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Hybrid Television: Opportunities and challenges for Public Broadcasters to improve their service to the citizenship.

Dr. Roberto Suárez Candell

Marie Curie Research Fellow

Hans Bredow Institute for Media Research

Heimhuderstr. 21 – 20148 – Hamburg – Germany

r.suarez@hans-bredow-institut.de

ABSTRACT

The convergence between broadband and broadcasting (Hybrid Television) is happening right now. Equipment manufacturers are fully focused on this innovation and several receivers are already available at the retailers.

From the point of view of broadcasters, especially those operating at the terrestrial platform, the possibility of having a broadband (return-)channel for supplying extra content and services related to their flow-channels or independent from them implies a great opportunity to enhance the value of their programming. In a context of increased competition due to the implementation of digital terrestrial television and economic crisis, where availability and access to funding resources have become major problems, such a technical convergence becomes an opportunity that should not be wasted. On the other hand, the connection of the main tv-set to the broadband becomes a very relevant threat, as it will end with the exclusive gatekeeper role that broadcasters had until now. In that sense, alliances between equipment manufacturers and content providers become a high risk for the position of terrestrial broadcasters.

Concerning Public Service, this technical innovation brings new opportunities for improving the fulfillment of its remit as well as challenges concerning the boundaries of its activities. However, despite the debate and the possible controversy around this issue, ongoing experiences in the United Kingdom, Germany or Spain show that Public Broadcasters have already taken the initiative and they are developing interesting and successful services. In part, they are making profit of their previous online strategies, which were developed as a first reaction in front of the consolidation of the Internet as a platform for distributing audiovisual content. The decisions taken now to foster the deployment of the Hybrid Television are the following steps in their necessary conversion into multiplatform operators.

This presentation wants to contribute to the analysis of the current processes of redefinition and repositioning of Public Service Broadcasting in the multiplatform scenario. In order to do so, in first place, an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) that Hybrid Television implies for Public Service Broadcasters will be carried out. Following that, some of the most relevant experiences across Europe will be identified and described. Finally, based on the current state of the art, and with the aim of participating in the main debate topic of the working group, the opportunities for empowering the participation of the citizenship in the field of public service raised by the convergence between broadband and broadcast will be detected and discussed.

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Keywords: Public Service, Hybrid Television, SWOT Analysis, Citizenship Participation.
