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GO ONLINE – WHAT TO PUBLISH?

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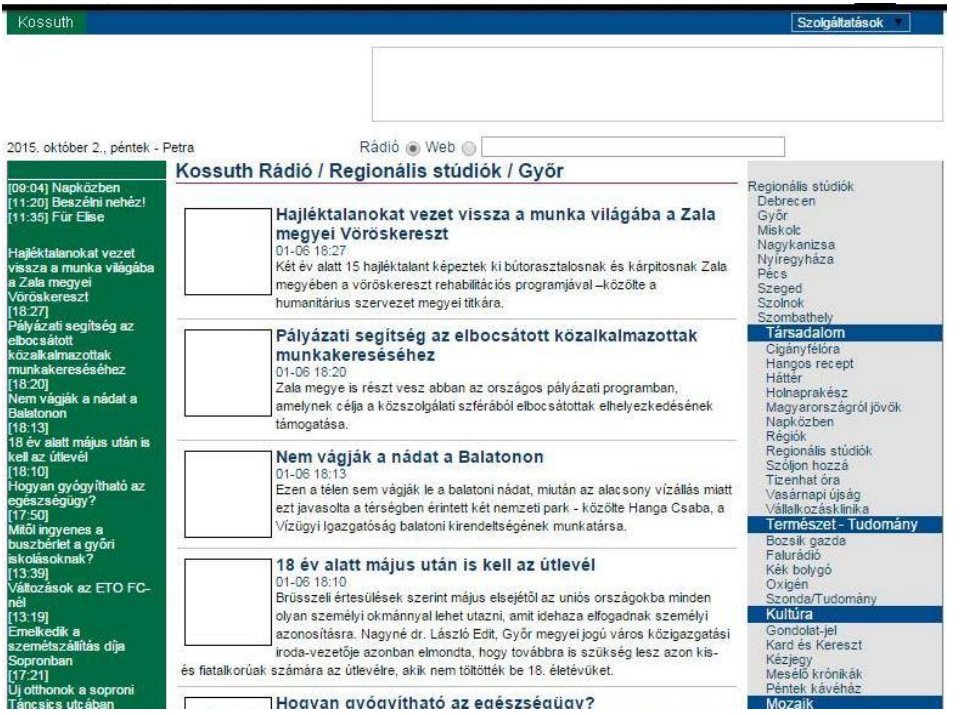
Abstract: Go Online – What to Publish?
Commercial or even public service media program editors, when faced with the dilemma between the terms online and on air, they unquestionably and unanimously opt for on air. However, the choices and way of online publishing of the functions of national radio divide their unity. Some would only share informative functions; others would include educational, entertainment and heritage-preservation contents as well. How does communication with the audience happen online? Is public service media suitable for this function at all? Another significant question is the accessibility of the content: PC only, PC and mobile applications, or primarily mobile applications and everything else only secondarily. In my present writing, I am researching these topics.

Keywords: public service media, online, information, education, entertainment.

BBC, perceived as the founder of public service media, set its objectives in its Charter: information, education and entertainment. The basic principles laid down by George V. (BBC, 1927) have not considerably changed in the last 80 years, had only been shaped by the demands of the actual era. Naturally, the first Royal Charter could not mention the significance of Internet, however, the basic regulations issued by Elisabeth II. in 2006 discusses television, radio and online separately. It is plausible, as at the time online publishing of contents started to boom worldwide. Holznagel pointed out the significance of online services six years earlier (BBC, 2006). The issue was brought up multiple times by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe as well. The year 2007 was a cornerstone, when pursuant of the study written by Nissen (Nissen, 2006) the 3rd Recommendation of the Committee of Presidents discussing the role of public service media in the information society was endorsed. Its significance manifested in the fact that the idea of public service media was extended beyond the boundaries of radio and television broadcast to include Internet and online services.

