AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION IN TELEVISION WEBSITES: A CASE STUDY OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING CORPORATIONS OF THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES IN SPAIN

La participación del público en las sitios web de televisión: Estudio del caso de las Corporaciones de Radiotelevisión Públicasde las Comunidades Autónomas en España

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ABSTRACT

The development of Internet and the Web 2.0 have multiplied the possibilities available to the television audience for dialoguing with the medium, beyond the television screen. This is in spite of the fact that interactivity in television is not something new. Participatory forms like electronic mail, chat, SMSs, forums, virtual meetings, surveys, blogs or social networks are acquiring a special relevance. At present, these tools are being preferentially incorporated by televisions and aimed at the younger public, given its special predilection for changes and for the use of new technologies. This communication analyses the incorporation of these new forms on the basis of a case study centred on the public televisions of the autonomous communities in Spain.

KEY WORDS: Television, Interactivity, Web 2.0, Internet

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, interactivity has been one of the most explored lines of research in the different media realities. Developed in the field of information technology, the concept of interactivity has been frequently used by a great variety of disciplines. Nonetheless, it is precisely the use made of this concept in the communicative disciplines that has given the notion of interactivity its current popularity. Put differently, interactivity is essentially a communicative concept (Rafaeli, 1988: 113) and, furthermore, so-called "conversational interactivity" (Bordewijk and Van Kaam, 1986) is, in practice, that most related with participation by the public in communicative processes and products. Besides, the efforts made in this direction over the last fifteen years by traditional programmers make interactivity the most striking characteristic for describing some of the most recent television processes, systems and products.

While traditionally the mechanisms for intervention by people in the construction of the journalistic discourse were somewhat scarce, we are currently witnessing a change in this tendency, given that Internet is enabling users to become emitters as well. In this way, an individualised creation and consumption of content is emerging, establishing a personal use of information.

For many years we have been witnessing a process of change in journalistic products, in the journalistic profession and in the relationship with the audience. As Jenkins (2004) expresses it, the new media consumers are active, migratory – they show increasingly less loyalty to the media , they have more social links and, far from seeming invisible amongst an homogeneous mass, they are noisy and public. This transformation is closely related to a new journalistic rhetoric that is arriving through the online media, that is, through content emitters with a vocation for mediation between events and the public, which principally employ journalistic criteria and techniques, employ multimedia language, are interactive and hypertextual, constantly updated and published on the Internet (Salaverría coord., 2005: 40).

The interactive potential offered by these digital media represents a real advantage for the public and for the medium: while the former finds spaces open to greater informational plurality, the latter, beyond the loss of control that this intervention might involve, finds this cession in favour of the user balanced by greater proximity to its audiences.

Furthermore, we understand that interaction with the audience and participation in the generation of content will characterise the television offer developed in the future. Television in its traditional format developed a unidirectional communicative model which interactive television is altering with the result of bidirectional and multidirectional television (Cebrían, 1998: 35); a participatory relation is emerging where the roles of emitter and receiver are constantly being interchanged. In fact, so-called "Internet TV" emerged with this component of social participation and interactivity from which it can probably no longer free itself since, amongst other factors, it constitutes one of the main advantages of this medium of transmission facing the rest. Internet not only contributes to communication between emitter and

receiver, but also to the possibility of interaction amongst receivers, the audience. In the 7 level classification established by Mariano Cebrián in order to measure the levels of technological interactivity, "Web TV" is catalogued at level 6 where interactivity, propitiated by the convergence of networks and media, links television's expressive process of images in movement with the interactive potential of Internet (Cebrián, 2005: 86). Therefore, the primordial question in this context is to determine how interactivity and access to each element of content is broadened, facilitated or complicated. Similarly, as Gómez Ponce (2009) explains, the key will therefore lie in seeking mixed formats and the distribution of content through different channels (social networks, video platforms, etc.); in strengthening the segmentation of channels for different publics through a multiplatform (conventional TV, TDT, Internet, mobile phones); in ensuring the loyalty of publics with clearly identified profiles like those of Tuenti, Twitter or Facebook; and in promoting a closer approach to multi-tasking (watching television and surfing) and to a multi-product strategy.

