

## Mobile television news: a study on the reception of the news on the mobile audience by adults / seniors

### Telejornalismo Mobile: um estudo sobre a recepção das notícias no celular pelo público adultos/ idosos<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** *With the arrival of digital television in Brazil, the programming of broadcast television becomes available in mobile and portable devices at no additional cost. The reception of content at anytime and anywhere should bring about a change in the relationship between journalists and viewers. For this paper, a survey was held in the reception field to qualitatively identify the expectations and needs of senior/adult public when watching news on mobile phones.*

**Key-words:** *Digital Television; Hyper TV; Transmedia; Television journalism; Mobile*

**Resumo** *Com a implantação da TV Digital no Brasil, a programação da televisão aberta passa a estar disponível nos dispositivos móveis e portáteis, sem custo adicional. A recepção de conteúdos a qualquer hora e em qualquer lugar deve provocar uma mudança na relação entre os jornalistas e os telespectadores. Para este trabalho foi realizada uma sondagem no campo da recepção para identificar de forma qualitativa as expectativas e necessidades do público idoso/adulto ao assistir as notícias nos celulares.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Televisão Digital; Hiper TV; Transmedia; Telejornalismo; Mobile*

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In Brazil, the central role of television as the main means of communication seems far from threatened, but is certainly in transition. This media format is considered the favorite of 76.4% of Brazilians<sup>3</sup> who make it a cultural agent that defines concepts, customs, behavior, and opinions. However, there is an undeniable change in the way various publics have been relating to the content that is broadcast every day.

Some authors have already announced a third phase of television that comes after the two prior phases defined by Umberto Eco (1984) as *paleotelevision*, the initial period between the fifties and the seventies, when people watched from home what happened in the world or what was allowed to be watched in the world, and *neotelevision*, the more recent period until the end of the last century, where there is a mixed system between public and private with a growing supply of new networks. The term post television was considered as the next stage, which in some ways determined the death of TV as we currently know it. Therefore, the term HyperTV, pegged by Scolari (2004) seems to be more appropriate because it suggests a television under construction within the phenomena that Henry Jenkins (2009) called the culture of convergence: “Welcome to convergence culture, where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways” (p.29).

Therefore, HyperTV has, as its new characteristics, more interaction between the sender/receiver; articulation with other interactive media; empowerment of the television viewer, program customization; digital abundance with thousands of channels produced by anonymous sources and available on servers such as Youtube; the opportunity to access programming by file (pay per view and video on demand) as well as the flow; increments of new terminals to watch TV, such as computer screens, tablets, mobile phones, and video game consoles; access

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <http://economia.terra.com.br/internet-e-o-meio-de-comunicacao-que-mais-cresce-entre-brasileiros,93855add93994410VgnVCM4000009bcceb0aRCRD.html>. Access on May 25, 2014.

to content at any time and any place; introduction on new languages, multimedia, transversal, interactive with encouragement to participate.

In this sense, two relatively new phenomena have arisen that convey the content that circulates through different platforms simultaneously. Transmedia and Crossmedia. In crossmedia, the same content is distributed through different means without major alterations to the message so that the receiver can access and perhaps interact. The material may be, but doesn't have to be, identical, because often what is released in one medium completes the content of another. If there are minor changes to the image, text, or audio, the data intersects, but the essence of the message remains the same. However, for transmedia, the content is distributed through various means and one compliments the other. Since they have more complete access, the receiver should use all or at least the larger number of the means in which the information was released. In this case, the main ingredient is the integration of content and means with the objective of showing the user's collaboration, who now has a voice and a turn<sup>4</sup>.

Regardless, in television journalism for example, one can question if it is possible to transform it all into transmedia content. At least for now, the coverage of major events and the special reports seem to be the fastest way to implement this new relationship between production, content, and reception (users). If not for editorial limitations, then often due to editing structure issues, and especially due to good old time pressure.