By the early 2000s the requirements set towards a public service media service provider became obvious in Hungary as well, however, opinions regarding the necessity of online appearance and—if any—the functions of public service media presentable online, as well as the methods of presenting thereof significantly differed. Then practice decided everything. Shortly after the start of Magyar Rádió's website, regional stations could also engage in online publishing of their 'own' content. It was their own, in the sense that they had to ensure continuous updating of the content. However, the website

was embedded in the website of Kossuth Rádió. The image below was taken of the website in January 2004. On the left side of the screen the titles of the news articles are shown, indicating the time of upload. On the right side, the regional studios of the Magyar Rádió are listed alphabetically, followed by the programs of Kossuth Rádió, thematically grouped, featuring such reputable programs as 'Magyarországról jövök' (I'm Coming From Hungary), 'Napközben' (Daytime), '16 óra' (16 Hours), 'Vasárnapi újság' (Sunday News) labeled 'society', or programs surviving even until today, such as 'Bozsik gazda' (Farmer Bozsik), 'Oxigén' (Oxygen) and 'Falurádió' (Village Radio) (the latter modified in its title and content as well) under the topic 'nature - science'.



As it is visible on the image taken in August 2003, the website exclusively included news in readable format that were broadcast in the radio news. There were no educational and entertainment programs, no background material and readers could not comment the content.

Nothing was highlighted on the—in retrospect very simple—website, all the news were listed in a uniform manner, their order was solely determined by the time of their completion, or rather the time of upload. Journalists, if it was possible, had to photo-

graph the events they worked on; however, this could not always be the case. In the Győr newsroom, where the cited website was prepared, there was a camera specifically for this purpose, but the fast pace of the events, or the distance they happened from each other, in some cases even the lack of technical capability of the journalists hindered efforts directed at the actual photography. In such cases, the news editor searched in his archives or online and a suitable picture was either found or not.

The initiative was accepted very well by the audience, the journalists working in peer media and—as a result of serious efforts to convince them—our own colleagues as well. It was interesting to observe that our news appeared on other websites as well and they were broadcast by local radio stations operating in our coverage area. We were entirely helpless against these obvious thefts. We acknowledged that we are perceived as a trustworthy source of news and from time to time our news articles are 'cited' verbatim, 'of course' without any source indication, suggesting that they were of their own. Not only the Győr newsroom, but all regional newsroom of Magyar Rádió faced this phenomenon. From then on not only radio and press news wandered over to the internet, but also the news from online platforms.

The Media Act issued in 2010 specified for the public service media to play a significant role in the research of new digital and online media services and their exploitation for the purposes of common interests. Its exact meaning was specified in the Public Service Media Codex issued in the following year. It is an interesting coincidence that during the heydays of the radio, László Németh regarded it as an opportunity to patch up a nation broken in thousand pieces (Németh, 1934), the Public Service Media Codex

regards Internet as the pillar supporting the preservation of national culture. The statement is by all means valid regarding the fact that the wider the spectrum of the instruments used for the attainment of the goal, the more people our message gets through to. If we approach the issue from the media consumers' side, we arrive to the same conclusion; with the spread of the Internet more and more people use online contents as a source of information. However, I would warn program editors from handling Internet as an exclusive source of information. In this case, on one hand, the media would only release entirely or almost entirely the same news; on the other hand, we would face the danger of unverified pieces of information. The former news director of the 'Magyar Távirati Iroda' (Hungarian News Agency) draws the attention for the dangers of stolen news articles in one of his writings (Pach, 2007, 74) for a reason. It is another issue that if the radio station wants to keep up with today's requirements, the broadcast content should practically be released online as soon as possible, as the use of Internet and the Internet as an information source is more and more widespread. While in 2008 young people most often engaged in watching TV in their free time, by 2012 computer activities and surfing on the internet took over. (Nagy, 2013, 218).

