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Breaking Radio Boundaries: A new environment for Government Advertising aimed at Young People

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Abstract:

Sequentiality, ephemerality and unidirectionality are reception properties that have traditionally characterized radio messages. However, the emergence of online media as platforms for broadcasting audio messages is contributing to the transformation in the uses and listening patterns of radio content. This fact turns out to be particularly interesting when defining relational communication strategies targeted at young people, those belonging to the digital natives' generation. For this public, whose learning processes are developed in a fully digital environment, the possibilities of downloading, copying, replaying and/or sharing sound files, at any time, from any place and on any device, fit their consumption habits and their way of interacting with media. This interaction should be taken into account when planning public service announcement campaigns aimed at informing, educating and raising young people's consciousness about specific social issues; that means, it should be used to promote that government objectives reach this public and, therefore, strengthening the opportunity of establishing a closer relationship with it. Within this context, the objective of this paper is to analyze the data provided by the Spanish government reports on public advertising campaigns from 2006 to 2010—selecting those campaigns specifically targeted at young people—along with the first results obtained from an investigation conducted by the Publi-radio research group from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. These data will be used to compare the media consumption habits of youth, defined for the purposes of this paper as individuals from 14 to 25 years old, and the advertising strategies carried out by the government, both in terms of media selection and investment.

Keywords: government advertising, radio messages, audio messages, digital natives

Introduction

Internet, like any other media of communication, determines the character of the messages that it disseminates. Taking an analytical look at the audio components of online communications, one is struck by the degree to which the characteristics of audio transmission through online platforms have deviated from those of traditional radio broadcasting (sequentiality, ephemerality, and unidirectionality) and have taken on new characteristics unfettered by either temporal or spatial limitations. While audio continues to be audio, sound transmitted via the Internet carries the added dimension of existing in the form of a digital file. The revolutionary possibilities of the digital file have made online audio transmission especially attractive to digital natives—young

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people born and raised in a world of advanced technology—and has shaped both their notions of how information is accessed and their media consumption habits.

The interactive potential of online content has been exploited to deliver a wide variety of messages, including advertising and public communications. This paper reports on a recent study of audio public service announcement campaigns undertaken by the Spanish government to inform, educate and raise the consciousness of young people about specific social issues that was carried out within the framework of a larger, ongoing research project titled '*La sono-esfera digital como nuevo entorno de recepción de mensajes sonoros entre los jóvenes. Estudio de los hábitos de escucha para el desarrollo de nuevos formatos de publicidad institucional*' (The Digital Sonosphere as a New Space to Communicate with Young People: A Study of Listener Habits for the Development of new PSA Formats (CSO2009-12236)² conducted by Publiradio, a research group devoted to the study of radio communication and advertising based at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.³

We will begin with a contextualisation of the three elements that make up the public information and communication process: the government that issues the messages, the content of the media message itself (within the scope of this study specifically the audio message), and the digital natives who form the audience for these messages. We will then describe an analysis of yearly reports issued by the Spanish government on public information and communication since 2006, which was undertaken to identify public service campaigns aimed at the 14-25 age bracket carried out during the period 2006–2010. This will be followed with a comparison between data related to different aspects of the planning and production of these campaigns such as budget allocation and choice of media and the media consumption habits of young Spaniards. In addition to the quantitative data available on listener habits, we were able to extract qualitative data for this study from a prior focus group of university students convened as part of the larger project CSO2009-12236. Taken together, these data sets have allowed us to explore a possible correlation between government planning of PSA campaigns aimed at youth audiences and young people's media consumption habits - information essential for designing new high-impact strategies that take best advantage of the opportunities offered by the new digital media.

An overview of government advertising and public communications in Spain

The Spanish government defines '*Publicidad y Comunicación Institucional*' as 'the generic name for messages the government issues to citizens as a part of its executive functions'.⁴ The majority of these messages are public service announcements produced and published or broadcast via the communications media to inform and educate the public and foster citizen awareness of issues of interest to the society at large. Alfonso Cortés notes that 'in today's highly mediatised world, government information agencies now perform tasks related to socialisation that were earlier carried out by other public institutions such as schools' (Cortés, 2011: 5). The same author confirms that 'as the advertising format of public service announcements offers the possibility to communicate messages in the government's own interest, government-issued public service announcements must reflect pedagogical values and educate the public in the broadest sense of the word, promoting social awareness and consciousness on humanitarian and other important issues' (Cortés, 2006: 1).

Government advertising and public service announcements have been regulated in Spain since 2005, when *Ley 29/2005 de Publicidad y Comunicación Institucional*,⁵ (the Law on Advertising and Institutional Communication

² Project funded by the Spanish Ministry for Science and Innovation.

³ Publiradio is a research group devoted to radio communication and advertising led by Armand Balsebre, PhD and coordinated by Juan José Perona, PhD under the auspices of the Departament de Comunicació Audiovisual i Publicitat II at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. In addition to the aforementioned academics, other members include Margarida Blanch, M^a Luz Barbeito, Dolors Bernadas, Daniel Casals and Ana M^a Enrique, (PhDs) and researchers Anna Fajula, Esteve Crespo, Núria Arcos, Susana Giménez and Blanca Perona.