Regardless, all of this is only possible with the technological change underway in Brazil from analog TV to digital TV. The choice of the system adopted by Brazil was a lengthy process. It is an option that, in some ways, determines our priorities for the future. The choice of the Japanese system (ISDB) with its unique mobility and portability points to the possible new direction in the relationship and the use of television content. Almost seven years after the first digital broadcast in Brazil, the Minister of Communications published, on June 23rd of this year, a

<sup>4</sup> *Em Questão*, Porto Alegre, v.18, n.2, p.121-132, jul/dez. 2012. At:<http://seer.ufrgs.br/EmQuestao/article/view/23731/23671>

new timeline for the analog switch off that was scheduled for 2016. The process now begins in 2015 with a pilot project in Goiás and continues in 2016 in the main capitals, in 2017 in other large cities, ending with the total implementation of SBTVD (Brazilian System of Digital Television) only at the end of 2018<sup>5</sup>.

Another important condition to think about HyperTV in Brazil is the penetration of mobile phone services in the general population. Brazil finished with 273 million and 58 thousand active mobile telephones in March of this year, according to data from the National Telecommunications Agency<sup>6</sup>. A promising market that allows an unparalleled reach for broadcast TV programming at no additional cost to users. On the other hand, there are still restrictions on the device models that access the digital TV signal. Even so, IBOPE (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics) already announced the measurement of the audience using this equipment, currently estimated at 50 million devices. Unlike the measurement of the audience in conventional televisions, the measurement of Digital TV on mobile phones will have a sampling based on the data of the national demographical census, such as social class and age. The measurer will be in new mobile devices designed in partnership with the institute and made available for sale<sup>7</sup>.

It was during the first decade of this millennium that the mobile phone first became a coveted item for Brazilians, evolving from the analog to the digital system. The mobile phone first became a music provider, and then it took on the level where it is today as a new media center that not only ensures portability and receives a TV signal, it also allows content storage. The business model is based on partnerships between content providers and mobile phone manufacturers or carriers. (MATTOS, 2013, p. 45).

Also according to the author, the proximity between telecommunication and radio broadcasting is being mediated by current legislation that

<sup>5</sup> Report published in *Zero Hora*, on June 24, 2014, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Available at: <http://g1.globo.com/tecnologia/noticia/2014/04/brasil-chegou-a-27358-milhoes-de-telefones-celulares-em-marco.html>. Access on 4/23/2014.

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <http://www.dtv.org.br/ibope-ja-comeca-a-medir-audiencia-de-tv-no-celular-2/>. Access on 4/30/2014.

allows the telecommunication companies to have full foreign capital, while the radio broadcasting companies may not be the property of or managed by foreigners. However, it is hard to say for how long the protection of the content produced by national stations will resist. While they want to broadcast directly to increase their audience, the mobile phone carriers see an opportunity to add a new service.

For the stations there is already a movement, even though it is timid, to encourage the public not only to exchange their analog devices for digital devices at home or to buy adapters, but an attempt to teach watching broadcast television on mobile devices. Rede Globo, for example, launched a special add campaign last year about this topic. They have also shown scenes during the soap operas and series where the characters use mobile phones or mini TV receptors and watch the programming outside the home<sup>8</sup>.

### **Mobile Television News**

Ever since the beginning, television has been required to carry out several social functions such as information, education, entertainment, and leisure. According to Vera França in the article *A Televisão Porosa: traços e tendências* (The Porous Television: traits and trends), these last two functions more strongly marked and consolidated the profile of television programming and the consumption expectations of its audience. But the author also recognizes that it is not possible to underestimate the informative function of television due to the fact that the tele-news is the flagship for many stations.

The majority of people today have a dimension of the world which was previously lacking. One can claim there is a lack of depth in the information shared and a consumption characteristic with minimal reflection; however, the volume is unquestionable (FRANÇA in FREIRE FILHO, 2009, p.35).

<sup>8</sup> Available at: <http://redeglobo.globo.com/novidades/noticia/2013/12/musa-da-copa-fernanda-li-ma-estrela-filme-para-estimular-tv-digital-fotos.html>. Access on 7/14/2014.