However, the emitter-receiver interaction is developing in a complex context. On the one hand, there are the particular contexts of each one of the elements that make up the expressive and broadcasting act of television and, on the other, the exterior and general contexts. The former should be considered at the very instant of the broadcast and in mutual relationship with each other. Similarly, the exterior contexts refer to the general contexts in which each of the elements is found, in short the broadcasters, the professionals, the audience and the social, political economic and cultural context. Nonetheless, in the new digital age television producers face growing difficulties in completely controlling the external contexts in which their programs are going to be consumed, above all with respect to country and format. Therefore, while in conventional television these two peculiar contexts (Cebrián, 36), that of production and that of recognition by the audience, were differentiated without any difficulty, the situation can change considerably with online television.

Also to be taken into consideration is the challenge represented by the tendency towards the combined and simultaneous consumption of offline and online television, an option that should be kept clearly in mind at the present time which is marked by media convergence. One of the most habitual formulas that makes this combined consumption possible is the possibility of chatting with other users and commenting on outstanding aspects during the viewing of certain programs.

The tendency towards user participation has been acquiring growing importance since the appearance of the first media websites, thanks to the use made of participatory interactivity through digital surveys, forums, chats and the Web 2.0. The latter has contributed significant changes like the incorporation of content created by users, social networks, online applications and tools for collaboration that have guaranteed the Web the universal scope that it enjoys today (Codina, 2009). Parallel to that, a growing tendency towards audiovisualisation has been generated.

In this respect, the arrival of Youtube marked a turning point. It is considered to be a social network that represents a tendency towards interactive social television with productions produced by civil society itself (Cebrián, 2008). With the appearance of this channel a generation of users emerged that was more interested in consuming videos on the computer screen than in bowing to the traditional programming of the television channels. It was necessary to ensure their loyalty, but Internet at that time was perceived as the enemy. Decanting television content onto the websites of the television channels themselves was inconceivable, since there was a fear of audience loss. Only the passage of time has shown that Internet does not deprive conventional television of its audience, but adds to it thanks to the positive correlation existing between the two forms of consumption. The greater the number of hours connected to Internet, the greater the number of hours in front of the television as well.

A real use was not immediately made of the Web's advantages and televisions have travelled a long route in order to reach the present moment, a route marked by doubts and constant experimentation with business models, offers and content formats. According to the study "Internet Business Models for Broadcasters: How Television Stations Perceive and Integrate the Internet" by Chan-Olmsted and Ha (2003), at the start of the new millennium Internet was basically used by the television corporations as a complementary or supporting format for their offline products. Equally, the article "From couch potatoes to cybernauts? The expanding notion of the audience on TV channels' websites" by Eugenia Siapera (2004) points out that at that time the television corporations considered Internet to be a mere broadcasting platform, a expansion strategy on the online medium, without it yet being possible to speak of a real change or a new way of understanding television audiences: "In its struggle for dominance, television has chosen to stamp the internet with the televisual, rather than making full use of the internet's potential".

Today, so-called Internet TV is growing at a dizzying pace, from its more amateur versions – amongst which TV blogs are to be found – to channels conceived in the image of the conventional ones. All the big national and autonomous community channels provide access on their respective websites to some of the content broadcast through their terrestrial signal. But some go much further and recreate real digital platforms on their websites, with several live broadcast channels and a wealth of content on demand. In spite of that, dependence on the Internet connection entails a series of handicaps for making the television offer through the Net into an alternative to conventional television in the medium term. Unlike the rest of the television offer to which the audience potentially has access, which is conceived to be consumed through the same device – the television, Internet TV is at a stage where its use requires a change of reproductive device (the computer), room (the bedroom) and state of comfort. Nonetheless, as the data of the study show, to the degree that Internet becomes yet another option on the remote control, as a result of the integration of devices, these handicaps will be reduced (The Cocktail Analysis, 2006).

The U.S. broadcasting chains like NBC, CBS, ABC or Fox were pioneers in this integration of the television and the Net. In relation to the use made of social networks, CNN opened the way thanks to the

integration of the coverage of Obama's taking office as the President of the USA on Facebook, making something possible that has since become normal practice: the possibility of directly viewing a program and commenting on one's impressions with other spectators. This new form of understanding live broadcasts on the Web is based on a new philosophy that supersedes the now outmoded "hit the play button and just watch", which fits in increasingly less with the more dynamic attitude of Internet users.