⁴ <http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/CPCL/index.htm>

⁵ Law published in the government gazette *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 312, 30 December 2005: http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/NR/rdonlyres/4033607A-A01F-4596-8035-A622167A2F61/99712/Ley29_2005.pdf

enacted in 2005) established four criteria that all such communications must fulfil: public utility, professional quality, transparency, and faithfulness to the government's established mission. This law also requires the government to draft a yearly institutional advertising and communications plan that provides an outline of all campaigns it intends to conduct during the following year. Among other items, these plans must specify the objectives, budget, timeframes, media and target audience for each campaign. The proposed annual plan is approved by the Council of Ministers each January. This law also requires the government to publish a detailed year-end report accounting for all the campaigns that were actually carried out.⁶

In 2010, the Spanish Secretariat of State for Communications issued a practical guide⁷ that specified the types of government communications campaigns that could be directed towards citizens. The list of approved categories indicated in this guide included campaigns that provided information of general interest or utility, campaigns that fostered positive habits, attitudes and social change, as well as campaigns that promoted state entities and agencies such as the Public Treasury, and *Loterías y Apuestas del Estado*, the agency responsible for state lotteries. The guide prohibited campaigns designed to sway public opinion in a partisan or political manner, any communication that contained discriminatory messages or incited violence, or campaigns that could be considered to constitute self-promotion (for example, communications about public works and services that could serve as propaganda for a specific administration).

Based on the above, it is clear that public communications issued by the Spanish government to its citizens are not restricted to information, education and socialisation initiatives; they also include announcements that contain commercial messages. Cortés (2011) divides public communications into four categories according to their purpose: socioeducational, informational, commercial and electoral. The first addresses the socialising function of government; the second covers information provided to citizens concerning issues such as recycling and emergency warnings and measures; the third refers to communications of a commercial nature and includes advertising campaigns related to tourism, lottery operations, and other state-run or state-promoted industries; and the fourth (prohibited) category covers any type of campaign that could be construed as electioneering.

It is worth noting that the announcements given the highest priority (and therefore the largest budget allocations) have been devoted to promoting healthy habits, providing information about citizens' rights, publicizing opportunities for public employment and recruitment for the armed services. Through its direct communications campaigns, the executive branch publically assumes its responsibility to educate and socialise its citizens, raise public awareness and bring government closer to the people. According to Rom, Sorribas and Curto, 'Government public communication is used as a vehicle for transmitting two broad categories of messages: information of public interest and promotion of civic attitudes and values' (Rom, Sorribas and Curto, 2009, p. 3).

Another issue that came to the fore during our study was government expenditure on public communications—an important point to consider given that it is one of the most important advertisers in the Spanish media market. Rom, Sorribas and Curto are quick to point out that 'the number of public administrations that exist throughout Spain at both the national and territorial levels make government one of the advertising sector's most important and most geographically distributed clients' (Rom, Sorribas and Curto, 2009, p. 2). If we compare figures for government advertising expenditures with those for the private sector over the same five-year period (2006-2010) provided by Infoadex,⁸ the Spanish government ranks among the top ten advertisers in Spain.⁹

⁶ Government reports on its advertising and public communications campaigns '*Planes e Informes de Publicidad y Comunicación Institucional*' 2006-2010: <http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/CPCI/PlanesEInformes.htm>

⁷ Guidelines provided by the Secretary of State for Communications: http://www.agenciasaeacp.es/publicaciones/docs/guia_practica.pdf

⁸ Infoadex is a research firm that publishes reports and data on the advertising sector and tracks advertising spending in Spain (<http://www.infoadex.es/>).

⁹ In 2006, the government was the second most important advertiser in terms of expenditure in the Spanish market; in 2007, it was the country's largest advertising client, outspending even Telefónica, which invested 173 million Euros in advertising the same year. However, it dropped to third place in 2008, fifth place in 2009 and once again to seventh place in 2010.

Table 1 below provides figures for both total Spanish government expenditure on public communications and the amount it specifically spends on media costs.¹⁰ The percentages represent year-to-year variations.

	2006	2007	Var. 07/06	2008	Var. 08/07	2009	Var. 09/08	2010	Var. 10/09
Total expend.	209,767,393€	269,523,547€	28.5%	134,515,104€	- 50.1%	95,296,027€	-29.2%	80,832,130€	-15.2%
Media costs	168,388,000€	234,033,000€	39.0%	116,039,200€	- 50.4%	77,261,600€	-33.4%	70,150,700€	-9.2%

Table 1. Spanish government expenditure for public service announcements and advertising
Source: Authors based on Spanish government reports *Informes de Publicidad y Comunicación Institucional* 2006-2010

It should be noted that the extreme variation between 2007 and 2008 corresponds to a recategorisation of specific campaigns previously deemed to fall under the category of public service announcement as commercial advertising (such as the ones for RENFE and Turespaña). The declines in spending registered in 2009 and 2010 correspond to budget reductions provoked by the world financial crisis, a factor that is also reflected in the decline in the volume of campaigns launched by the Spanish government during this same period. These fell from a total of 186 in 2006 to a total of 130 in 2008. Only 100 campaigns were conducted in 2009, and even fewer (86) were run in 2010.

As a major advertiser, the Spanish government is aware that the public service advertising it produces must adapt to new times and changing media habits. The Secretary of State for Communications itself has recognised this need: 'Traditional advertising has changed with the evolution of the media. New media such as TDT, mobile technology and Internet have changed the way citizens relate to government and the messages they receive. Advertising is increasingly personalised and participative' (Secretaría de Estado de Comunicación, 2010, p.1). For the purposes of this study, we have focused on how changes in the way that radio listeners receive transmitted messages and how new media consumer habits, especially in terms of the new dimensions these messages acquire when they are transmitted via the Internet, have had an impact on the way that the Spanish government carries out its public service communications campaigns.

