy and implies a higher strain to reach audiences, which broadcasters justify as a benefit for the public; if there is more competition to ensure the audience share, more innovative and quality contents will be offered to attract viewers. Nevertheless, results have demonstrated that the outcome is actually the opposite and, if there is more competition, the public broadcasting's content and production process will be less democratic. This occurs because of the soft and superficial content provided by commercial broadcasters. By trying to reach and engage more consumers, private channels offer popular and trivial content (as entertainment or popular shows) as this type of programming suits all audiences, what leads to a PSB content's reshaping to approach private broadcasters and, therefore, a lack of quality and information of the public programs. Then, the problem is to ensure the public value and citizen interest while competing with private actors. To achieve this, states and institutions have opted to public funding and media regulation to ensure a democratic and well-informed citizenship. Thus, public broadcasters receive governmental subsidies that are used to warrant programs that do not generate enough income to maintain its production, as cultural or public affairs programs do (Curran et al. 2009). Following this strategy, PSB is required to differentiate their public funding and activities from their commercial ones, as advertising or partnerships, to secure that public funding is devoted to the public interest, what means that governmental and institutional revenues are not subsidizing private interests (Flynn 2015).

Public funding has proven insufficient to ensuring a high-quality public service in the current media system. Therefore, most public broadcasters have opted for a mixed model or advertising formats. However, as Jakubowicz (2007) notes, it is necessary to guarantee the PSB principles—such as citizens' interest, content diversity, pluralism, social inclusion, and democratic values—while acquiring funding from other sources: "money is a relevant factor when one aims to make outstanding (and domestically produced) programmes" (Donders 2010 69). Nevertheless, private companies have

denounced this strategy as an unfair competition, since the commercial broadcasters are entirely funding by private and market operations and are competing in the same environment as public broadcasters, which also benefit from public budgets:

> The exclusive (i.e. non-competitive) access of PSBs to public funding was characterized as conferring 'privileged status' (Ward 2004: 93) upon those broadcasters. This status was challenged in a series of legal actions at the European level in the 1990s: commercial players in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland filed legal complaints to the effect that public funding of public broadcasters, through licence fees or direct subsidy, constituted state aid incompatible with the Treaty of Rome provisions on competition law. (Flynn 2015, 127).

Thus, in the case of the European Union, the solution has been to limit the public service remit to assure fair competition between public and private actors and prevent the PSB from engaging in activities aimed at economical profits.

Mixed models: As previously illustrated, some broadcasters benefit from both public and private funding systems. While providing high quality, diverse, and informative content, public broadcasters engage in commercial activities and allow advertising content in their programming to avoid political intervention and institutional dependency. This is because the competitive environment created by the commercial counterparts is meant to lead to greater content diversity (Smith 2009). The most popular example of this dual system is the British Corporation, BBC, which was the first in combined public and private funding to assure impartiality and sufficient resources to create quality content and preserve the citizens' interest (Ramsey 2016). As some studies have explained (Donders and Raats 2015; Mjøs 2011; Smith 2009), mixed models enable PSBs to serve the public and offer local, cultural, and plural content corresponding to some of its principal values. Thus, thanks to the advertising activities and market-oriented strategies, public broadcasters can afford the costs of the production processes and the technological investment. Nevertheless, in most cases, broadcasters are under political pressure to legitimize their public character and financial model, as well as demonstrate that public funding fulfils the public's needs and requirements (Johnson 2013).

3.3. Policies and regulation

Multi-stakeholder approach: In some European countries—such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and Sweden—public broadcasters resort to the multi-stakeholder consultation to secure diversity, plurality, and democratic values in PSB programming. This strategy's objective is to include more actors involved in the regulation and production processes to warrant the public interest and inclusion of educational and cultural content (Donders and Raats 2012; Van den Bulck and Donders 2014). However, current research has shown that the multi-stakeholder approach—while trying to ensure democracy, consensus, and a greater representation and inclusion of all society groups—has proven to be the opposite of democracy. There is a domination of some agents, especially commercial ones, which results in a prioritization of private interest over public value (Donders, Van del Bulck, and Raats 2019).