In Spain, the Veo7 channel has taken this use of social networks to an extreme with "Twision". This is a pioneering space at the world level, launched in March 2010, and it is based on participation and social networks. The idea involves the fusion of a television program and Twitter – one of the social networks with most adepts in Spain. The free "tweets" of the audience replace the usual "SMSs" that appear on the screen, and the bulk of the program's content revolves around what is commented upon in the social networks, with continuous references being made to the members of those communities. Group lists on Facebook, Youtube videos, photos of people, the best sayings of the week and the presence of guests on Twision ["twinvitados"] or interviews through Twitter are normal practice. The results of this amalgamation between the Web 2.0 and the television have yet to be seen, but for the time being the format appears to be a great success.

Certainly, the widespread practice of social networks in the production of television – and radiophonic – content has stimulated the creation of a new professional profile in the media: that of the coordinator, or person in charge of social networks, also known as the "social media editor" (Flores Vivar, 2009: 79). The main abilities of this figure are based on reaching the masses, exercising influence and possessing technological skills (Flores Vivar, 80). In any case, for the time being the presence of this professional profile is mainly limited to the online newspapers that are trying to offer their community of readers some type of social network.

The initiatives of à la carte television and live television have also favoured the relationship with audiences. In Europe, for example, the BBC was one of the first in setting up new television services on demand through Internet, thanks to the launch of its special MyBBCPlayer application in 2006. In Spain, the Spanish Public Broadcasting Corporation (Radio Televisión Pública – RTVE) began to exploit these possibilities thanks to the redesign of its new website in May 2008.

In short, Internet has given the traditional broadcasting corporations different possibilities for strengthening their relationship with the spectator, thanks to the possibility of offering new services, like live television and exclusive services for Internet only, but also thanks to interactions with the user and the social networks. This is true to such an extent that the growing participation of the audience in the medium and the audiovisualisaiton of the Web are granting an increasingly outstanding place to the television broadcasters in the panorama of Internet media.

Following after the printed press, television has been the most affected by the impact of Internet. Those who predicted that the new medium would put an end to the television were as mistaken as those who forecasted a decline of the radio to the benefit of the television. The most evident proof is perhaps that in recent years the growth of the penetration of Internet in Spanish homes has run in parallel to the growth of the average consumption of television. What is increasingly evident is that the convergence of television and Internet – in a context of consumption of audiovisual news and leisure content – makes it difficult to draw a frontier between the two media (The Cocktail Analysis, 2006).

2. WEB TV IN SPAIN

The television in Spain is the means of communication with the largest following, the greatest social influence and the most political weight. In 1956, the regular broadcasts of the state channel Televisión Española (TVE) began. At the start of the 1980s, the televisions with a regional scope, or covering an autonomous community, were set up. The first was the Basque channel, Euskal Telebista (ETB) in 1982, and in 1983 TV3 appeared in Catalonia. In 1991, the private television corporations were set up: Antena 3, Tele 5 and Canal Plus, putting an end to the monopoly that TVE had held for 35 years. In the year 2006, the government approved the establishment of two further analog channels (Cuatro and La Sexta) and the experimental broadcasts of the Televisión Digital Terrestre (TDT) began, which has been in operation since April 2010.

In Spain "Web TV" has become consolidated in recent years and the spectators make use of Internet for television consumption with growing regularity. A study of the consumption of audiovisual content on the Net and on mobile phones in Spain gave the figure of 11.7 million for the number of Internet users who dedicate between one and five hours a week to watching videos downloaded from Internet. This means that 78% of the users regularly view films, music and series proceeding from this source, half downloaded by themselves, and the other half given to them or loaned by second parties. This revolution in television consumption has raised Youtube as its great champion. Thirty-five percent of Internet users visit that server at least once a week to view short videos thanks to its vast offer. While 13% prefer to visit the websites of different non-thematic, general channels (Antena 3, Cuatro, Telecinco and La Sexta).