Internet: the transition from radio message to audio message

As we have pointed out in the introduction to this paper, the way a radio message has traditionally been received by a listener has been conditioned by the characteristics of the media itself: its sonority, sequentiality, ephemerality, and unidirectionality (Huertas and Perona, 1999). Nevertheless, digital technology has opened up new possibilities for portability and interactivity, characteristics that give the transmitted message new dimensions. The only property that aural messages transmitted through an online environment share with messages transmitted by traditional radio is sonority. The move to digital technology has been followed by a shift to a digital vocabulary; the term 'radio' message has been widely abandoned in favour of the more encompassing term 'audio' message.

An audio message can be offered in copiable and downloadable files. It can be reproduced, replayed and retrieved. Digital technology is not linear; it facilitates initiation of play at any point in a file. Like traditional radio messages, digital sound messages can be listened to while carrying out other activities.

¹⁰ The total expenditure includes media, design, and production costs as well as agency commissions; that is to say, the total cost of the campaigns. The media expenditure refers exclusively to the budget allocation for distribution through television, radio, Internet, the press, etc.

The traditionally passive audience for media messages is evolving into a more technologically savvy and proactive listenership with a wider range of media skills. In an environment marked by connectivity and interactivity, relationships maintained through the mass media have been transformed; the listener who was formerly a passive receptor of transmitted messages has now acquired an active role. As Rost (2004) has noted, interactivity allows individuals to define their patterns of consumption free of the restraints of time and place by means of an ever-increasing range of connection devices (selective interactivity) and offers them the possibility to share contents or provide feedback (communicative interactivity).

The traditional mode of radio communication undergoes a modification in an online environment: 'the order and synchronous time inherent to a narrative radio sequence based in the here and now is broken by diachronic, on-demand consumption of pre-recorded sound' (Martínez Costa, 2004: 9). The nature of the new media also allows people to personalise the way they consume media content and allows advertisers to home in on specific audiences and thereby make the most of advertising campaigns - in the case of this study, government communications and advertising campaigns carried out in Spain.

The conversion of radio content into audio content has opened up a wide range of broadcast possibilities. Audio content is now transmitted through podcasts (RSS), personalised Internet radio or music sites like Spotify. The integration of radio into the Internet has also generated a wider range of complementary features that incorporate data, images, graphics and video.

Digital Natives: a generation in synch with audio messages

The characteristics of audio content transmitted via the Internet have a special relevance for adolescents and young people in their early and mid-twenties. For the purposes of this study, we have established an age bracket of 14 to 25 years for the demographic group referred to as 'digital natives' - young people born and raised in the Internet era.

Although the term digital native was defined and popularised by Marc Prensky in 2001, Prensky himself noted that the generation gap between 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' was detected as far back as the 1990s.¹¹ With the passage of time and the rapid advance of digital technologies, the term digital native has evolved from referring to those individuals who grew up parallel to the development of digital technology (Merino 2010) to describing young people whose socialisation since birth has taken place in a digital environment: 'These digital natives are accustomed since childhood to be surrounded by technological devices; as features of the primary context in which they have been socialised, these devices have always been part of their vernacular' (Merino, 2010: 209). Both the first wave of young people labelled as digital natives (marked by their adaptation to a technological environment), and the second wave, (distinguished by their lifelong exposure to it), conform to the characteristics that Prensky attributed to individuals caught up in the digital revolution. He observed that 'Digital natives are used to receive information really fast. They like to parallel process and multi-task [...] They prefer random access (like hypertext). They function best when networked' (Prensky, 2001: 2). These traits determine the manner in which this demographic group interacts with and uses communications media, which is driven by their need for connectivity and interactivity and their multitasking capabilities. Seen from this perspective, Internet would seem to be the ideal communication media for reaching out to young people. The following statistics bear this out.

Figures provided by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) show a steady increase in Internet penetration throughout the Spanish population (see table 2). Moreover, they point out that penetration in the 16–24 year age group is now close to 100%. In reference to these young people, La Sociedad de la Información en

¹¹ Marc Prensky wrote a post in his blog in 2006 that cited various authors who had spoken of digital immigrants and natives prior to his 2001 work on the subject and used the same or similar terms for this demographic group in: <http://www.marcprensky.com/blog/archives/000045.html>.

España 2010, a report issued by Fundación Telefónica, offers the observation that Internet 'is considered by many of them to be a fundamental part of their lives' (Fundación Telefónica, 2011: 42).

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
16-24 age group	82.8	86.3	90.3	92.3	94.1
Total survey group	47.9	52.0	56.7	59.8	64.2

Table 2. % of population that had used Internet during the three months prior to the annual survey
Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística (<http://www.ine.es>)

Results of a May 2010 survey on media consumption carried out by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas de España (CIS) support the INE figures (see tables 3 and 4).

		Television	Radio	Press	Internet	None NR/DK
for entertainment	18-24 age group	43.0	3.0	2.1	49.4	2.5
	Total survey group	59.9	13.0	5.3	19.5	2.3
for educational purposes	18-24 age group	14.8	4.2	11.0	65.0	5.0
	Total survey group	28.2	13.7	14.0	36.4	7.7
for information	18-24 age group	38.8	5.5	19.8	32.5	3.4
	Total survey group	46.2	15.7	18.8	16.0	3.3

Table 3. Replies to a question asking individuals to compare their usage of four different types of media (%)
Source: CIS Barometer May 2010 (<http://www.cis.es>)

	Television	Radio	Press	Internet	None NR/DK
18-24 age group	28.3	2.1	3.0	65.4	1.2
Total survey group	50.2	14.1	6.0	28.0	1.7

Table 4. % Survey participants choice in response to a question concerning which media they would choose if they only had access to one during a one-month period
Source: CIS Barometer May 2010 (<http://www.cis.es>)

These statistics indicate that the youth segment of the survey group feel a strong preference for Internet and give radio a very low rating. Nevertheless, that picture changes if one takes in account the figures for media penetration contained in the report of the *Baròmetre de la Comunicació i la Cultura* (fig. 1), a survey carried out in Catalonia by the Fundació Audiències de la Comunicació i la Cultura (FUNDACC).

