

## SCREENS MULTIPLICATION

### New television habitats in social media's age

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The social sphere enters into dialectics with traditional media: news and narratives, comments and criticisms bounce from one side to the other. From this point of view, the TV of talk and infotainment is an emblematic case. The rich diffusion of the new digital channels, the consolidation of satellite television, but also the explosion of on demand content, have urged the player market to exercise hybrid solutions for enriching and integrating the television offer, appealing to the potential given by the web. The television networks – being aware of the re-determination of the medium – combine and integrate new engagement models and strategies with the offer of contents and the programming strategies typical of generalist television. The television networks – being aware of the re-determination of the medium – combine and integrate new engagement models and strategies with the offer of contents and the programming strategies typical of generalist television.

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For some time now, the media have been our new environments for socialization, “places” we frequent daily. This is called media experience, and it means that the media constitute forms of living and complex experiences: not only cognitive but also emotional, practical, and relational. Traditional media inform people about events and entertain them during breaks and in their free time. However, digital media increasingly produce semiospheres in which entities with a hybrid status coexist: real and media, physical and digital, public and private, cognitive and sensitive<sup>1</sup>.

Reality's experience is increasingly subjected to a process of elaboration, implemented by virtual realities, which change how people perceive things. The Internet is not only a different, more efficient, and modern way of accessing information and data; it is a global arena in which anyone (not only professionals, not only holders of certified knowledge), for example, can publish its User Generated Contents on social networks. However, the environment that is thus created, social, and visual (many contents have an iconic form) is not only a kingdom of freedom, a fascinating home to lives on the screen, but also home to violent and biased people, haters, and deniers

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<sup>1</sup> In his writings from the 1960s to 1975, Yuri Mikhailovich Lotman defines culture as a powerful mechanism for the preservation of information that can include written texts, images, architectural structures, objects of various kinds, urban spaces, etc. However, Lotman clearly states that culture is not a static repository of information. Culture preserves information and receives new information in a continuous process of coding and decoding texts, messages, objects, practices that come from other cultures. In its dynamic aspects, culture assimilates texts, translates them into its languages, and continuously dialogues with non-culture, another space equipped with different codes, producing new information. Culture needs external chaos. In the case of short forms of current audiovisual production, dense icons of the contemporary semiosphere, such as commercials, promos, trailers, video clips, mutually lend each other modules and models, hybridizing in a continuous process of translation.

of all kinds. The social sphere enters dialectics with traditional media: news and narratives, comments, and criticisms bounce from one sphere to another. From this point of view, talk and infotainment TV represents an emblematic case. The interactions between the network and talk, talent, reality, and TV series are constant, as is the continuous exchange of stimuli, messages, and comments, such as to represent—in fact—an extension of the audience and how the relationship with the network has profoundly affected the pathetic dimension of the broadcast creating new media atmospheres.

### **The Second Screen**

The model increasingly reflects the convergent culture theorized by Henry Jenkins<sup>2</sup> in 2007 and photographs the state of the art of television in the digital era and the emergence of new practices and forms of viewing that arise from the advent of social media. One of the most significant changes that has affected the construction processes of the television flow is a decisive rebalancing of the power relations between networks and audiences. This shift empowers the audience, allowing them to shape the future of television through their individual and fragmented viewing practices.

The rich diffusion of new digital channels, the consolidation of satellite television, and the explosion of on-demand content have encouraged the market of players to exercise hybrid solutions of enrichment and integration of the television offer, appealing to the potential given by the web. Television networks—aware of the redefinition of the medium—combine and integrate new business models and strategies with the offer and programming strategies typical of generalist TV. The increase in connected devices and the massive diffusion of social media determine a new centrality of television that surpasses the models and formats of traditional TV and manifests itself through an extraordinary multiplicity of practices, consumption scenarios, screens, and interactions (Turkle, 2005, pp. 246-286).

The multiplication of screens introduces two elements of innovation: the increase in the overall time dedicated to watching TV through different devices and the diversification of multi-screening practices. While television content remains the common reference environment, the multiplicity of screens becomes the new technological form of TV, bent by audiences based on different needs, rhythms of life, and motivations.

The television consumer directs his selection several times a day towards suitable devices, that is, towards the best combination of screen, content, environment, and satisfaction sought, building specific settings. In this scenario, all forms of vision find their space and acquire relevance. Some of these contain a particularly pathemic dimension in the semiotics of passions that ranges from anxiety, anguish, embarrassment, uncertainty, and worry (dysphoric passions) to impatience and curiosity (euphoric passions), passing through the topics of the suffering of Boltansky (2000, pp. 110-136) (of denunciation, of sentiment, aesthetics) up to the pain and dolour theorized by Aldo Grasso<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Media convergence is much more than a simple technological change; it transforms the logic of action of the media together with those that guide the consumption of information and entertainment of the public. In this scenario, every relevant story is told through the multiple media platforms and the diffusion of these contents sees in large part the contribution of the active participation of consumers. Convergence is a process and not a point of arrival, argues Jenkins in *Convergent Culture*, Apogeo, 2007. And in this sense, starting from Pierre Levy's theory of collective intelligence, he has shown how in the last decade a culture of participation has emerged, where fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and diffusion of new contents. Producers and consumers interact with each other continuously, according to dynamics of action and relationship that are changing and innovative. In participatory culture, not everyone has to contribute, but everyone must believe they are free to do so.

<sup>3</sup> On this topic, a useful reference is represented by the article by A. Grasso, "Why in Italy the TV of Pain Is Spreading" in *Vita e Pensiero*, Milan, 2012, n. 2.