In over seventy years of Brazilian television, an internationally recognized quality standard has been established. With television news, the production routines, the newsworthiness values, and the aesthetic quality of the content are all fully accepted by the audience. According to Porcello (2013, p.11) “Life, the daily grind, and the streets have always been part of the day to day journalism of Brazilian television. For good or ill, TV reveals or conceals, it says and it hides, the face of the Nation for over 60 years.” Even so, the television news is globally facing a significant drop in the audience, and there are studies that point out the aging nature of the audience that remain on their sofas.

Surveys show that youth between 18 and 24 years of age search various sources when they look for information. The younger they are, the more media at the same time. This is the profile of the new user of electronic media. It is therefore not by chance that the printed papers record a steep drop in the number of readers in this age group. But it is not only print media that suffers restrictions. Young people think TV is limited. They consider the internet to be active because it allows the user to choose the information that interests him. With other media, others choose for you. In summary, they reject the figure of the gatekeeper, the selector, the editor for the official news (TOURINHO, 2009, P. 211).

In Brazil, this drop was widely reported after the IBOPE numbers released last year. As an example, from an audience of 80% in the seventies and eighties, the *Jornal Nacional* dropped to 27% in 2013<sup>9</sup>. This is a percentage that could mean the democratization of the voices on Brazilian television if the audience of the other stations had grown, but that is not what happens, as mentioned by França (in FREIRE FILHO, 2009, p. 31):

Just as the different societies were “destabilized” (each in their own way) with the arrival of television, and later restabilized, absorbing television but also shaping it, they now “suffer” the new and frequent changes in broadcast standards. Stimuli (positive and negative) intersect in permanence;

<sup>9</sup> Available at: [http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/posts/view/queda\\_da\\_audiencia\\_do\\_jn\\_e\\_um\\_alerta\\_para\\_a\\_imprensa](http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/posts/view/queda_da_audiencia_do_jn_e_um_alerta_para_a_imprensa). Access on 05/27/2014.

television is no longer intact in an era in which the world and different societies are experiencing such intense transformation.

The major issue addressed by Tourinho (2009) is how to innovate in such a way so that a television newscast shown on broadcast TV is prepared for the public of the digital era, the nomad public, and at the same time, not abandon the faithful viewer who is used to the format and the conventions.

### **Methodological strategies**

This article is the result of the third stage of research that has been developed for three years and that has as its premise the adaptation of television journalism to the convergence context, based on the multi-screen reality: television, computer, and portable devices (tablets and smartphones).

(...) portable reception, either in portable devices or using mobile phones, alters the way we consume and see TV content. First of all, the format, resolution, and definition of the screen change; secondly, the demand for information changes, because the audience time varies significantly in relation of the audience in the TV room; and in third place, there is the possibility of full interactivity or permanent and real, because the return channel is intrinsic to the mobile phone medium (BECKER E ZUFFO in SQUIRRA E FECHINE, 2009, p. 44).

In 2012, the study called *A TV que cabe no bolso: uma análise de conteúdo do Jornal das Dez da Globo News disponível para recepção no celular* (The TV that fits in your pocket: and analysis of the content of the Ten O'clock News of Globo News available for mobile phone reception) identified several obstacles for the consumption, understanding and production of meaning by the receiver in the journalism content offered in the first application of the 24 Hour cable news station. On small screens and in adverse attention situations, obstacles were found called communication noise, such as: overly long duration of reports,

excessively open framing plans, incompatible landscapes, infographics, character generators and art in general that was inappropriate for the smaller screens. On the other hand, editorially, the 2r hour cable television news concept with a majority of factual reports seemed to be appropriate to update the receptor who no longer needs to be at home in front of the television to see the images of the main events of the day.