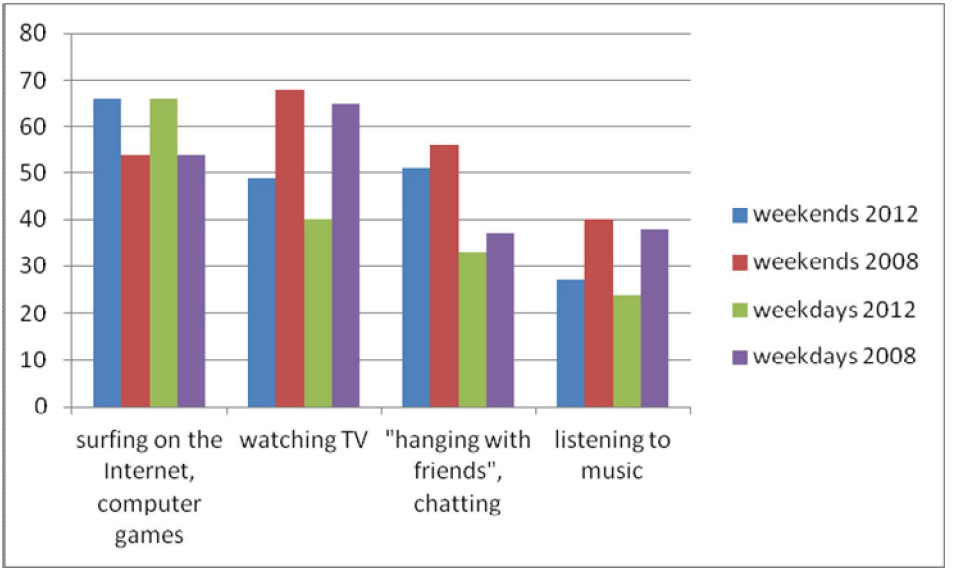


Table No. 1. Pastime activities ("What are you doing most often in your free time?")
source: Own article based on 'Magyar ifjúság' (Hungarian Youth) 2012.

Back to the previous thought, the question is still the same: what are we intending to get through to the audience online, more accurately, online as well? If we consider BBC's Charter, it is certain that we aim at information, education and entertainment—

online as well: to inform people about the events happening in the world around them, in other words about politics, public life and economic happenings. The public service media news will be presented in a readable form on PC, tablets and smart phones as well. The latter has to be emphasized, since lately the use of smart phones is skyrocketing to unprecedented heights. The trend is exemplified by the USA, where slightly more than 20% of the 12-24 years olds does not use anything but smart phones, and the number of smart phone users among the population over 55 has almost doubled over the course of two years.