However, this rise of the Net for following audiovisual content continues to be fed from conventional television, which explains the scarce television production elaborated for Internet only. The conclusions of the seminar "Future tendencies in television content and programs" – organised by Radio Televisión Española (RTVE) and the "Menéndez Pelayo" International University in November 2006 – indicated, however, that the success of television on Internet will be based on the development of innovative content formats, created specifically for the online media, capable of making use of the advantages offered by participatory interactivity.

As found by the "Televidente 2.0" study, drawn up by the research and consultancy agency The Cocktail Análisis in 2008, spectators "frequently" employ the Web to view what they were unable to see on tele-

vision the day before, what they want to see before it is broadcast, or what the channels showed when one was a child . Now, it has also been shown that there is a direct relationship between Internet consumption and the consumption of other conventional media. In fact, the study "El impacto de internet en el consumo de televisión [The impact of Internet on television consumption]" shows that Internet users consume less television than the population in general.

In Spain, televisions with a national scope employ different tools of participation or interactivity on their websites. However, due to its recent appearance there are few studies in Spain that analyse participatory journalism on television. Amongst the scarce research works carried out to date, mention is deserved by the study made by Meso, Palomo and Ganzábal (2009) on participatory journalism on Spanish public television (Rtve.es) and on another five private sector channels (Antena3.com, Telecinco.es, Plus. es, LaSexta.com and Cuatro.com).

According to this analysis, the Spanish national channels still constitute an experimental laboratory. In 2008, they improved their websites, making them more usable, dynamic and participatory, and, at the end of the same year, practically all of them offered the citizen a complete package of options for participation. One of the most outstanding initiatives was made by Telecinco, which set up the "Yo cámara" space, created so that the user could record and publish her own videos. For its part, La Sexta set up its "Comunidad" section, inviting users through their collaboration to "create" the channel and its programs.

There is a more recent study by José Manuel Noguera (2010), who concentrates on the latest activities of the Spanish online media in the social networks, concretely in Facebook, of which he makes an exploratory study. In the more local field, Jesús Pérez and Teresa Santos (2009) analyse the future of local televisions, which necessarily involves being present on Internet and the degree to which they make use of the possibilities offered by the digital medium. In a very similar way, Elvira García de Torres and Mª José Pou (2000) examine interactivity and the news on the websites of nine local televisions in Valencia. Also notable is the work by Mercedes Medina and Teresa Ojer (2009), which evaluates the public channels' fulfilment of their role as a public service. Concretely, it analyses variables relating to the service that the public television channels in Spain provide to their audiences, on the basis of the diversity of their offer, technological development and corporative social responsibility.

Our communication takes account of the earlier studies. Its main aim is to explore the different proposals of participatory journalism promoted on the platforms on the Net by the different radio and television corporations of the Spanish autonomous communities. We believe that these actions respond to the concern of these media to connect with the community, break with the unidirectionality of journalistic messages and turn the receivers into emitters and vice versa, in line with the tendencies that currently mark the audiovisual sector on Internet. At present, these public autonomous broadcasting corporations are facing the challenges and deep changes of technological developments and, also, of a market that,

with its new juridical framework, is increasingly competitive. In this context of changes, we understand that analysing their presence on Internet is of considerable interest, to put it mildly.

This communication is thus intended as an initial approach to that reality which is in a state of effervescence and definition. It is based on a study of the autonomous and regional televisions with a public character, which have great weight and importance in the television panorama of Spain. We set out from the premise that any attempt to try and understand the present situation in depth will, in a certain way, be trivial, due to the velocity with which events are developing. Nonetheless, we did not wish to miss the opportunity for carrying out a first study analysing the experience and expectations of these television corporations based on providing service to the citizens, according to the importance they attribute to the relationship with their consumers through Internet.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 SAMPLE

This study analyses the websites belonging to twelve Spanish autonomous radio and television corporations, belonging to the Federation of Autonomous Radio and Television Organisations (Federación de Organismos o Entidades de Radio y Televisión Autonómicos - FORTA), a non-profit making federation that brings together bodies, governed by public law, created by the laws of the respective autonomous parliaments to directly manage the public services of Radio and Television Broadcasting in the different Autonomous Communities of Spain:

-Radiotelevisión Canaria (RTVC) (The Canary Islands)
-Corporación Aragonesa de Radio y Televisión (CARTV) (Aragón)
-Radiotelevisió de les Illes Balears (RTVIB) (The Balearic Islands)
-Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals (CCMA) (Catalonia)
-Radio Televisión del Principado de Asturias (RTPA) (Asturias)
-Radio Televisión de la Región de Murcia (RTRM) (Murcia)
-Radio Televisión Castilla-La Mancha (RTVCM) (Castilla-La Mancha)
-Radio Televisión Pública de Andalucía (RTVA) (Andalusia)
-Radio Televisión de Madrid (Madrid)
-Radio Televisión Valenciana (Valencia)
-Radio Televisión de Galicia (RTG) (Galicia)
-Radio Televisión Pública Vasca (Euskal Irrati Telebista) (The Basque Country)

The autonomous radios and televisions are configured as public services and are inspired by the principles of objectivity, impartiality and truthfulness of information, respect for political, religious, social, cultural and linguistic pluralism, respect for all the freedoms recognised in the Spanish Constitution and

the different autonomy statutes, the protection of children and youth and the separation between information and opinion. They have, besides, the principal aim of attending to the widest audience and the commitment to offer quality, diversity, innovation and ethical standards, from a perspective of proximity but with a universal vision, as well as dedicating attention to affairs of special public interest and developing new related and interactive services.

As Ramonell (2006) explains, autonomous televisions are not something residual, on the contrary, they have a considerable audience percentage. In 2005, autonomous televisions as a whole had 17.3% of the average total audience according to SOFRES. TVE was situated a little over two points higher (19.6%) and a little over four points higher were the private corporations Antena 3 (21.3%) and Tele 5 (22.2%). By autonomous community, the television with the largest audience is Canal Sur of Andalusia with 20.2%, followed by TV3 with 19.6%, ETB with 18.4% and the Televisión de Galicia (TVG) with 17.2%.

The experience of the autonomous radios and televisions has also made it evident that they have been and are basic tools in the development of the autonomous structure of the state, especially with respect to the territorial and social cohesion of each autonomous community, the development and spread of particular cultures – and languages, the projection and presence of the municipalities and social groups of each region and, in short, the personality and identity of each autonomous community. But while all of the above was and is important, it is no less relevant that in each autonomous community an industrial and entrepreneurial fabric has been generated – and is being created in those broadcasting corporations that have emerged most recently – in a sector as innovative and with such future as the audiovisual one.

These autonomous public radios and televisions have committed themselves to adaptation to Internet and to the recent renovation of their online versions. This has found expression in an increase in their number of users, as Table 1 reflects in relation to the online audience of the main autonomous televisions in Spain:

Table 1. Evolution of the consumption of the main autonomous televisions on Internet (individual users)

	March 2010	February 2010	January 2010	March 2009	March 2008
Televisiò de Catalunya	1,477,989	1,094,036	1,191,144	937,816	801,844
Telemadrid (1)	396,316	284,139	305,409	-	-
EITB	725,313	673,569	624,920	639,238	428,977
CRTVG (2)	176,509	174,419	177,280	-	-
RTVA	629,471	656,138	508,406	442,969	-

Source: OJD Interactiva. Elaborated by the authors.
(1) Monitored by the OJD since May'09. (2) Monitored by the OJD since September'09.

Radio Televisión de Canarias (RTVC) renewed its website in December 2008. Following this, there was an increase of 30% in its number of visits. During the following months, the department of RTVC concerned worked to improve the website, with a new display for viewing content and an improvement of the "News" section. This was because it was understood that the website should become a medium of record that would make use of the image and audio potential generated by public television and radio. Another novelty was RTVC's bursting into the social networks. This idea originated in its Press Office and is functioning with great success. The profile of Radio Televisión de Canarias on Facebook is around five thousand friends. It is also on Twitter in order to exploit its aspect as a vehicle for rapid news. Several of Radio Televisión de Canarias's programs and content have their own profiles on Facebook and MySpace. They are promoting a policy by which each program and each personality of RTVC has its own spaces on these social networks. They have discovered that this is an even closer way of establishing contact with the public, who can comment on their doubts and questions through these profiles, as well making known their suggestions and criticisms in a very fluid, proximate and sincere way. Besides, to this must be added the channel that has recently been opened by RTVC on Youtube . They have made a strong commitment to these new platforms for viewing television and following the radio in order to situate themselves in the vanguard in the Canary Islands.