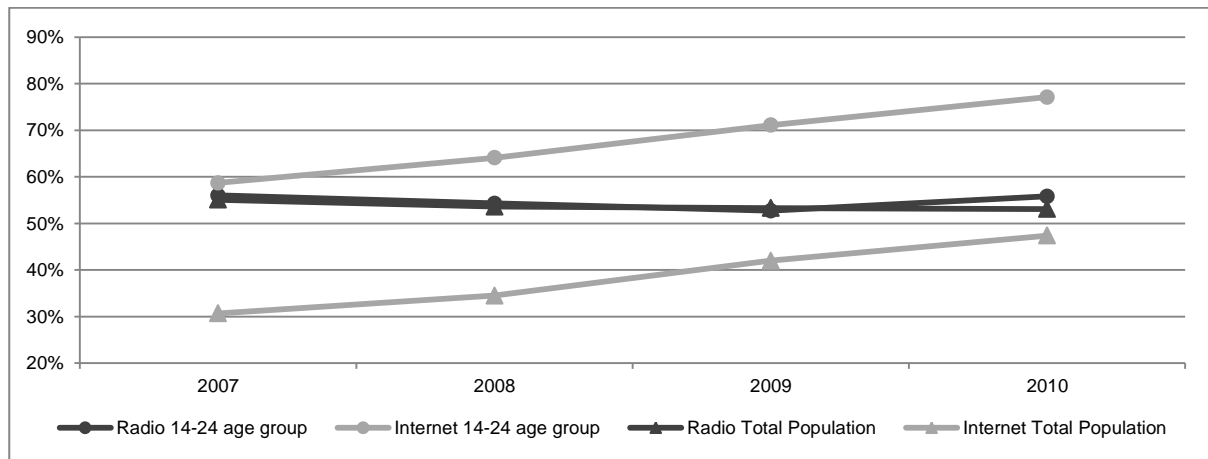


Figure 1. Evolution of radio and Internet penetration in Catalonia 2007–2010
Source: *Baròmetre de la Comunicació i la Cultura* (<http://www.fundacc.org>)

Although the figures contained in this report refer exclusively to Catalonia, they are in line with data for the entire country contained in the *Estudio General de Medios* (EGM) report, which also situates radio penetration for young people at 50%.¹² These high audience levels hold throughout the general population with only minor yearly fluctuations. It should be noted that young listeners are more interested in music programming than in general programming. Other data generated by the barometer survey indicate that Internet penetration is rising for the 14-24 year age group (a group that already had demonstrated high levels of penetration) as well as for the general population. EGM figures for Internet are in line with those for Catalonia, showing a higher penetration for young people (62.8% compared to 38.4% for the general population).¹³

In establishing links between radio and Internet, one should take into account statistics for online radio audiences. The results published in *Dieta Mediàtica i Cultural dels Joves 2010*, a report on a study of media consumption carried out in Catalonia by the FUNDACC, showed a higher percentage of online radio penetration in the 14-25 age bracket (25.7%), than in the adult population (11.9%).

A final factor that must be taken into account is the facility with which young people adapt to new media devices such as computers, mobile phones and tablets. The Fundación Telefónica report cites individuals in the 14–26 age group and business professionals as being the drivers of ‘multi-device connectivity, for both leisure and communication needs including round-the-clock access to Internet’ (Fundación Telefónica, 2011, p. 78). The media habits of today’s digital natives, therefore, make it necessary to communicate with them via the channels they use and through a variety of platforms and devices. It is also necessary to employ technology that engages the hypertext and multitasking skills of active and interconnected media users, whose ways of accessing resources are very different from those of the group of digital immigrants cited by Prensky.

Youth as the target audience for government advertising and public communications

As we have observed up to this point, the digital environment redefines the communication process, both in terms of the message and its audience. As a high volume advertiser with a mandate to communicate with

¹² Data extracted from the third annual report (covering February to November) of a variable triannual survey *Estudio General de Medios* carried out by the Asociación para la Investigación de Medios de Comunicación (<http://www.aimc.es>).

¹³ Both the Barometer and EGM data sets correspond to a variable listenership poll concerning subjects’ radio consumption on the day previous to the survey. For this reason, Internet penetration figures are lower than those cited by INE (94.1%) that represent the 3 months immediately prior to the survey.

citizens, the Spanish government cannot afford to ignore this reality, especially in its efforts to communicate with young people. This study was undertaken to provide an analysis of government advertising and public communication aimed at the nation's youth in order to verify whether the Spanish government has successfully adapted its communication strategies to the new digital landscape. Our analysis has been based on data taken from annual public reports on government advertising and public communication released for the period 2006–2010.

As this paper focuses on the age group referred to as the generation of digital natives, the data contained in the aforementioned government reports were screened to extract information concerning government campaigns specifically geared towards young people between the ages of 14 and 25. Campaigns directed to a wide youth audience were selected for analysis. The themes and objectives of these central government campaigns largely coincided with initiatives pursued by the Instituto de la Juventud (INJUVE), an agency that functions under the auspices of The Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality (www.injuve.es), as both seek to transmit consciousness-raising messages to a potentially high-risk population group while its members are still in the process of developing core social values. A decision was made to exclude short-term campaigns addressed to very limited audiences. After deliberation, 49 campaigns were chosen for analysis (see table 5).

