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## THE TV AS A RADIO

### ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with an analysis of currently popular practice in Bulgaria – TVs to retranslate their broadcasts directly on the radio. The broadcasted content is mainly news and talk shows, but sometimes it includes movies too. The considered matter will be discussed in the context of penetration of the TV and radio media into the online space.

The multimedia companies owning both TV and radio stations use the radio as a platform for TV content broadcasting. This rises several questions: why there is no, little or insufficient authentic radio content production? Is it possible the existence of radio listener without TV experience at present? Does the TV turn to “audio wallpaper”? Can we consider this single direction cross media approaches as a lifeguard for the radio survival as a media? How all of these look like in the Global Network?

### KEYWORDS

Radio; TV; media convergence; Internet

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The presented text is dedicated to the analysis of current phenomenon in Bulgarian media – live broadcasting of the TV content on the radio. The Bulgarian Law on Radio and Television does not forbid such practices. Moreover, the media’s owners announce it as a step towards media convergence that is realized in Internet by multichannel platforms.

### INTRODUCTION OF THE INVESTIGATED MEDIA

*BTV and BTV radio.* The biggest private national TV channel BTV (established in 2000) is a part of a big international multimedia company, which is a property of the Central European Media Enterprises (CME) since

2010. In Bulgaria the company owns six TV channels, six FM radio stations and eight internet sites/gateways. Media that are part of the organization's portfolio vary both as a style and as an age target audience. We could recognize the aim to cover the complete audience by segmentation of the particular program offers.

BTV radio was launched in the Sofia air in 2009 with intention to give opportunity to the audience to watch the TV program even in "the places where the access to TV and Internet is difficult – in the cars while driving to work or for pleasure, while entertaining outside home etc." (btvradio, 2009). The radio program is closely related to the TV program – it consists of all broadcasted TV news, all current affairs, and comedy shows. The own radio production is limited to the daily broadcast for Sofia city between 1.30 pm and 5.00 pm as well as with radio news emissions in this time range. TV newscasters on duty read the news as texts without using audio materials.

*TV OnAir and Radio OnAir.* OnAir TV was launched in 2011 replacing an existing TV channel. The profile of the media is focused on the business. It is a shared property of the air company Bulgaria Air and the owner of one of the biggest country cable operators – MSAT Cable. The company's portfolio includes radio station, gateway and in-flight magazine "The Inflight magazine of Bulgaria Air". The OnAir radio station (launched in 2011 also) has a transmission license for 31 Bulgarian cities (BG OnAir, 2011); practically this means that it covers almost whole country. The radio program is synchronized with that of the TV (retranslates the news and the current affairs) and the own production is limited to the news emissions at every hour.

These are not the only multimedia companies in Bulgaria that include in their portfolio radio stations. But, the others do not broadcast TV content, although maintaining relations with respect to the musical style (e.g. radio and TV *The Voice*, in which each of the two media has its own program and radio hosts).

## **OUTLINING THE PROBLEMS**

In the present text marketing and management reasons for taking the decisions for broadcasting of the TV program on the radio are not taken into account; they seem very obvious. They are related to the potential possibility to enlarge the TV audience and to maintain the audience already won, reflecting in bigger profits. The main focus of this work is on the media content aspects.

Following problems could be outlined:

## **THE ADVERTISEMENT — THE MUSIC KILLER**

There is no substantial difference between the TV and radio advertisements broadcasting from the point of view of the legal restrictions. In the Bulgarian Law on Radio and Television the commercial TV channels are allowed to broadcast 12 minutes of advertisements per hour; commercial radio stations have 12 minutes advertisements per hour also. For both the self promotions/advertisements are excluded (Law on Radio and Television, 1998). Theoretically, there is no problem for advertising spots to run at both media in parallel. However, in practice, the advertiser frequently chooses to pay only for the TV and not for the radio advertisement. This reflects in the advertisements spots duration difference, which frequently appears as unused time during the radio broadcast. In such cases the fast finishing advertisement block must be filled with additional content, before the continuation of the retranslated TV content. Common practice for the reviewed radio stations is to broadcast music. Moreover, songs and not instrumentals, that are frequently used in the radio broadcasting as a glue elements. It is well known fact that people listens radio mostly for the music, which means that respect to this is more than needed (Eurostat, 2002). But in the considered cases the approach to the songs is very rough – they are stopped at the moment when the broadcasted TV content becomes available again. Sometimes this happens in the middle of the chorus, without fading out and even without finishing the musical phrase. This breaks the integrity of the piece and results in education of the listeners to some extent of an esthetically unjustified disrespect to the musical art. This element shows the *deep obedience in which the radio is placed with respect to the television*. Radio practically *does not have rights on its own broadcast*. It is a continuation of the television. This reflects on the most basic parts of the radio content. Also, it is interesting to point out the name of the radio – it contains the word “television”; it shows its nature – a radio that is some kind of television.

## **THE TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE — DOES THE LANGUAGE OF THE MEDIA CHANGE ALSO?**

Although belonging to the same family of electronic media the radio and television in their traditional form have different characteristics, which reflect on the media language. The radio is a “pure” audio media and it does not rely on pictures, replacing them with authentic listener’s images created using words, music and sound effects. The television relays on pictures

as main information carrier, which complements the journalistic narration. However, what happens in case of mechanical transfer of the television content in the radio with respect to the means of expression?