In 2013 a second stage of the study *O telejornal em qualquer lugar: uma sondagem sobre a recepção de notícias nos dispositivos portáteis* (Television news anywhere: a survey regarding the reception of news on portable devices) confirmed that the reception of news, in this case of the *Jornal Nacional* of Rede Globo, a broadcast station, were also harmed by the noise, but less that what had been identified in the prior study with the content of cable television. However, the most important discovery in the reception field was having identified that the young/adult public<sup>10</sup> (16 to 25 years of age) with a high degree of education (some or completed college), who are considered the ideal public for the use of new technology, already had acquired the habit of watching videos on mobile devices (78%), especially from Youtube, music videos, humor, and TV series. On the other hand, in this group 81% of the respondents said they did not accompany broadcast television programming on their mobile phones. Even so, for this public, having access to television news outside the home, at any time and at no additional cost, was highlighted as the main advantage of the implementation of the Digital TV system in Brazil. The same survey showed that the results could have been completely different if the target audience wasn't so used to new technologies, especially browsing the internet and using social media.

Ever since, mid 2013 to early 2014, a new investigation has tried to deal with this issue. Based on an ethnographic and qualitative

<sup>10</sup> According to IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) the Brazilian population age groups are divided into: Children – from 0 to 14 years of age; Youth – from 15 to 19 years of age; Adults – corresponds to the population between 20 and 59 years of age; Elderly or seniors – people that are 60 years old or older. Available at: <http://educador.brasilecola.com/estrategias-ensino/faixa-etaria-populacao-brasileira.htm>. Access on 5/6/2014. For this study we selected adults above 30 years of age due to the cutout done in the 2013 survey. (N.A.)



methodology, an exploratory study was done in the field of reception. For the survey, it is important to note that the results found, although significant, may not be transposed to all of the receptor public. In this case, the numerical indicators (percentages) are important to verify and better understand the relation of the users with the audiovisual content and thus obtain inductive interpretations with more confidence. It is important to remember that quantitative and qualitative methods are not incompatible, but rather, in this case they are used in a complimentary fashion.

At first those interviewed answered about their habits regarding the access and use of the mobile devices to watch videos. During a second stage they watched some content and answered questions about the experience. The questionnaire was made up of 23 structured questions, with open and closed ended questions, i.e., with room for other comments by the responders.

For this purpose, 33 interviews were held with an adult/elderly public (from 30 to 80 years of age), of various educational levels (from incomplete elementary education to college graduates) and diverse levels of purchasing power (from BRL 800.00 to BRL 17,000.00 a month). For the second phase, three reports from the *Jornal Nacional* were selected and shown to the interviewees, with a duration of a minute and a half (T:1'30"), which ran on the 10th, 11th, and 14th of June. The editions and topics were chosen randomly among the factual subjects: "drought in São Paulo"; "American spying" e "BRICS summit meeting". But in all three reports, possible reception problems (noise) was spotted ahead of time such as: open plains with images that were hard to identify, the use of infographs as support to highlight numbers and data; essential subtitles and characters for identifying journalists and sources.

### **Description and analysis of data regarding access and use**

The first number that catches our attention is the rate of people that *watch* videos on their mobile phones drops from 78% among youth/

adults to 55% among adults/elderly. Of the total 18 respondents, a majority of fifteen (15) is between 30 to 50 years of age, only two (2) in their sixties, and one (1) in their eighties. As for purchasing power, eight (8) respondents had a family income of BRL 800.00 to BRL 2,000.00; five (5) up to BRL 4,000.00 and five (5) above BRL 5,000.00. As for the level of education: six (6) have only elementary; five (5) have high school, and seven (7) have college.

Of a total of 15 respondents who *don't watch* the videos on their mobile phone, two (2) are above 40 years old, five (5) above fifty years old, and eight (8) between 60 and 70 years old. As for purchasing power, six (6) respondents had a family income between BRL 1000.00 to BRL 2,000.00 and (1) up to BRL 4,000.00 and seven (7) above BRL 5,000.00. As for the level of education: three (3) have only elementary; seven (7) have high school, and five (5) have college.

It is important to note that this article does not do comparative analysis between the answers of the youth/adult public and the adult/elderly public. Even so, just the first number regarding the habit of using the mobile phone to watch videos provided a significant result. Among the adult/elderly public, a little more than half of those interviewed (55%) said they habitually accessed videos on their mobile phone, while the survey done earlier with youth/adults, a majority (78%) of those interviewed said it was a frequent habit. This, in a way, confirms the aging of the television audience and television journalism and the search for new information alternatives, as described previously by Tourinho (2009).