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total campaigns by year	11	11	11	7	9
Total expenditure	53,394,852 €	52,281,174 €	45,352,102 €	31,292,438 €	29,579,418 €
Media expenditure	43,198,596 €	48,777,853 €	39,208,605 €	23,582,530 €	24,660,797 €
% of total gov't expenditure	25.5%	19.4%	33.7%	32.8%	36.6%

Table 5. Government expenditure represented by youth campaigns chosen for the study
Source: Authors based on government reports *Publicidad y Comunicación Institucional* for the period 2006-2010

The figures in table 5 show that although the number of youth campaigns was small compared with the total number of campaigns carried out by the Spanish government during the period (49 of a total of 668), the year-over-year percentage of total expenditure allocated to campaigns directed to young people was very high. This relative weight in comparison to budget totals can be partially explained by the scope and scale of a few large general campaigns for which young people made up a large part of the target audience, such as those carried out by the Dirección General de Tráfico (Spain's national traffic management agency known as the DGT) or those dealing with gender violence. The DGT campaign included publicity for a special program that offered reduced fees on mandatory driver's education courses for young people and the gender violence campaign included publicity for *Foro Juventud y Violencia de Género*, an international conference on youth and gender violence. Table 6 breaks down Spanish government expenditure on media campaigns directed towards young people during the period 2006–2010 by theme and purpose.

Campaign themes	Ministries ¹⁴	Objectives	Years	Average annual expenditure
Anti-piracy	Culture	Fight against digital piracy and promote legal acquisition of digital content	2008, 2010	969,274 €
Promotion of culture	Culture	Promote reading and culture	2008–2010	1,110,595 €
Armed forces recruitment	Defence	Showcase the armed services as a career option and boost enlistment	2006–2010	7,558,729 €
Professional training and language instruction	Education	Promote professional training as an alternative to university studies and foster an interest in the study of foreign languages	2006–2008	5,913,582 €
Highway safety	Interior Ministry (traffic agency)	Promote responsible driving habits and prevent highway accidents	2006–2010	14,450,730 €
Tobacco, alcohol and drugs	Health and Social Policy	Raise awareness about the dangers of tobacco, alcoholic beverages and drugs to reduce youth consumption	2006–2007	6,332,690 €
Sexual education	Health and Social Policy	Prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually-transmitted diseases	2006–2010	1,570,604 €
Tolerance	Labour and Immigration	Foster peaceful coexistence and respect for a multicultural society	2007	20,275 €
Gender violence	Labour and Immigration/ Equality	Raise the awareness of society about gender violence and fight to end violence against women	2006–2010	3,770,977 €
Housing and emancipation	Labour and Immigration/ Equality /Housing	Publicize and distribute economic aid for young people seeking to establish their own residence for the first time	2006–2008	2,325,483 €

Table 6. Thematic breakdown of campaigns considered for this study
Source: Authors based on government reports *Publicidad y Comunicación Institucional* for the period 2006-2010

We will now move on from this general description of the campaigns chosen for our analysis to a comparison of the Spanish government's annual expenditure on youth campaigns and its overall expenditure on advertising and public information campaigns, as well as a comparison of the media employed in youth and general campaigns.

Government advertising in a digital context: the coexistence of radio and Internet

As previously mentioned, the research project of which this study is a part has focused on two communications media in particular: radio and Internet. To facilitate year-over-year comparison, figures for both the number of campaigns and campaign expenditures included in this article have been expressed in percentages of annual totals. No comparison of absolute figures has been made in order to avoid the distortions that would have been inevitably caused by the fall in government spending on advertising and public communications every year since 2008 in reaction to the current economic crisis. Any variation in the number of campaigns carried out in a particular media or in expenditures from one year to the next must be understood within the context of budget cuts that have affected communications media across the board. We have also chosen not to compare expenditures for various media, as the variation in rates and costs from one communications medium to another

¹⁴ As names of ministries varies from one administration to another, names in this table have been taken from the most recent report (2010).

makes establishing a correlation between expenditure and volume of activity impossible. For example, if one compares the cost of providing the same level of media coverage via television and radio, the cost of the former will always be higher than that of the latter.¹⁵ With this explanation of the factors we have taken into consideration, we are now ready to present the data, which is the principal objective of this paper.

We will begin by comparing government expenditures in both media (figures 2 and 3). These statistical charts show that government expenditure on Internet advertising has been steadily rising in comparison to its expenditure on radio advertising. Despite minor fluctuations, this trend has been sustained during the five years covered by our study (2006–2010).

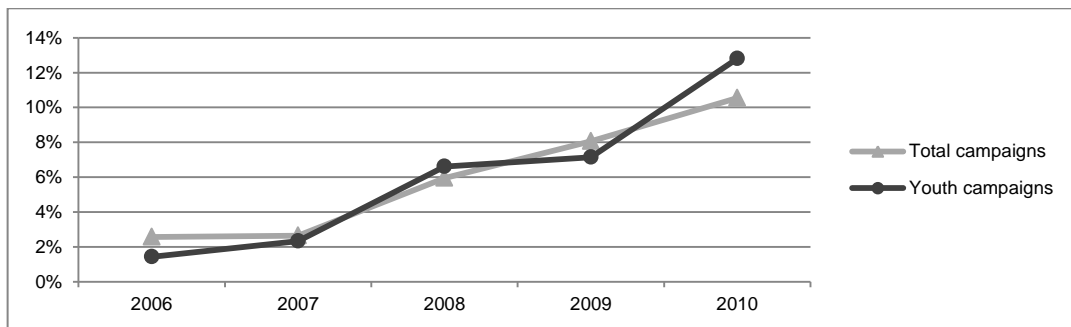


Figure 2. Comparison of total government expenditure on Internet advertising and government expenditure on Internet for youth campaigns (%)

Source: Authors based on government reports *Publicidad y Comunicación Institucional* for the period 2006-2010

Figure 2 shows the growing year-over-year weight of Internet expenditure in government advertising and communication budgets, a trend that can be observed in both the government’s total budget for advertising and communications and its expenditures related to campaigns specifically directed to youth audiences. One can clearly observe a surge in Internet spending during 2010, although analysis of future expenditure would be required to ascertain whether this represents a temporary spike or marks a permanent shift to Internet as part of a strategy to increase the impact of government media campaigns on young audiences.