In the investigated case, the television does not respect the radio particularities at all. In the both considered examples, radio appears as a “supplementary” media and not as an independent one. That is why it re-translates ready content not consistent with its specifics. The TV reports are intended to be WATCHED and not to be LISTENED. The TV presenters usually say “See more about the topic”. The radio audience cannot see anything. That is because the TV language is not intended to work on the listeners’ fantasy. The listener does not see the man (which the viewer is invited to see on screen) and frequently there are no additional audio marks which could help listener to imagine him (sound, music). In practice, *the substantial part of the communication/information content is lost during its transfer from the television to the radio*. For example, when a graphical and numerical data are shown on the TV the radio listener cannot follow the subject of the conversation. The new television effects (as multimedia for presentation of content via virtual studio) on the radio lose their meaning.

Moreover, *in many cases the listener cannot understand simply anything*. This happens mostly in the comedy shows (e.g. BTV radio broadcasts every day the repetitions of the daily talk show *Slavi’s show*, as well as weakly *The comedians* show and a dance competition). These shows rely on the actors sketches, which satirize given characters and their behaviors. The actor’s play involves strong body play and mimics. All these elements cannot be provided to the listener by means of the radio if not translated to its own language using sound effects and the accompanying the voice nonverbal elements. Long seconds (sometimes about from 15 to 20) the listeners hear laughs from the TV studio audience but have no idea about the reason. The history of the radio knows such techniques as successful, but usually they are related to a traceable action. When the action is soundless (wordless) and body performed, listener has nothing to associate it with in order to understand it.

On the other hand, of course, the TV broadcasts built on the principle “talking heads” practically “enter” the radio completely naturally. Such broadcasts are also journalistic discussions performed statically as action and are interview based. Taking into account that they do not rely on the picture as the information support column but the voice they are very close to the radio language. In this case the TV shows only as “audio wallpaper” that permits not to be watched, but only listened. In other words, *the TV turns*

to radio as a background media for viewers. By not requiring concentrated watch in practice, it provides radio conversations only technically carried by the TV. In these cases the experiment “TV on the radio” worth it. It does not require translation among different media languages. For example, Bulgaria On Air is much closer to the radio nature because the TV profile is the economical journalism while BTV radio broadcasts all the mother-TV content which is with multi-profile content.

Outside these programs the question arises – why the TVs use such transfusions towards the radio when part of the content remains unintelligible by the audience? Possible answer, apart from the economic reasons, we could find in the *intention of the television to cultivate (to grow) viewers with new means*. Moreover, it is not a question for attraction of new viewers, which will face the problems of misunderstanding which already have been pointed out, but with keeping the old ones, i.e. it is relied mainly on the *listeners with existing TV experience*. Those, who know the TV shows, know the participants, the basic elements and therefore could figure out the missing elements in the radio messages.

### **OWN PRODUCTION — RADIO SIMULATIONS**

In order to justify the necessity of their existence, besides the broadcasting of foreign (although relative) program, BTV radio presents their own product also – *For Sofia*. The concept of this program is to be broadcasted every working day between 1.30 pm and 5.00 pm, when the TV shows soap opera series. This should be the exactly the place to produce authentic radio production. In practice, however, it frequently is focused on the reminding the stories from the morning blocks which concern Sofia city and the country, as far as the country problems are considered to be important for the capital. Video stories or audio fragments from someone’s utterance are repeated. In other words, we could say that *the radio simulates its own content production*. Of course, the program frequently includes own stories that are covered only by the radio and are not “absorbed” by the company’s TV or websites. Radio OnAir does not produce its own content.

In this sense, the question how the radio and TV interlace is viewed in the context of media convergence and the existence of the classical media in the network becomes interesting. Both investigated radio stations do not have podcasts on their websites. This is reasonable since they do not have their own production. Radio Bulgaria OnAir even does not have its own website but is presented as a part of a bigger company. Both media are born

together with their Internet appearance, which defines their peculiarity. If for the traditional radio stations their Internet appearance using new audio-visual means presents a chance to win new audience, for the considered media such process cannot be observed. A new form of existence of radio is born, in which radio is not the leading part but exists only fictitiously as a name. Even platforms as Facebook cannot be used to communicate with the radio team; they only preprint messages from the company's website. We could conclude that in the presented case convergence is not expressed in terms of usage of all present media possibilities, but of domination of texts and visual content on the audio content. This fact is very interesting taking into account the research conclusions that most online phenomena borrow the radio specifics – its possibility to be a “background media” (Twitter), to be a private media (email, personal messages), to use sounds to attract attention (Skype), etc. (Crawford, 2009). The sound and the radio haven't lost its potential to carry information and entertainment values. That's why experiments in the online environment in the future will move towards expansion of their audio content.

Hosting the TV in the radio that we investigated in the case of BTV radio and Radio Bulgaria OnAir as is not only a commercial instrument, but is a platform for new experiments in the field of audio usage also. However, this cannot be useful when radio remains only as a name. At this stage we could point out that *radio genre disappears, the manner of radio listening is changing, the television occupies new platform to enable continuation of its personal existence.*

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