Corporación Aragonesa de Radio y Televisión (CARTV), for its part, has opted for Internet as a substitute for its satellite channel. Its determination to be in the vanguard of the new technologies applied to the world of television has led them to confront the transition to Terrestrial Digital Television (TDT) with total security, to set up an experimental television channel in High Definition (HD), and to produce and broadcast in panoramic format (16:9) and over Internet. In fact, on this television's website it is currently possible to follow the broadcasts of the satellite channel and the programming for the province of Aragón. However, the aim of the strategy is to strengthen those retransmissions, as was done by all of the national channels throughout 2009 (with an "à la carte" offer and direct transmission via "streaming"). With the closure of its European television channel the corporation saved close to one million euros, money that was employed to strengthen its online content. At CARTV they understand that they are embarked on a route, from which there is no turning back, leading towards a new audiovisual panorama where, at the start of the XXI century, the autonomous television is already playing an essential role in the particular identity of each region. In order to travel this route, many professionals and businesses are contributing dedication and talent every day. It is only in this way that one can understand how they can with certainty confront the changes in regulations, technology and formats that are already taking place in the audiovisual panorama.

In April 2010, Radio Televisión de las Islas Baleares (IB3) and Televisiò de Catalunya announced their preparations to set up a television channel on Internet. Following the arrival of the channels of Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals (CCMA) in the Balearic Islands in February that same year,

collaboration in the audiovisual field between the Generalitat de Catalunya and the government of the Islands continued to advance. This latest project is a platform of audiovisual content to which the Public Broadcasting Corporation of the Balearic Islands and CCMA will be contributing all of their production for joint broadcast over the Net. In fact, both this project and the reciprocity in the reception of the channels are the result of the agreement of reciprocity of broadcasts on TDT between the public corporations of Asturias and the Balearic Islands signed in January 2009. It has a duration of five years and envisages the creation of a bilateral commission for sharing audiovisual policies and promoting content. With respect to the new Internet television channel, this is a totally à la carte television for the provinces where Catalan is spoken. The fact is that there are 10 million people who speak Catalan and this represents a market of television spectators that cannot be ignored. In spite of that, the commitment to Internet involves directing themselves towards a public under 45 years of age that therefore has other habits of television consumption.

In a practically parallel way, in December 2009 Radio Televisión del Principado de Asturias (RTPA) awarded the contract for the service of Internet streaming of the signals of Televisión del Principado de Asturias (TPA), Radio del Principado de Asturias (RPA) and video on demand for the TPA. RTPA, which began to operate on Internet in December 2006, conceived its Internet portal as a multimedia platform, focused on the user, in accordance with the latest Web tendencies, enabling visitors to interact with its content. rtpa.es initially brought three media together: the electronic newspaper, radio and television in a single multimedia platform. But it very quickly incorporated one of the most innovative services on the Net, which enables the more active users to configure their own TV programming by browsing in the "On demand" modality through a wide offer of original productions by TPA. The design of rtpa.es combines clarity and simplicity with a highly intuitive system of browsing that guarantees the accessibility of its content. In this respect, they have opted for a graphic image with a soft chromatic range: white to facilitate reading and blue as the main contrast colour. They have also opted for a modular structure that enables adaptation to the informational needs of each moment and great flexibility for the addition of new sections and content.

In May 2009, Radio Televisión de la Región de Murcia (RTRM) presented its new website. Besides having a design that met all the norms of accessibility, the main novelties were the incorporation of photo galleries, surveys and the "à la carte" section, which would enable users to see different programs produced by the corporation outside their normal broadcasting time and to download complete versions onto their computers. At the same time, the live broadcast on the website of the programs of Murcia radio and television, already present on the earlier version, was improved for this new stage.

The website of Radio Televisión de Castilla-La Mancha (RTVCM) is conceived as a basic tool for making known the rich content offer that is daily offered to the inhabitants of the autonomous community of Castilla-La Mancha through its public radio and television. The autonomous corporation makes available

to the user an attractive, agile and modern website with updated information so that, at a glance, s/he is kept up to date about what is happening in Castilla-La Mancha and in the world, and at the same time receives advance information about the range of information and entertainment offered by the corporation. On the website, the user can find the latest news, is able to listen to live radio or the latest bulletin that has been broadcast, recover the video summary of the news headlines.... S/he has available the full listings of programs, presenters, their curricula... s/he can make a virtual tour of their installations and, if s/he wants, s/he can communicate with other internet browsers who are visiting them.