And the rates diminish as the respondent arrives at a more advanced age. The majority of those who don't access videos on their mobile phones are in their fifties, sixties, and seventies. The exception which, as they say, proves the rule, was the interview of a eighty year old woman who answered yes as to watching videos, not only on her mobile phone, but also on her tablet. She identified the habit as a leisure activity done at home; she described films and news as her favorite content and was not only aware of the implementation of Digital TV in Brazil the change is important because "you could move around with the news always under your arm."

There is no way to identify the educational level and the family purchase power as a determining factor for the results of this survey, probably because it is qualitative. In further studies, perhaps it will be necessary to increase the number of interviews to identify such trends.

As for the content, the answers could be multiple; therefore, there is no way to determine a percentage. Thus, of the 18 people interviewed who used a mobile phone to see videos: eleven (11) answered that watch the news, five (5) series, four (4) movies, three (3) musicals, three (3) humor shows; one (1) recipes, one (1) soap operas, and one (1) sports. Youtube was cited as the access channel for twelve (12) people. Al of the eighteen (18) people interviewed cited TV programs, fourteen (14) accessed after going on air at the stations through sites or apps, and only five (5) live, using the broadcast digital signal.

Among the content cited by those who already used mobile devices to watch videos, it is clear that the news comes first, confirming the centrality of television media and the importance of television news for the adult/elderly audience, a production construction in the sense that it has not been shaken by new technology.

Series and movies were also frequently cited content, showing that Brazilians are accustomed to this genre due to cable television. There is a direct relationship between subscribers and users of sites and apps that provide this type of content. It is also an indication that the flow and the file exist harmoniously as the preference of the receptors. The difference seems to be the liberation from the tyranny of the television schedule and the choice of the best time and place for this type of recreation.

While culinary recipes appear with new content for this particular audience, soap operas and sports are a surprise. The last two genres were mentioned only once by the respondents. The soap opera may still be a sofa habit. Also, an episode is, on average, 45 minutes long, which perhaps surpasses the attention span on the small screen. The same may occur with soccer matches, although sports news and the compact games might be more appropriate for this type of reception.

Among the eighteen (18) people who said they already watched videos on the mobile devices, twelve (12) used mobile phones, five (5) preferred tablets, and only one respondent mentioned the car television. The access location was also a multiple choice question. Fourteen (14) answers mentioned their home as their favorite place of watch videos on their mobile devices, eleven (11) mentioned their workplace, and only three (3) mentioned their car or bus. Ten (10) people answered that they watch videos while they wait, nine (9) during breaks between activities during the day, and three (3) when they commute.

Among the 45% that don't watch videos on the mobile phones, the main reason mentioned was that 86% didn't know that the broadcast television programming is available through the Digital TV system as no additional cost. After being notified of this possibility, 60% answered that this is important and they will make use of it: "to be updated", "anywhere", "at any time", "for the mobility", "more people will have access". Among the 40% who didn't think access was important, the quotes were: "I'm not in the habit", "I prefer other means of information", "I don't have time".

The data indicates that, despite the fact that the implementation timeline of the Ministry of Communications scheduled the switch off for 2018, the population in general has little information about the change, its benefits, and challenges. The chance of accessing the signal with mobility and portability is even less discussed. Once they are aware of this possibility, the adult/elderly receptors seem to mostly be interested in using it, and that despite a lack of skill for the new technological devices, this is an alternative for an increased audience.

### **Description and analysis of data regarding reception of the news.**

Of the total 33 people interviewed, 82% found it pleasant to watch a report on their mobile phone and 18% found it to be unpleasant in some way. In total, (100%) responded that they had no difficulties in

understanding the information; nevertheless, 3% complained of the size of the screen for viewing images; 19% said they couldn't fully understand the infographic and read the subtitles and other characters; 2% alleged they could read only partially.