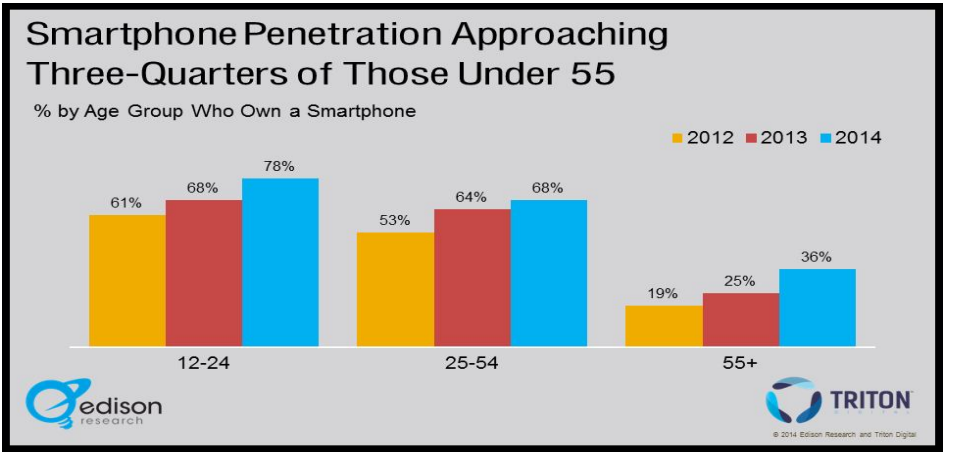
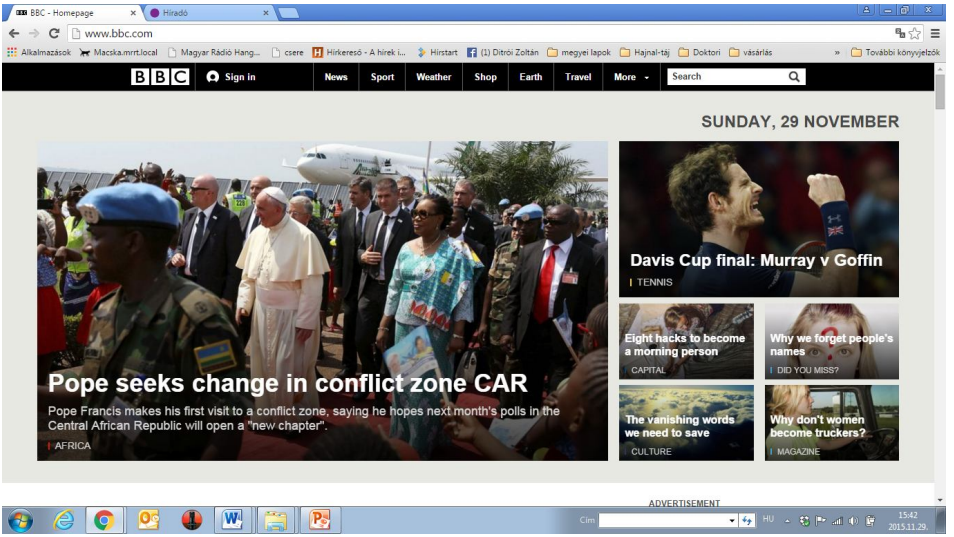
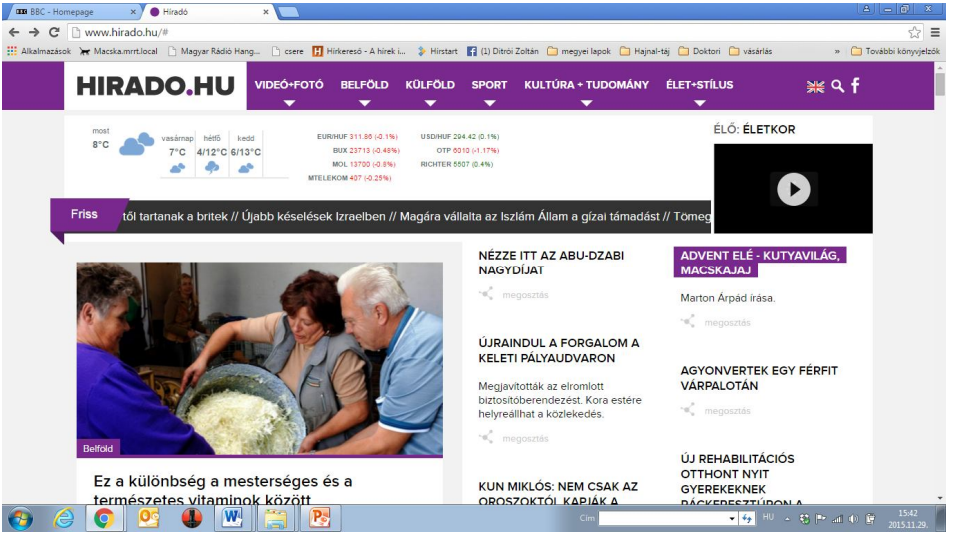


Figure No. 2. The percentage of smart phone owners in the USA 2012-2014
source: Edison Research (2014)