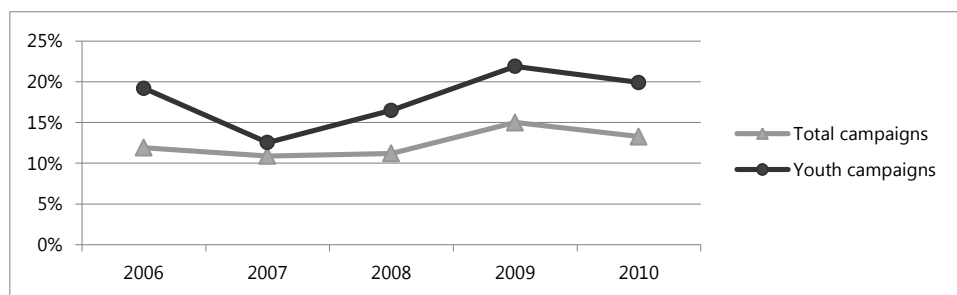


Figure 3. Comparison of total government expenditure on radio advertising and government expenditure on radio for youth campaigns (%)

Source: Authors based on government reports *Publicidad y Comunicación Institucional* for the period 2006-2010

¹⁵ Government expenditure in absolute numbers for the main media employed during the five years studied (figures expressed in thousands of €): Total campaigns. Television: 65,260 (2006); 93,470 (2007); 48,383 (2008); 27,830 (2009); 25,934 (2010). Press: 61,305 (2006); 70,774 (2007); 22,185 (2008); 16,972 (2009); 11,820 (2010). Radio: 20,046 (2006); 25,485 (2007); 12,990 (2008); 11,591 (2009); 9,308 (2010). Internet: 4,330 (2006); 6,193 (2007); 6,909 (2008); 6,228 (2009); 7,395 (2010). Youth campaigns selected for this study. Television: 23,773 (2006); 26,076 (2007); 20,325 (2008); 10,359 (2009); 9,488 (2010). Press: 6,211 (2006); 8,258 (2007); 4,234 (2008); 3,636 (2009); 2,130 (2010). Radio: 8,290 (2006); 6,120 (2007); 6,463 (2008); 5,164 (2009); 4,907 (2010). Internet: 620 (2006); 1,135 (2007); 2,594 (2008); 1,685 (2009); 3,158 (2010).

Radio expenditure has been fairly stable and has maintained its weight in overall government media expenditure during the period 2006–2010. Nevertheless, it should be noted that its weight has been percentually higher in campaigns directed to young audiences. This can be explained by the lesser emphasis given to print media for government campaigns targeted towards younger audiences; in such campaigns, the default distribution of expenditure favours radio and other media.

Official reports on government advertising and communications break down data on government advertising and communication campaigns by the medium employed. Figure 4 illustrates the percentages of all advertising and communications campaigns carried out by the government during the period studied that employed radio and Internet.

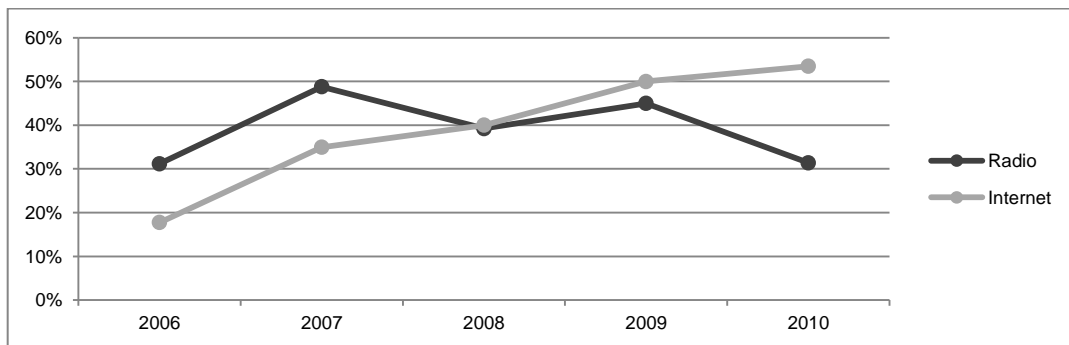


Figure 4. % of total campaigns that employed radio and Internet

Source: Authors based on government reports *Publicidad y Comunicación Institucional* for the period 2006-2010

It can be clearly observed that while the number of campaigns that integrated radio held steady with only slight annual variations, a growing number was carried out through the Internet. However, if radio is compared with all other media, it is losing ground. In 2006, radio was the second most frequently used medium by the Spanish government for its advertising and communications campaigns (58 campaigns), only outranked by the press (122 campaigns). The Internet ranked fifth in 2006, with 33 campaigns. However, by 2010, the Internet had become the second most important medium in terms of the number of government campaigns in which it was employed (46), only slightly less than those carried out in the press (53). Statistics for the same year show that by 2010 radio had become the fourth most employed medium. That year, it was used in the same number of campaigns as outdoor advertising (27). These figures clearly illustrate the swift ascendance of the Internet in terms of its use in advertising and communications campaigns. The gains made by Internet in the niche market comprised of young audiences are made even clearer in a direct comparison of the government’s use of radio and Internet for youth campaigns provided in figure 5.