Government regulation and influence: One strategy to ensure democracy and preserve public interest is government regulation (Ginosar and Krispil 2015). A PSB, in its origins, should serve the public

and satisfy the social and local demands and needs. Therefore, some governments must supervise and control the broadcasting practices, such as the Spanish PSB, in which the institutional regulation molds the communication field and audio-visual processes (Fernández Alonso et al. 2010). Furthermore, as Ogus (2004) explains, government supervision serves to warrant the public value by reflecting all political attitudes and correcting market failures: "identifying the market failures that justify state intervention and selecting the methods of intervention that predictably will correct that failure at least cost" (Ginosar and Krispil 2015, 4). Nevertheless, some studies have demonstrated that the political and ideological influence over PSB it is not beneficial to democracy or the citizens but, rather, results in the media's lack of independency and autonomy that benefits private interests and political preferences (Arriaza Ibarra 2013). Moreover, in other cases—including undeveloped geographies or ex-socialist countries, such as China—the state aid control results in the ideological manipulation and rights reduction: "de-emphasis of individual equality, and the subordination of individual liberty to collective and state interests in the Chinese Constitution, as well as by the government's practice of implementing collective rights to subsistence and development ahead of civil and political rights" (Chan Chin 2012, 907).

Neoliberal approach and deregulation process: Three studies analyze the PSB's deregulation processes and neoliberalism practices to avoid political intervention. As Dawes (2014, 707) indicates, government supervision influences media production and distribution in favor of ideological preferences:

> ...the construction of the public as a passive citizenry of recipients of state aid, requiring state interference and thus compromising their freedom from the state (and the legitimacy of the liberal state as one that does not interfere in the private realm), broke down the public–private distinction between politics and economy, and undermined just as much as market processes the ability of citizens to form an active public and hold political power to account.

Therefore, some broadcasters have opted for a deregulated model characterized by media independence, impartiality, and a free-market driven system, because—as Larsen (2014) notes—the market is better qualified than governments to preserve the citizens' independence. Nevertheless, Thussu (2007) argues that media autonomy—while implying more competition—threatens democracy because viewers are consider consumers, not citizens, and the production processes are submitted to the economical profit, leading to poor-quality content and a prioritization of popular genres: "public television is increasingly sold off and market competition is reshaping the values of the television news genre. The information environment, in other words, is diminishing as media markets become privatised" (Cushion, Lewis and Ramsay 2012, 832)

Small countries, third democracies, and undeveloped nations: PSB is a central element of the European democracies, as well as other countries, including Australia, Canada, and the United States. However, in small countries or undeveloped geographies, the PSB's role has proven different. Two articles have observed the PSB's role in small countries such as Macedonia, Finland, and Serbia, where there is little space for private broadcasters and marketers as their population's size is insufficient to be economically motivating. Therefore, governments of these countries have more responsibility to offer and ensure diversity, information, and high quality in PSB content. In this case, the strategy followed by public broadcasters and regulators was the opposite of other European countries. The goal was to

guarantee the presence of private companies in the media landscape and ensure the commercial competition because the market failure was unaffordable to the PSB's budgets (Jõesaar 2011).

However, in non-democratic geographies and third democracies, the PSB implementation was seen by Aaron Rhodes (2007) as a path to democracy and a strategy to achieve social and political transformation: "stable, independent, and functional media are seen as a means of achieving wider democratic goals. Media-specific goals focus on establishing and supporting independent media institutions. Support to PSB reform could fall into both political and media specific goals" (Marko 2015, 294). The same can be said for Arab countries where the PSB was an essential tool for developing democracy and citizens' participation in public affairs (Ayish 2010). The European Union and other broad institutions have guided the public broadcasting model of these nations to develop the media's independency and democracy. However, some studies (Ayish 2010; Marko 2015) have demonstrated that the media transformation did not result in political changes because the social and cultural contexts of each nation remain dominant.