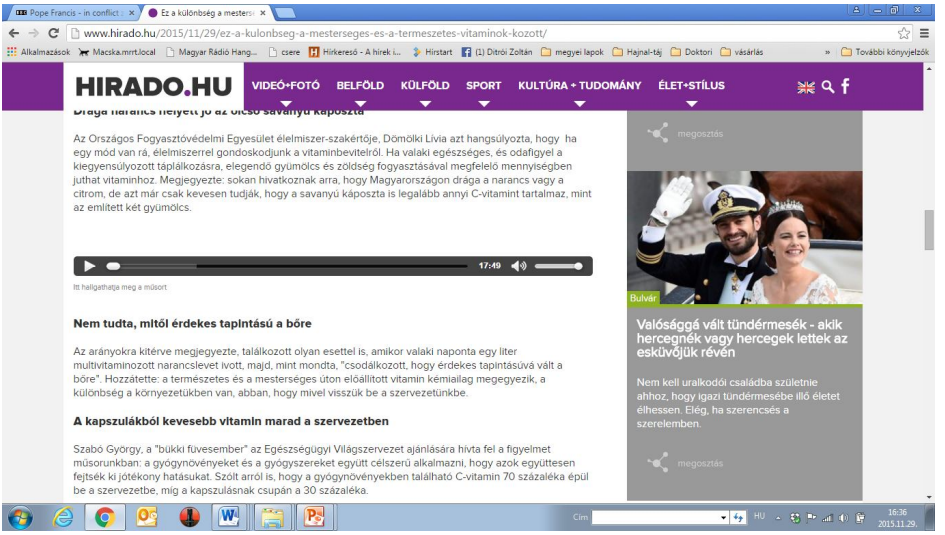
If we compare the BBC's and the MTVA's (the primary producer of Hungarian public service media programs) website, the difference is obvious. The British site entices readers with many photos and the resulting colours, the Hungarian one applies more less of those. The latter has an advantage of not having to insert headlines in a coloured photograph; therefore, the black letters against a white background are easier to read than their counterparts on the BBC website.



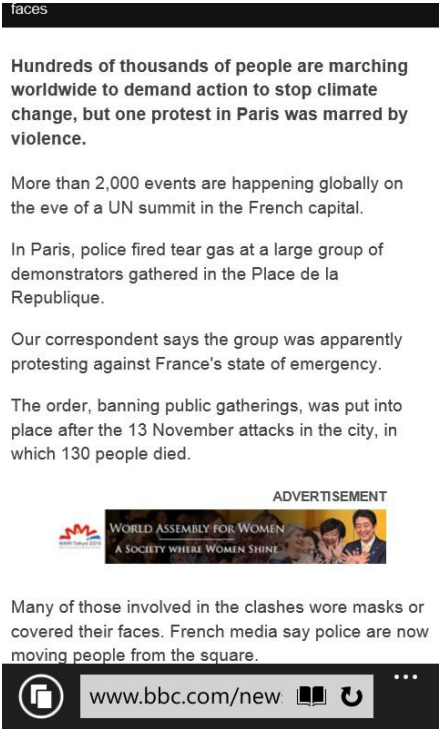


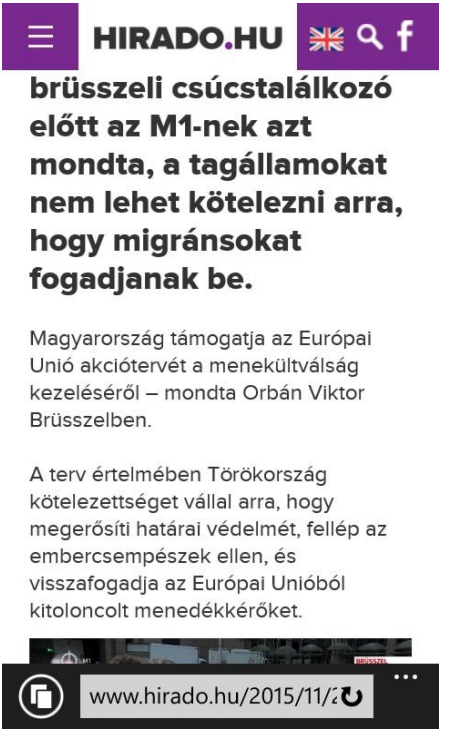
Immersing in the news deeper, we find the following differences: The editors of both websites use font size 12. The Hungarians use font type ProxiNormal, whereas their British counterparts the little rounder, thus in my opinion more readable Helvetica. The next difference is that the British paragraphs contain maximum three lines, while

the Hungarian ones sometimes go on for more than five. These two, seemingly insignificant differences add up to a website that is significantly more convenient for the readers using a PC, to the benefit of BBC.