In the previous surveys mentioned in this article, it was already clear that the production routines, the newsworthiness values, the aesthetics of the content are fully accepted by the audience. This doesn't seem to be a serious problem for the reproduction of television content in mobile and portable devices. Of course some adaptation needs to be considered in terms of the aesthetics of the images, since when in motion, the viewer may be in front of a 3, 6, or 50 inch screen. Even the elderly public didn't show major difficulty in understanding the journalistic content. But it is important to think that mobility and portability are intimately connected to short attention and concentration spans. The visual limitations of older viewer also need to be considered.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The alteration of the entire technological system for the production and transmission of content is a reality with a set deadline, even if it can be postponed by the government once more, there are just four year till the switch off. The digital system for broadcast television functions in large cities and about 50 million mobile phone devices already can receive the broadcast TV signal at no additional cost. Most of the adult public and even the elderly already have shown that they use mobile devices to watch television content, even if the frequency diminishes as age increases. The implementation of the Brazilian Digital Television System will facilitate access to broadcast television content, which can be decisive in allowing television in Brazil to continue to maintain its central role among the media of the so called Convergence Zone.

The digitalization of the system is also the initial condition for HyperTV to cease being a theoretical concept and to become a communication phenomenon that primarily alters the relationship between the producer and the receptor, or is it already the user? The empowerment

of the viewer is still a long way from the full interactivity possibilities that is so attractive on the internet. And perhaps this will never happen with television, because since it is a public concession it will always require mediation (gatekeeper), especially when airing the information on journalistic programs. Nevertheless, the receptor has the potential to be more active. In fact he was never totally passive. Beyond the increasingly diversified content, the freedom from the programming schedule is not insignificant in terms of the necessary changes in the editing routines. The survey made it clear that most of those who were interviewed access content after it is aired on television, which demonstrates this freedom from the scheduling developed by the producers.

To be able to watch television without a television device, anywhere and anytime, away from the living room, is already a revolution. For the stations, a simple transposition of the programming flowing to the mobile and portable devices means working with a different rationale in terms of prime time. For example, commute times in public transportation or in cars should become more valuable. The drop on the audience ratings of television news recorded by IBOPE last year can be somewhat overcome when the news reaches the viewer, even when far from home. In the interviews, it is clear that the mobile phones and tablets, and even the receptor devices in cars are convenient for receptors and is a chance for producers to reach and expand the reception. This commute time must be considered an opportunity to revert the systematic loss of viewership.

Winning over new viewers or winning back lost viewers seems like an even larger task which depends on new genres, formats, and on editorial decisions that are more transparent and democratic, but mobile phones, have the intrinsic characteristic of being able to provide feedback, participation, and collaboration. You just need to want to use it. It is a streaming program or file, with attention given to the transmedia content that uses the best each medium has to offer, so that they might be broadened and deepened at the same time. In the survey, the content most frequently cited by the respondents that watch the videos on

mobile devices proves that the news and series are the friendliest genres and have the potential for narrative changes that will bring about the first levels of interactivity.

But while conquering the restless generation that needs several sources of information, we don't recommend forgetting the other generations more akin and faithful to the television content, even if they are also being transformed into a nomad public. The design of the age range pyramid in Brazil has changed, according to IBGE, since 2010. More and more narrow on the base, where there are children and youth, and wider in the space for adults and the elderly. The trend will probably remain inverted. The audience for television and television news in Brazil is aging, but so are today's restless youth. Therefore, the opportunity to capture the broadcast television signal at any time and place needs to simultaneously cater to the needs of the restless, without losing the viewers won over time, investing in things such as new narratives for the more traditional genres of soap operas and sports.

Even though most of the people interviewed said it was pleasant to watch news on their mobile devices, there is still a need to adapt the framing plans for the small screens, the infographics, the characters, and the identification subtitles, which still are an obstacle for full comprehension of the content and a better media experience. These are adaptations which need to be done with some urgency or risk distancing the elderly/adult public.

With each survey of the reception field, new questions appear, certainty transforms into doubt, and only some are verified as true. This is the joy of academic research that privileges the qualitative and attempts to understand how communication is greater than its vehicles, even when hegemonic; greater than the means, even when they play a central role in the process; greater than the simple production of content, even if it is increasingly complex.

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