European Union and homogenization: The European Union is instrumental in media regulation and funding for all state members. Some studies (Just, Latzer, and Saurwein 2012; Spasovska and Imre 2015; Van den Bulck and Moe 2012) analyze the EU pressures to distinguish between public and commercial financing and justify the public remit as a tool to protect democracy and warrant transparency and independency. Some studies (Donders and Pauwels 2010; Psychogiopoulou 2013) have demonstrated that the EU guidelines have a global and homogenic character that do not consider each nation's particularities and context, resulting in several challenges as the national features predominate over common commandments (Van den Bulck and Moe 2012). In this case, the implementation of new formats or services has failed, such as the aforementioned transition to DTT. Three articles have observed a recent transformation in the EU practices from a regulatory attitude to a free-market prevalence. This resolution has led to the implementation of a test that state members must apply to approve new services (Donders and Pauwels 2010; Van den Bulck and Moe 2012; Just et al. 2012). The tests consist of two steps—public value evaluation and market impact: "on the one hand, new media services' public value must be evaluated. On the other hand, their positive and negative effects on the market should be calculated as well (European Commission 2009). On the basis of these two components, governments have to approve the delivery of a service" (Donders and Pauwels 2010, 137). Following this strategy, governments clarify the PSB's role and warrant the traditional principles while avoiding the PSB's participation in commercial activities.

3.4. Public value and citizen interest

Public role and citizen interest: Since its origins, PSBs, especially in Europe, have maintained a democratic role and serves the citizens: "generally, [the] PSB can be considered as 'a major pillar of the democratic process'" (Iyengar 2009; cited in Jacobs, Meeusen, and D'Haenens 2016, 3). A PSB's role and public value has never officially been defined. However, as some articles explain (Esser and Majbritt Jensen 2015; Sjøvaag, Pedersen, and Owren 2019), the PSB should provide citizens with high-quality, diverse, and tolerant content, ensure universal access, and inform each societal group. As the Amsterdam Treaty on PSB (1997) declares, "the system of public broadcasting in the Member States is directly related to the democratic, social, and cultural needs of each society and to the need to preserve media pluralism'" (cited in García de Madariaga, Lamuedra Graván, and Tucho Fernández 2013, 911). Furthermore, PSBs must supply the market failure, ensure citizens are well informed, and utilize public funding to ensure democracy and transparency (Sjøvaag et al. 2019). However, PSBs face several challenges because of the market impact and digitalization, as previously mentioned. Thus, PSBs must find a balance between popular and soft content, which attracts large population sections

(as entertainment or sensationalism), and informative and cultural programs, which helps maintain PSB quality and status (Esser and Majbritt Jensen 2015).

Educate and inform: Education and culture are some of the main values of PSBs. Nevertheless, this type of programming does not attract the private and commercial broadcasters because of its audience share and scant revenues that do not cover the production and distribution costs (Huntsberger 2014; Pajala 2010; Shepperd 2014; Steemers and D'Arma 2012). Therefore, educational and cultural programs are considered a market failure that PSBs should supply and provide, as follows: "there are still likely to be important gaps in market provision, and thus there continues to be a continuing justification for a strong PSB presence in this area" (D'Arma and Labio 2017, 2). Nevertheless, as we have seen, PSBs must find a balance between the commercial success and popularity and the public and cultural values. For this purpose, some public broadcasters have prioritized what Grummell (2009) calls *edinfotainment*—educational and cultural content adapted to the entertainment genre and to popular formats and programs: "educational producers adopted new programme styles and strategies to attract viewers, blending educational material with entertainment and information strategies from mainstream broadcasting" (Grummell 2009, 276).

Distinctiveness: In a more competitive and commercial environment, PSBs must differ from their private counterparts to attract viewers and ensure revenues: "incentivizes the audience to stay within the content of a vertical or create hype around it, thereby increasing the potential for generating advertising revenue" (Ejbye Sørensen 2013, 43). To accomplish this, some broadcasters, including the BBC, have opted for a mixed model: "distinctiveness here seems to be associated with innovation, risk-taking, the overall volume of what the report calls 'PSB genres' in peak-time (identified rather narrowly as 'including specialist factual, arts, classical music and comedy'), 'challenging genres' and programmes, as well as 'service innovation'" (Goddard 2017, 1902). Following this strategy, the BBC was able to create an actual brand as its quality guarantee; thus, the British broadcaster can afford different multiplatform strategies to reach larger audiences in the UK and globally: "provide brand security for viewers, visitors and documentary producers. To be a successful site, it is therefore not just the ability to produce or deliver documentary content that matters, the ability to vouch for its quality is equally important" (Ejbye Sørensen 2013, 39).