For said reasons, the leading broadcast stations—both commercial and public service televisions or radios—following the latest trend, have aimed their developments to mobile phones. Initially, public service news was only made available for PCs, with no mobile applications whatsoever. By today, developers have solved this problem, and the news are easily accessible on mobile phones, moreover, in my opinion, this platform makes their reading even more convenient than on BBC.





The news broadcast by the Hungarian public service media is available online as well. The TV News, radio programs ‘Krónika’ (Chronicle) and ‘180 perc’ (180 Minutes) can be followed live on mediaklikk.hu. Moreover, similarly to all other programs of Kosssuth Rádió and Bartók Rádió, they are archived for 60 days. Radio programs can be listened to on the website hangtar.radio.hu, for 60 days after the date of the original broadcast.

Besides the programs about public life and politics, other news can be read at mediaklikk.hu, mostly to advertise the respective program. Sometimes the program itself is available for listening as well, like for example G7, a program of an economy topic.

The educational, informative functions of public media are present on the Internet as well, exemplified by the initiative of Bartók Rádió to describe opera plots. This page does not only detail the content, from act to act, but provides information about the circumstances under which it was created and of course about the author as well. A selection of 120 operas awaits the visitors.

Another society group was targeted by a program of Petőfi Rádió, titled 'dr. Zenehouse' (Music House MD), which made listeners privy to the secrets of electronic music. For educational purposes, the editors decided to store all the programs on petofilive.hu, where all the episodes can be listened to, shedding light to the various techniques, equipment, electronic tricks, everything in connection with this genre.

One of the benefits of public media, if not the most significant one, is its archives. From time to time, programs present a special moment from the archives of 90 years of radio and the whole material is available for researchers as well, yet these priceless recordings are almost inaccessible for the public. The collection processing the sound memoires from 1956 represents the heritage preservation function. The material recorded on the scenes of the revolution, starting the 23rd of October all the way to the 7th of November, follow the events from day to day, from hour to hour. Imre Nagy's 4th of November radio speech, as well as János Kádár's, Zoltán Tildy's and Pál Maléter's can be replayed. From the other side, one can listen to the memoires of one of the Csíkszereda convicts, the memoire of the commander of Hungarian National Guard or the one from a volunteer ambulance man, or the one presented by the on-scene radio correspondent. Even vintage press releases about the 1956 events can be viewed in the compilation on the website radio.hu.

The fact that mediaklikk.hu offers poems for our listening can be regarded both as educational and entertainment function. The episodes of *Vers napról napra* (Daily Poem) can be recapped for the already mentioned 60 days. Even comments about a poet by their peers, critics or a relative are published here. These short quotes are also read out in the program. Another opportunity regarding poetry is the full release of *Vers-maraton* (Poem Marathon). Hungarian poets recited their own poems on the Day of Poetry. The productions from 2014 and 2015 lasting for 12 hours each can be reviewed in 60 minutes long segments.

Public media provides opportunity for listeners, viewers to express their opinions about the various programs and to comment the topics live, via e-mail or sms or online. The latter is exemplified by the programs *Napközben* (Daytime) and *Közelről* (Zooming), meanwhile the telephone communication characterizes the programs *Hajnal-táj* (Around Dawn) broadcast by Kossuth Rádio and the request shows of Dankó Rádió.

However, all channels can be contacted via Facebook, where visitors can read trailers of the programs or listen to interviews that are sometimes linked by the very interviewee. And, of course, visitors can comment everything here. All the news articles—similarly to BBC—can be liked, shared and of course commented on Facebook and Twitter.

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