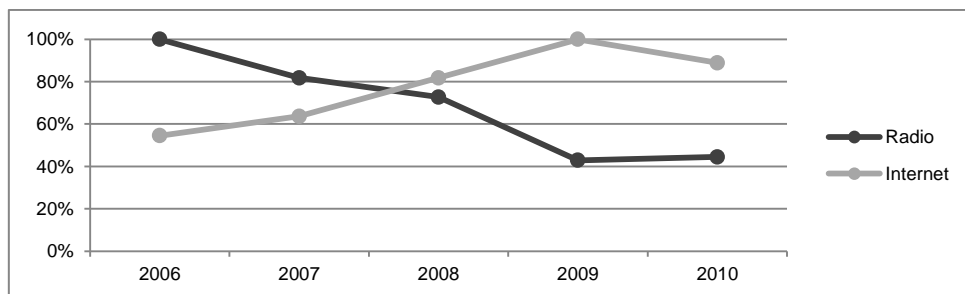


Figure 5. % of youth campaigns that employed radio and Internet

Source: Authors based on government reports *Publicidad y Comunicación Institucional* for the period 2006-2010

The orientation of government media campaigns towards a growing audience of digital natives gives online media an increasing edge over radio. In 2006, radio was employed in 100% of government campaigns addressed to young people and was the government's media of choice to reach this audience. This percentage has been steadily dropping. In 2010, radio stood equal with the press with 40% of this market—below Internet, magazines and outdoor advertising. Internet, on the other hand, has made spectacular gains in the same market. Whereas this medium was used in half of the government campaigns carried out in 2006, during 2009 and 2010 it was implicated in between 90 and 100%. Since 2008, more youth campaigns have been carried out through Internet than through any other medium and several, including the government's 2008, 2009, and 2010 campaigns to promote reading and its 2010 campaign to promote respect for authors' rights for digital content, were carried out exclusively online.¹⁶

Looking at these figures, one can observe the positive evolution of Internet, which has progressively been given more consideration in government media planning. Radio, on the other hand, has seen its formerly stable share of government contracts for advertising and communications services erode, both in terms of its participation in general campaigns and in those specifically directed to young people. This trend coincides with digital native consumer habits, although it must be noted that this demographic group continues to tune into the radio, particularly for music programming.

What are young people's listening habits?

For further insight into the preferences and listening habits of young people, we will now turn our attention to some of the qualitative conclusions drawn by the PubliRadio research group from a focus group study¹⁷ carried out for the project mentioned in the introduction of this paper, 'The Digital Sonosphere as a New Space to Communicate with Young People: A Study of Listener Habits for the Development of New PSA Formats' (CSO2009-12236). The responses and commentaries elicited from participants in this focus group defined and fleshed out the characteristics specific to this group, which places a high level of importance on the skills required for using new media technology and whose relationship with technology often borders on a dependence that can at times reach extremes, as in the case of the group member who stated: 'I think that our generation has been immersed in technology from adolescence'. Another expressed his relationship to media in these terms: 'I've had a mobile phone since I was eleven years old. Technology evolves with you. Today, you just can't go around using a heavy-as-a-brick Nokia 3310 phone like everybody used to have. You keep changing models and adapting to them and discovering new things'. Yet another participant commented, 'Today's young people—the twenty-somethings—use Internet more and always need to be connected'. A young member of the focus group reflected, 'I think we're getting more and more hooked on technology. When my friends who are in their thirties now were young, they didn't even have mobile phones. They called each other from home and they were just as happy without them'. One student brought up the issue of connectivity: 'When I'm at home I'm always connected—always—whether I'm in Facebook, Messenger, or another site. I disconnect when I go out. If I had the possibility to be online anywhere I went, I'm sure I'd do it and stay completely hooked on it, in my own little world,' an opinion that was echoed by another, who flatly stated: 'The first thing I do when I wake up is boot the computer, because I've got to look at my mail. I look at a lot of things; I look at everything'.

There are two characteristics of digital natives' media listening habits that recur like a leitmotiv throughout the report on this focus group: their penchant for multitasking and their desire for portability of the media they

¹⁶ The two campaigns carried out completely online were 'Yo soy leeder' (<http://www.yosyleeder.org>) and 'Detrás de la cultura estamos todos' (<http://www.culturaenpositivo.es>). Although these campaigns are noted in the 2010 report, they were carried out in 2011.

¹⁷ Focus group convened in October 2010 with 8 subjects (university students with a median age of 21 and therefore digital natives). Responses were processed using the qualitative analysis programme MaxQda.

use. These two themes gained more and more relevance as the study progressed. Participants referred to these habits and preferences through comments such as 'There's always something on in the background while you're doing other things... the radio, Spotify, or something else—always. I think that our generation can't do anything without something playing in the background'. It was made very clear to the researchers involved in the study that people in this demographic group place a great deal of importance on being able to listen to something while carrying out tasks, wherever they are at the moment. Perona (2011) has commented on this trend and its ramifications for radio: 'Today, thanks to technological convergence, a person can do a wider range of things while listening, a fact that ensures a positive coexistence between radio and other media. As radio accommodates the concept of multitasking, it resists displacement by other media and serves as a complement to what they offer' (McClung, Pompper and Kinnally, 2007: 116, cited by Perona, 2011). Regarding the issue of portability, focus group subjects affirmed its importance with statements such as 'The majority of people wear headphones on the street or carry their iPods or their mobiles with them wherever they go'. Portability is so important that it overrules other considerations such as poor sound quality: 'I think that these gadgets offer convenience, but the sound quality is inferior. Listening to music with a mobile device is not the same as listening to it played on a higher quality radio/CD player at home'.

