

Renaissance Of The “Forgotten” Medium Radio

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Research issue

With the classical understanding of “radio” as mass medium (Maletzke, 1963), the scholarly analysis of sports information practically came to a standstill according to Schaffath (1996). The findings of his study across Germany indicate that radio is nearly unimportant as the accompanying medium for parties interested in sports information. Only the live-reporting on the Fußball-Bundesliga (football federal league) each Saturday afternoon creates a station — listener — bond. The lack of variety on sports (almost exclusively football) and journalistic form of presentation (predominantly news and reports) do not cause incentives to consume with the recipient. These findings apply to public radio stations as much as to private program providers.

After thorough checks I found that there is no comparable research in the market of sportradio. Mendelson (1964) and Ecke (1991) focussed on Use and Gratifikations approach in general regarding the topic of radio, but not within the sportmarket. Some following studies address partial aspects of the radio sports portfolio (cf. Gruber, 2001; Krause, 2006; Hupe, 2007; Moldenhauer, 2009), like legal, journalistic or competitive questions.

With the establishment of audio-content on the internet, it was possible to have a renaissance of the formerly medium radio. With “90elf” (start: 2008, off the air: 2013) and the successor “sport1fm” an offer stabilized, that provides content only on football and only on game days, however. Since 2013 there is a 24/7 radio provider in Germany, that calls its “meinsportradio.de”. More than 20,000 user and million fold clicks or downloads per month are quantitative evidence, that there is a consumption interest among recipients. There are no commercials during the program, no music and also no general news (politics, traffic, weather).

meinsportradio.de is not a transition or addition of an existing radio channel to the internet. It is more a special case of double hybrid: on one hand the offered programme is serial and modular and on the other hand the programme is created by broadcaster and recipient. That makes the research object unique.

Research questions

The research would like to understand, (a) what the difference of the program is, (b) why the listeners are interested in the offer and (c) if the listeners display a different receptive behaviour than during consumption of “classic” radio.

Research method

The study is integrated into the “Use and Gratifications theory”. The study doesn’t follow the TAM-analysis, because here the use of technical innovations for daily work is questioned more. According to Schweiger (2007) the study goes with the linear model of the reception process, which consists of the pre-communicative stage, the communicative stage and the post-communicative stage. The presented analysis initially concentrates on the communicative stage to explore the concrete selective and receptive behaviour as well as the media appropriation.

Based on expert interviews with the owners and operators of meinsportradio.de, all listeners were surveyed with a standardized written online questionnaire. The high return (N: 276) permits reliable analyses.

Results and discussion

The listeners surveyed welcomed the modular offer of sports information that is made possible by audio-podcasts. The listeners arrange their “radio program” individually, they actively search for program content they are personally interested in. From that it can be concluded, that these programs are listened to more consciously and actively than classic radio (cf. Schaffath, 1996). The listeners use “background information” (31.8%) and “interviews” (22.1%) on a multitude of sports. And not just primarily “news” (17.8%) and “reports” (16.7%) as Schaffath (1996) attested for public and private radio stations. In total meinsportradio.de regularly reports on 21(!) sports. Mostly information on football (50.5%) is demanded, before “volleyball” (14.5%), “ice hockey” (8.9%) and “handball” (8.6%), thus sports that are not observed by classic mass-media with priority. More than three quarters (79,53%) of the surveyed people are male. The average age is between 31 and 40 years: interestingly more than every tenth is over 50 years old (11,16%).

19.8% of those surveyed provide editorial contributions and therefore are “prosumers” (cf. Tofler, 1980) of meinsportradio.de. That opens totally new relationships between program provider and user. It also could be an innovative advancement of user generated content (UGC).

Limitations

The data and findings collected with a scholarly standard for the first time constitute a snapshot. Regularly spaced follow up studies could provide additional findings about tendencies of the receptive behaviour. The presented survey was conducted purely quantitatively for budgetary reasons. By conducting qualitative interviews, it would be helpful to learn more on the motives and expected gratifications from listening to and producing of program contents.

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