The most interesting dimension of this multiplication concerns several levels: (1) the decisive assignment by the audience of the characteristic of “event” to television consumption perceived as a historical and public moment not to be missed; (2) the wait for the broadcast of a serial or sports TV content; (3) the moments of viewing constructed as rituals to be shared (eventization); (4) multiscreen and post-television sharing, which is continuous and allows television audiences not to give up the pleasure of sharing, in person or remotely. They are always-on audiences, potentially connected to the outside world, and share the pleasure of watching TV (Scaglioni, 2011).

In recent years, how users enjoy television content has changed radically. Digitalizing content and broadcasts have allowed a notable evolution of the television ecosystem toward new forms of use, navigation, and interaction. We can also notice profound changes in the typical characteristics of the environment within which the content is enjoyed: Increasingly, users watch television content while simultaneously using mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets to interact, comment, and study the programs broadcast by broadcasters. The popularity of social networks has changed the Web ecosystem towards a more collaborative environment where user-generated content’s importance becomes ever greater.

The analysis of these contents certainly cannot strictly represent a statistically representative sample of society. However, all actors must undoubtedly consider it to grasp some users’ trends, popularity, and opinions, which cannot be overlooked. Typically, the television content produced and broadcast by the broadcaster is enriched with descriptions in natural language and metadata and, subsequently, stored statically in an archive for subsequent reuse<sup>4</sup>. What happens next? Many of the program’s broadcast, in particular the most interesting ones, is republished online, in whole or in part, by the users themselves (for example, on YouTube); during and after the broadcast, the television contents are commented on by users on the leading social network portals, such as Facebook and Twitter, also giving rise to intense debates on the web<sup>5</sup>.

For TV content, a second life begins during which the audio/video content is watched, “tagged”, “appreciated”, commented on, and shared over and over again, transforming itself into a “magnet” capable of attracting web users and essentially becoming a social object that conveys emotions, opinions, topics of discussion: The analysis of such content can help the various actors quantify the popularity of television characters and programs, the trends, and the public’s approval.

### Always on

Live television, which was increasingly losing meaning due to the possibility for viewers to review content at any time and on any platform, could exploit this new push. Users and viewers will increasingly need to enter the circuit of conversations and comments at key moments, at the moments when these are triggered, in live broadcasts. The intertwining of the two platforms is happening on three different levels, which contribute to the radical change in television business logic: planning, with television that can exploit the creative ideas of users/performers; fruition, which changes both in how television programming is distributed and how people

<sup>4</sup> On this topic, the studies of Giovanni Boccia Artieri are enlightening. *Read in Particular Phenomenology of Social Networks. Presence, Relations and Media Consumption of Italians Online*, Guerini e Associati, Milan, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> To delve deeper into the constantly evolving technological framework but also the interaction of digital with traditional media, see E. Menduni, *I media digitali. Tecnologie, linguaggi, usi sociali*, Laterza, Bari, 2007. To understand the audience transition process, it is useful to read the data that emerged from the research conducted in 2016 by the Osservatorio Social TV coordinated by Alberto Marinelli and Romana Andò, see “TV intorno. Tecnologie, settings, rituali e bisogni per un’esperienza di Consumo espansa” according to which the traditional TV set continues to maintain the primacy among the screens with which to consume television content: For 74% of the sample the TV set is used always and often and for 20% sometimes.

interact with the program itself while they follow it during broadcast; measurement, with the increasingly inadequate Auditel and the need for new tools and measurement logics. The term share, for example, is seen here in a new perspective, as the term itself says, of continuous sharing.

The interactivity given by Social Networks is also extending the concept of television format today. With new media, it is possible to specifically identify one's audience, interact differently by listening to what viewers think, and know what type and target consumer exists on the other side of the screen. The new life cycle should be composed of three main phases: (1) pre-show, aiming to find insights to capture viewers' attention. The alternatives can be previews on social platforms or the official website, live or behind the scenes, tweet sections or chats with presenters, prize competitions, exclusive interviews on blogs and Social Networks; (2) live: the moment certainly the most crucial for the success of the program itself where the priority is to be able to channel and exploit the feedback that comes from the web; (3) the post-show: The involvement of viewers in the hours following the live broadcast also decreases about the genre, more for films and TV series and more slowly for information or entertainment programs. Operators cannot avoid this trend, but they can make the content available in streaming to keep curiosity high and satisfy viewers who miss the live broadcast.

### **Finally: Re-mediation**

Smart media are here specifically understood as textual entities from which to extract specific cultural grammars or modes of expression that, through the media, indicate, by analogy, corresponding ways of thinking and acting. In this scenario, some of the characteristics of an intertextual nature and linked to remediation, such as multimedia, modularization, and hybridization of texts, which were believed to be the foundation of the field of new media, become less significant in the analysis of new trends. Rather than re-mediating themselves internally, current smart media are designed to open up to external reality (Carbone, 2016, pp. 102-110). Therefore, they take on the role of prostheses equipped with sensitive properties, in particular, towards contexts, spaces, and subjective visions. If only a few years ago, the media user was imagined as a physically immobile subject wandering in virtual spaces, the value of media fruition currently derives from the position that the subject assumes in a localized or social media space. The role of smart media is, therefore, to annotate the surrounding world, to give a personal vision of it, to be able to share it, and finally, to interact with others.

It was once easy to distinguish between reality and representation. However, for about 30 years, the media have constituted new socialization environments, daily "non-places" in which TV has replaced traditional social and educational institutions, disintegrating the boundary with reality. The media experience, what the media constitute, forms of living and complex experiences that are cognitive but emotional, practical, and relational. The public can no longer experience aesthetic pleasure, but a mere stimulation of the senses can no longer perceive an overly visible imagination.

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