This is therefore a demographic group that wants to be able to decide not only what it listens to, but also where, when, and in what form it will hear it. Given the range of possibilities available to digital natives to download and limitlessly reproduce audio content any place or any time using the technical means of their choice, the media they consume adjusts itself to their whims as consumers. The option of downloading content, particularly music, is key to their lifestyles: 'I think that the more people can download music from the Internet, the better it is for musicians and groups, because people attend more concerts. For example, I really like a certain singer that I discovered listening to the radio. I looked for his music in Internet and now I attend his concerts whenever I can'.

It's not surprising that the young people who participated in the focus group could perceive the advertising potential of radio and platforms and sites such as Spotify: 'I like the kind of advertising that grabs you right from the beginning; that makes you stop what you're doing to listen... the kind that makes you ask yourself, "What are they trying to tell me?" That's good radio advertising. I think that Spotify could really come up with some good ideas for advertising if it put some effort into it'.

Based on the work we have carried out, we believe that Spanish government ministries and agencies would do well to consider those characteristics that are unique to the new media technologies that are shaping youth media consumption habits such multitasking and portability when they plan media campaigns directed to young people. By taking into account how young people consume media content, they would be fulfilling the commitment expressed in the 2010 government guide to adapt its communications to the new technologies and the paradigms they create.

Conclusions

As we have related throughout this article, young people today are digital natives who live in an environment in which technology provides the contextual underpinning and comprises the predominant features of the daily landscape. They map out their coexistence with this digital paradigm by instinctively navigating through a maze of opportunities for connectivity, portability and multitasking that give them a sense of gratification and confirm their mastery of new technology. However, radio still has relevance as a communications media. It can coexist with other communications media by virtue of its potential to reach listeners while they engage in other activities. Therefore, we cannot speak of its displacement as a media, but rather its inherent capacity to complement other media, particularly Internet.

Internet is both the preferred medium of the majority of young people today and the medium that has undergone the greatest evolution during the five years covered by this study. Nevertheless, radio penetration (mainly in music formats) has held steady for this demographic group during the same period and stood at 50% in 2010, proportionally in line with penetration for the mean population. It must also be noted that 25% of Catalan young people regularly access radio programming through the Internet.

Within the new context of digital technology, the term 'radio message' has given way to 'audio message', which better reflects the new dimensions of broadcast sound. Radio has long been the primary medium for transmission of audio content, which until the last decade has been subject to radio's paradigm of sequentiality, ephemerality and unidirectionality. Internet, however, has the potential to cater to the habits and needs of active listeners who seek interconnectivity and are accustomed to accessing resources online—characteristics that make it attractive to young digital natives.

Strategies for advertising and communications campaigns undertaken by the Spanish government cannot ignore the changes brought about by a shift to a digital environment, as this shift has recreated entirely new ways of receiving audio messages and new youth consumer habits. This reality leaves public authorities no other alternative than to communicate with these young people through the channels they use to find media content and via mechanisms that engage their digital instincts and skills, which are inextricably linked to hypermedia environments and multitasking.

An analysis of the data gathered for this study has revealed a relationship between the positive evolution of online media and its increased utilisation for governmental advertising and communications campaigns. The data also show that during the same time the Spanish government has steadily maintained proportional expenditure on radio advertising, and even relied heavily on this medium to transmit messages to young people; it has also been steadily increasing its expenditure on Internet. This trend in government media policy for public service announcements is seen even more clearly if one studies a breakdown of campaigns by the type of medium employed. Whereas in 2006 all Spanish government campaigns directed to youth audiences made use of radio, five years later that media was utilised in only 40% of institutional youth campaigns. As the government's use of radio for youth-oriented communications declined during the period studied, Internet assumed a progressively more important role, rising from a participation in 50% of the total youth campaigns launched in 2006, to a near total participation in youth campaigns carried out during 2009 and 2010.

Nevertheless, the Spanish government needs to go further in fulfilling its mandate to inform and educate the public and foster public social awareness; it needs to make the messages it transmits to youth audiences more effective. Government communication strategies must respond to the growing opinion that advertising and communications must be personalised and interactive and that the content of the messages they transmit must be creative and tailored towards the specific audience to which they are directed.

At the current time, advertisers recycle strategies designed for radio into audio content for digital platforms, without taking advantage of the potential of digital technology and the multiple new possibilities it offers. New user's habits and mobile devices now allow advertisers to 'microsegment' and home in specific niche segments of the population. Advertisers have the option of broadening the concepts of their advertising strategies and developing more personalised campaigns rather than simply replicating the formats and strategies used for messages transmitted through more conventional channels.

As stressed in this paper, radio functions as a complement to Internet, unlike other media such as television or the press that do not accommodate users' predilections for multitasking. Therefore, keeping in mind the complementary roles of radio and Internet in the transmission of audio messages, it is unwise to rule out either radio - especially radio outlets that use a musical format - or Internet radio as a medium when planning campaigns directed to young audiences. This study recommends that the government adapt its public

communications strategies to today's media environment by shifting from a restrictive *radio* content mentality to a more up-to-date vision that considers *audio* content.

As the study outlined in this paper constitutes one phase of an ongoing project, we conclude with a proposal that springs from the insights gained from our research to date: not only should the possibilities of audio messaging be fully exploited to better reach young audiences; Spanish government advertising and communication campaigns aimed at young people should also be designed to form them as well as inform them. This, then, is the challenge going forward - to give a definitive answer to the question 'What is the potential importance of an audio message for young listeners?' This question marks the path towards further research.

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