FOR YOU, FOR ME, FOR EVERYONE?
The Relevance of Public Service Media from the Audience’s Perspective in Austria

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IAMCR 2015 conference

Université du Québec à Montréal,
July 12–16, 2015
PSM IN AUSTRIA

- Sharing the same language and a similar culture with Germany
- All of its media face strong foreign competition
- No commercial TV until 2002
- Therefore: Austrian PSM, ORF, still in strong position
- But (like other European PSM): also decreasing market shares
AUDIENCE FRAGMENTATION

- Increasing media choices
- Individualization of media usage
- Diverse and fragmented audience

Mass audience
RESEARCH INTEREST

PSM

- Usage
- Expectations
- Evaluations
KEY CONCEPTS: MEDIA CHOICE AND USAGE

► Uses and gratification approach (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; Ruggiero, 2000)
► Habitual behavior/Ritualized media usage (Rubin, 1984; Rubin & Perse, 1987)
► Media repertoires (e.g., Hasebrink & Popp, 2006; Kim, 2014)
► Schemata (Rummelhart, 1984)
► Decision heuristic (Marewski, Galesic, Gigerenzer, & Hartmann, 2009)
► Concept of civic duty (Poindexter & McCombs, 2001)
► Media literacy (Livingstone, 2004)
METHODS

telephone survey

experimental study

semi-structured interviews

$N = 1000$

$N = 90$

$N = 48$

2009/2010

2011

2015

First public value research project
(2008-2013)

Second public value research project
(2014-2016)
There are noticeable differences in how PSM are used in different age groups: ORF 2 is particularly popular with older people, while younger people rely more heavily on ORF eins and online news.

*N = 1000; Usage of different PSM offerings (0 = “never”, 4 = “on a daily basis”)
PSM USE: Routines & Habits

Media routines shape and preserve PSM habits in all domains (TV, radio and online).

“In the morning, the radio is already turned on when I’m still in bed.”
(m | 87 | mid)

“In the evening, what’s usual is tune in to Zeit im Bild or the like.”
(m | 62 | high)

“I listen to the radio while getting up to come to live.”
(m | 62 | low)

“Actually, I browse orf.at every evening to see whether there are any news.”
(m | 20 | low)
News website orf.at and on-demand streaming service tvthek.orf.at are hugely popular for reasons of equipment and freedom of choice.

"We don't have a TV set any more. We only stream. If there's something we're interested in – if, for instance, a friend sends us a link to Arte TV – we stream it. That's our way of watching TV."

(f | 26 | mid)

"Whenever I watch something that has originally been on TV, I mean content by ORF, 3Sat, Arte or the like, I use the app and watch it on demand because it allows me to make a break or jump to the next piece. I prefer that a lot."

(f | 27 | high)

"Of course, I watch the news online. It's all available on orf.at or the TVthek."

(f | 34 | high)

"Yes, I'm interested in news. [...] What you get from the ORF is pictures which include headlines."

(m | 76 | high)
PSM USE: SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

PSM news coverage serves as basis for private and professional communication.

"Actually, I browse orf.at every evening to see whether there are any interesting news in order to be ready to join conversation if anyone brings up the issue."

(m | 20 | low)

"[…] if a friend’s talking about whatever news you haven’t heard yet, you’re very likely to look it up. Or if she sends you a video from the TVthek, you’re likely to watch it."

(f | 26 | mid)

"I believe it’s very important because it provides you with something to talk about. For instance, I'm a hairdresser and I need that sort of general knowledge to chat with my customers if they start talking about it."

(f | 22 | low)
EXPECTATIONS OF PSM

Broadcast-first users are more likely than digital-first users to attribute expected characteristics to PSM.

- offer high-quality content
- "Public service media have the duty to inform the public which they more or less fulfill.” (m | 62 | high)
- “Indeed, ORF offers more high-quality programs than private channels.” (m | 71 | high)
- be distinctive from commercial media
- be unbiased/independent
None of the participants totally refrains from ORF, which indicates that PSM in Austria are (still) appealing to a large and diverse audience.

Although “no two people will have identical media repertoires, the chances are they will have much in common” (Webster & Ksiazek, 2012).
DISCUSSION (2)

► PSM are frequently used in many different ways.
► PSM are credited with high quality.
► PSM deliver topics for conversation.
► PSM are recommended offline and online.

► Shift from PSB to PSM not yet (fully) recognized.
► (External) restrictions by law, regulators etc.

PSM in Austria in position to remain relevant even in times of more fragmented audiences
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