On 28 February 2010, the website of Radio Televisión Pública de Andalucía (RTPA) entered a new stage with the launch of a renewed configuration, presentation and structure of news. The Head of Interactive Media of RTVA conceived this project as a combination of design and content in permanent change, according to future needs and the users' demands. In February that year the website had 365,000 individual users and more than four million pages were visited.

Radio Televisión Pública Vasca–Euskal Irrati Telebista (EITB) renovated its website, Eitb.com, in October 2008, a change that served as an occasion for giving greater weight to its participatory channel. With this change, the initiatives it had set up in 2007 took on a new impetus; these included the blog "ZuKRri" (Zu Kazetari – You are the Journalist), open to citizen participation, and the Aupatu website – which by 2009 had a community of nearly 1,500 people who participated on a daily basis, sending in, and voting on, the most interesting news found on Internet. Similarly, it set up new pioneering initiatives, such as Kemotions, an experimental social network based on emotions. The Euskal Irrati Telebista group has recently proposed to strengthen its presence in the main social networks like Facebook, Twitter and Tuenti. Following the integration of Facebook and Twitter in the content and live retransmissions via Internet, the intention now is to order the products and brands on the basis of internationally successful experiences. The intention is that the programs should be "products" that generate interactivity and conversation with the different social networks. For example, television programs like "Uyyyyy!" make constant use of the Twitter and Facebook networks in its broadcasts. The strategy has been designed by an internal work group that has received external advice and participation by those in charge of those social networks. Besides, successful experiences set underway by multimedia groups in Europe and the United States have been analysed.

3.2. METHOD

The study of the selected cases was carried out during the month of February 2010 employing a qualitative and quantitative procedure based on the study "The use of the Internet by America's Newspapers" , carried out by The Bivings Group in 2006. For the purposes of the study a file was designed that included several categories and indicators, based on the most usual tools of interactivity and participation: surveys, competitions, forums, blogs, the creation of communities, the possibility of commenting on news and sending content to the media – text, videos and audios, the possibility of sharing news and contacting the journalists.

4. RESULTS

All of the websites analysed offer live television services and "à la carte" podcasting services. This facilitates the possibility of à la carte radio and strengthens the service of the online broadcasters, given that links are added to the offer of content on demand. The contribution of the podcasts is increasingly visible on the websites of the public companies analysed, which we could consider to be an advance in the attention paid to the listener and a response to new, demanding audiences.

The spaces for citizen's participation are only available on three of the websites analysed: Radio Televisión de Castilla La Mancha, Radio Televisión Pública Vasca and Radio Televisión Pública de Andalucía. What was also missing from all the websites analysed was a space for digital meetings or interviews where the users can participate by sending in their own news to the interviewers.

Blogs are the most usual tool for participation and interactivity on these websites, although none of them offered users their own service for publishing blogs (Figure 1). One of the big differences with respect to the practices that are generalised on other media is that not all of the televisions analysed have created and published blogs for their own and guest journalists, thus preventing the multiplication of the offer of content that this service would bring. Those that have done so have made a commitment to strengthening the area of participation and are providing an important service to users.
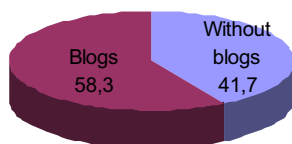
Figure 1. Use of blogs on the websites of autonomous public televisions.

Coinciding with the new options for participation in the abovementioned corporations, there has been a general growth in the number of their individual users. Televisiò de Catalunya and EITB have managed to almost double their audience in barely two years. In the same period of time the rest of the websites have not appreciably increased their individual users according to OJD Interactiva . In the case of Televisiò de Catalunya, the number of individual users has grown by nearly half a million people. With respect to the Basque public communications group, a continuous use of the social networks is increasingly noticeable in programs that are reproduced live on both radio and television. In the television broadcasts, Facebook and Twitter are the tools most utilised by the users for developing interactivity. One reflection of this is the "Uyyyyy!" program on the group's second channel which, in spite of its being broadcast for a only little more than a year (it was launched in January 2010), has managed to achieve audience loyalty by, amongst other measures, incorporating the characteristic tools of interactive communication. Its website invites participation through surveys and comments, as well as making available to users a way of uploading their own videos. On the other hand, although the group has widened

Table 2. Possibilities of participation on the main Spanish television corporations on Internet.