Diversity and pluralism: These values are also two main principles of PSBs. In this case, new technologies have supposed an advantage to PSBs while their development has provided public broadcasters with advanced and economical ways to reach all groups of society: "new narrowcast and on-demand services are extending ways of delivering media services, contributing more media, rather than displacing broadcasting" (Debrett 2009, 816). Thus, the expression and inclusion of minorities and ethnicities are guaranteed, as well as the universal access: "from the perspective of social representation, large groups of citizens, compared to minorities, have a greater ability to organise their interests and be visible in the mass media" (Mangani Tarrini 2018, 284). Nevertheless, research in this area (Engelbert and Award 2014; Ala-Fossi and Lax 2016) has proven that new technologies and services depend on economic factors, which is against PSBs' core principles and leads states and governments to regulate PSBs' online activities to truly ensure pluralism and diversity.

4. PSB Studies: Limitations and Future Research

The increasing challenges and difficulties of the PSB and Public Media in maintaining its status and position as a democratic service have enabled a new research agenda for social scientists. In this context, PSBs may be instrumental latin expanding and preserving public and cultural interest in democratic societies as well as ensuring a well-informed citizenship. Based on the review of relevant articles, this study found distinct shortcomings in PSB research over the last decade. This includes a

lack of possible strategies or solutions to face the current PSB challenges, neglect qualitative approaches for PSB programs' quality and features, limited research on multiplatform strategies, and social media management besides the BBC and the absence of a cultural analysis in a broad sense—meaning music, cinema, or stage arts. In the following section, the paper offers critiques and suggestions for how PSB research should progress.

4.1. Providing possible strategies to face PSB challenges

As reflected in the qualitative analysis, the PSB's current situation is challenging because result of the different obstacles public broadcasters must face. Although some studies have identified and defined the phases and inconveniences when funding PSB (Collins 2011; D'Arma 2018; García de Madariaga, Lamuedra Graván, and Tucho Fernández 2013) or adopting contents and formats to digital platforms (Ejbye Sørensen 2013; Moe 2013; Van Dijck and Poell 2015; Stollfuß 2018), this analysis rests on a superficial level, as most of the studies describe the current difficult situation for public broadcasters. However, each study offers accurate and relevant proposals to face it. Thus, research on possible solutions and strategies to properly manage the PSB's hindrances is still required.

To address and solve this critical situation, future PSB research should detect not only the challenges that threaten the PSB's status and its adverse consequences, but its origins, trying to identify the strategies and actors involved. Based on previous public broadcasters' experiences, the successes as well as the failures—such as the DTT implementation or the adoption of mixed models—future research should propose alternative ways to compete with commercial broadcasters and social media sites or reconfigure the funding model. Therefore, if existing and current research has extensively proven that the PSB's current plan has failed, a line of inquiry should proceed in reanalyzing and identifying the previous mistakes to reshape PSB tactics. Furthermore, a qualitative approach is needed to test the possible solutions on different scenarios, such as the distinct multimedia platforms or services of several public broadcasters from different countries, to ensure and validate the efficiency of the potential solutions.

4.2. Public programs' quality and features

Although research on PSB is extensive, most of studies remain on political, financial or regulatory measures (D'Arma and Labio 2017; Ramsey 2016) and few of them focus on the contents' quality and features (Evens, Verdegem, and De Marez 2010; Ginosar and Krispil 2015; Iosifidis 2011; Jõesaar 2011; Moe 2010; Psychogiopoulou 2013). Although some previous studies have analyzed the audiences' perception germane to the PSB status (Horsti and Hultén 2011; López Olano 2017), practically any study considers the public opinion about PSB contents, program structure, and variety or quality. Moreover, regarding PSB's quality, articles included in this review consider it one of the former obligations and features of PSB, especially in Europe, but a clear definition of the chief features and elements that constitute high-quality content or services is still required. Future research should move into the analysis of the viewpoints of critics and the public regarding program themes, genres, and messages as the PSB's target audience includes citizens and not the competitors, stakeholders, or institutions. Therefore, PSB's future research questions should broaden their representative samples, including not only producers and other media professionals, but also spectators and consumers to provide a wide representation of all agents' involved and value the PSB's program content.