	CARTV	RTVIB	RTPA	TRM	RTVCanarias	RTVCastilla
Space for citizens' participation						X
Blogs					X	
The medium's news can be saved and shared		X	X		X	
Survey		X				X
Sending in news						X
Sending in photographs						X
Sending in videos						X
Competitions		X				
Possibility of modifying the visual and graphic resources	X		X			
Sending in messages to the newsroom	X	X	X	X	X	X

	Telemadrid	RTVG	RTVV	RTCataluña	EITB	RTPA
Space for citizens' participation					X	X
Blogs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Comments can be made on the news / series /...			X	X	X	
The medium's news can be saved and shared	X		X		X	
Survey	X		X	X	X	

the number of available podcasts, 70 in 2010, a lack of response from users can still be observed. This might be due to the fact that EITB still does not produce podcasts that are original and that have not previously been reproduced in a conventional medium. This type of products would favour interaction with the public, creating specialised niches for those users who are unregistered and therefore show no interest in interacting with the program while it is on air. We can thus observe that there have not yet been any attempts to exploit this new tool commercially.

Services for personalising the website with favourite programs and content are available on Radio Televisión Pública de Canarias. The rest offer the possibility of modifying visual and graphic resources. Some websites permit the sharing of photographs, videos and comments, such as Radio Televisión de Castilla La Mancha, which does so on the basis of using mashups like a Google map of Castilla-La Mancha.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In the multimedia age, the consumption of content ceases to be massive and adopts a personal style leading towards a participatory dialogue with the audience. Hence, the analysis carried out makes it possible to confirm that in Spain the consumption of audiovisual and participatory content through Internet has matured and spread. The online autonomous televisions are following in the wake of the public and private national televisions, although in the light of the results obtained it can be observed that they still face numerous challenges and limitations, deriving especially from their scarce interactivity. The creation of new specialised content that differs from the conventional programming might prove an effective course for this achieving this. That is, it is essential that the producers of content of each communications group should incite and encourage interactivity by offering attention, quality and immediacy.

Even so, we consider that there are some outstanding exceptions, such as the Catalan and Basque televisions. In a more evident way, the latter are starting to accept the new role of the audience in an age marked by the Net, social networks and the leading role of citizens. Nonetheless, the Basque television is on this occasion falling behind the Catalan television in so far as it does not have forums or chats available where the user could establish direct communication with the rest of the public.

Other autonomous televisions, like that of Galicia, with an audience – the Galician diaspora – that is very interested in interacting with the medium and other agents, barely have tools available for doing so. Similarly, other autonomous televisions that have recently appeared, such as those of Murcia, Aragón, etc., do not make great use of interactive and participatory resources either.

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ENDNOTES

[1]< http://www.tcanalysis.com/uploads/2008/03/televidente2_presentacion.pdf>

[2]< http://download.aimc.es/aimc/07informacion/Ponencias/impacto_internet_television.pdf>

[3]This communication forms part of the academic production of the consolidated group IT392-10 of the Basque Government and of the research project "El proceso de convergencia digital en los grupos

mediáticos: el caso de la radiotelevisión pública vasca, Euskal Irrati Telebista [The process of digital convergence in the media groups: the case of the Basque Public Broadcasting Corporation, Euskal Irrati Telebista] ", directed by José Larrañaga Zubizarreta (ref. EHU08/57).

[4]<http://www.facebook.com/pages/RadioTelevision-Canaria-RTVCes/188600904655?ref=search&sid= 1255215552.508860693..1>

[5]<http://twitter.com/RTVCes>

[6]<http://www.youtube.com/user/tvcanariados>

[7]http://www.bivingsreport.com/campaign/newspapers06_tz-fgb.pdf

[8]Only the audiences of Televisiò de Catalunya, Telemadrid, EITB, CRTVG and RTVA are being monitored by the OJD Interactiva.