4.3. Social media management in different contexts

PSB research germane to digital and multi-platform strategies still deeply relies on the BBC's case (D'Arma 2018; Ejbye Sørensen 2013; Goddard 2017; Ramsey 2018; Starks 2011), because it is the

most successful and international public broadcaster, leaving the question on the adoption of online strategies and services to other public broadcasters. Extant literature has demonstrated that the BBC is the main public broadcaster that has succeeded in the digital environment thanks to its mixed model, partnership with commercial broadcasters, and branding strategy. However, few articles consider the techniques employed by other public services or channels; PSBs of other nations are only mentioned relating to its difficulties and failed strategies but without delving into its causes or possible alternatives. This closed perspective regarding online formats and social media platforms prevent PSB research from discovering efficient ways to manage the technological and digital challenges, because—according to Ayish (2010) and Marko (2015)—a PSB's needs and restrictions differ from one nation to another as the political, social, and cultural features remain dominant. Concisely, future research should dig deep into the digital landscape, multi-platforms services, and social network sites, as this environment is in constant and rapid evolution.

4.4. Improving cultural and artistic analysis

Although education and culture are two of the main PSB obligations (Esser & Majbritt Jensen 2015; Grummel 2009; Pajala 2010; Shepperd 2014), a focus should be placed on artistic and international culture. Previous studies suggest that the cultural and educational values are best suited to political and democratic interests (Huntsberger 2014; Pajala 2010; Shepperd 2014; Steemers and D'Arma 2012); indeed, in some studies, the term "culture" refers to national or local identity (Debrett 2009; Flew 2009; Spasovska and Imre 2015). This implies a lack of a cultural analysis in a broad and general sense. Therefore, PSB future research should consider a wider and more precise definition of "culture." Moreover, the actual value that PSBs offer through high-quality cultural and educational programs should be sought by analyzing the program's content regarding national identity, democratic values, and political information, as well as contemplating other artistic and cultural forms—including stage arts, cinema, or music—that are lacking in current research.

5. Conclusion

The content analysis suggests that the prototypical PSB research is empirical, based on qualitative approaches (case studies), conducted in different countries but mostly concentrated on the European scenario, and based on data originating from an exploration of PSB policies and regulatory framework. In addition, results of the thematic analysis suggest that the strongest research stream relies on the PSB challenges and difficulties emerging from technological and digital development, such as competition and privatization increments and funding struggles. Suggestions for future research should address a special emphasis on possible solutions and strategies to manage the current PSB's hindrances. Furthermore, a reanalysis of the extant strategies adopted by some broadcasters, such as the BBC as well as failed cases, to determine mistakes and causes of the current instability to identify clues as a basis for possible solutions. Beyond the controversial situation, future studies might also consider including actual spectators' critiques and perceptions to rigorously analyze the public contents' quality and features. Finally, PSB's line of inquiry should consider including other artistic and cultural values, beyond national and political sentiment and identity.

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AUTHORS

Tania Lestón-Huerta
Tania Lestón-Huerta is a Master Student of Communication Sciences at Carlos III University in Madrid and her main interests are in new media platforms and sociology of communication sciences. Her latest research activity is concerned with social networking sites and users' behaviour patterns.
tanialh96@gmail.com
Índice H: 0
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1727-357X

Manuel Goyanes
Manuel Goyanes, PhD, Manuel Goyanes, PhD, teaches at Carlos III University in Madrid and his main interests are in media management and sociology of communication sciences. He has written about leadership, news overload and business models. He is the author of *Desafío a la Investigación Estándar en Comunicación. Crítica y Alternativas*, Editorial UOC.
mgoyanes@hum.uc3m.es
Índice H: 13
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6537-9777
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=es&user=ouvI-lQAAAAJ
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Manuel_Goyanes
Scopus ID: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=49863192400

Barbara Mazza
Barbara Mazza, Associate professor and President of master's degree in Organization and Marketing for Business Communication at the Sapienza University. She is the local coordinator of several research projects at national and international level, and a member of IRNIST, International Research

Network in Sport Tourism. The most of her recent publications are on the topics of business communication.

barbara.mazza@uniroma1.it
Índice H: 9
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5981-8729
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=es&user=J8ZW0-EAAAAJ
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Barbara_Mazza6
Scopus ID: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57202984223