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IS AN OTT PLATFORM FOR KIDS THE SOLUTION? An analysis of content and strategies for reaching young audiences in PSM in Catalonia (Spain)**

Abstract

Public service media (PSM) face challenges in their adaptation to the digital era within a context of platformisation, with young audiences being the least engaged with them. Taking a case-study approach, this article examines the content and distribution strategies of Catalan PSM (CCMA) in Spain for reaching children and young people. Using a qualitative methodology consisting of content observation, document consultation, interviews and a focus group, this study explores one of the main challenges for PSM, which is to connect with young audiences. The results show that budget cuts affected innovation within the CCMA, which in turn impacted on its creation of new programming and its presence on digital platforms and in the digital sphere. An over-the-top (OTT) platform for children's content was launched in 2022 after many years of hardly any new CCMA strategies for reaching this target audience.

Keywords

PSM, children's programming; young audiences; innovation; platformisation; OTT.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Public service media (PSM) have been analysed over different historical periods and from different angles, including their functions, funding and governance. The digital adaptation of PSM has been one of the key debates in recent decades but, since 2020, the focus has shifted towards understanding the role of PSM within the context of platformisation.

Platformisation is understood as the phenomenon of the mainstreaming of platforms, many of which are in the hands of large multinational companies, thereby transforming the communication ecosystem¹. Children and young people make it necessary for PSM to embrace digital dynamics in order to guarantee universality.

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¹ A. Helmond, “The Platformization of the Web: Making Web Data Platform Ready”, *Social Media + Society*, 2015: 1-11. Accessed April 5, 2023. DOI: 10.1177/2056305115603080; M. Pérez *et al.*, “Niños,

The digitalisation of content and on-demand multiplex consumption have led European PSM to create transmedia experiences to attract young audiences². In fact, children and young people's programming and content distribution have been core issues in the analysis of PSM for many years, and they are currently linked to the platformised communications scenario.

The COVID-19 pandemic showed that PSM that generated and distributed their own content were essential agents for children and young people. In this sense, innovative and informative content for young audiences was created by some PSM outlets, such as *Diario di casa* by RAI in Italy and *Allô Okoo* by France TV in France. Similarly, educational content was developed for home learning, such as *RTÉ Learn* by RTÉ in Ireland, *Szkola Z* by TVP in Poland, *Lumni* by France TV in France, and *Aprendemos en casa* by RTVE in Spain³.

In addition to the strategies that emerged during the pandemic, there were platforms that promoted the creation of communities around young people's interests and styles. Examples of these initiatives include *17* by NRK in Norway, *Yadabat* by RTS in Switzerland, *Océan* by France TV in France, *Anne+* by NPO in the Netherlands, *Throwback89* by ARD in Germany, and *PlayZ* by RTVE in Spain.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PLATFORMISATION, YOUNG AUDIENCES AND NEW CONSUMPTION HABITS

PSM face challenges in adapting to the digital era within the context of platformisation⁴. Innovation (in terms of formats and distribution) is necessary when confronted with technological evolution and audience fragmentation, and also for companies to distinguish themselves from their competitors in the media ecosystem⁵.

Subscription-based platforms are enjoying great success, as an increasing number of media markets have replaced traditional television, especially among young audiences⁶. Platforms enable content to be adapted to diverse audiences, and special attention is being paid to young people and their new consumption models, primarily via social media, to generate more engagement⁷. Among the most pressing challenges for PSM is the

niñas y adolescentes, revolución del consumo audiovisual. El impacto de las plataformas en línea en España", *Anàlisi: Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 65 (2021): 155-172. Accessed March 25, 2023. DOI: 10.5565/rev/analisi.3292.

² A. Larrondo, "Scope and Difficulties of the Transmedia Practice. A Case Study on the Spanish PSM System", *Journalism Practice*, 14, 8 (2019): 991-1007. Accessed March 30, 2023. DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2019.1679036.

³ A. Cañedo, A.I. Segovia, "La plataforma de los medios de comunicación de servicio público. Una reflexión desde la economía política de la comunicación", in *Gestión de medios públicos en el entorno digital. Nuevos valores, estrategias multiplataforma e internet de servicio público*, edited by M. Goyanes and M. Campos-Rueda, Valencia: Tirant Humanidades, 2022, 65-88.

⁴ Helmond, "The Platformization of the Web: Making Web Data Platform Ready"; Cañedo, Segovia, "La plataforma de los medios de comunicación de servicio público"; T. Poell, D.B. Nieborg, B.E. Duffy, *Platforms and Cultural Production*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022.

⁵ T. Zaragoza, J. García, "Development of Journalistic Innovation in Public Television: The Case of RTVE Lab", *Hipertext.net*, 17 (2018): 11-21. Accessed April 1, 2023. DOI: 10.31009/hipertext.net.2018.i17.02.

⁶ A. Albarran et al., *Handbook of Media Management and Economics*, New York: Routledge, 2012; T. Evens, K. Donders, *Platform Power and Policy in Transforming Television Markets*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

⁷ European Broadcasting Union, "Youth Report: What Works", 2022. Accessed April 1, 2023, <https://www.ebu.ch/publications/strategic/membersonly/report/youth-report-what-works>.

redefinition of their relationship with the audience, especially among so-called problematic groups with distinctive characteristics and needs, such as young viewers/listeners⁸.

Young people are the least engaged with PSM⁹ as they have diversified consumption habits through digital platforms, but they remain important to the operation and survival of PSM¹⁰. Young audiences “constitute the most vulnerable public and, at the same time, one of the most complex ones to retain once they reach adolescence”¹¹.

Universality and diversity are traditional goals assigned to PSM. Nowadays, however, reaching everyone, including younger viewers, has become more difficult. *The Public Service Media and Public Service Internet Manifesto* warns that access to innovative, critical and high-quality content must be provided with attention to audience diversity¹².

PSM outlets have traditionally targeted niche audiences, that is, those that private media outlets do not cater for due to high costs. PSM outlets are the ones that offer quality content aimed at specific cultural groups and ethnic minorities, promote language diversity and develop specific platforms for children and young audiences¹³. Domestically produced children’s television requires regulatory intervention, as engagement with young audiences often cannot survive economically¹⁴.

In the European context, PSM outlets have traditionally focused on young audiences, creating specialised channels and high-quality programming¹⁵. Children and young people have been considered ‘a strategic field of activity’ and an area of expansion in PSM¹⁶, and most public companies in Europe have channels or online brands that specifically cater for them, including the following: CBeebies for children aged under 6 years and CBBC for children aged 7 to 12 years in the United Kingdom; Ki.Ka in Germany; Gulli in France; Rai Yoyo for children aged under 8 years and Rai Gulp for older children in Italy; Z@pp/Z@ppelin in the Netherlands; Ketnet in Belgium; Clan in Spain; and NRK Super in Norway¹⁷.

Most of these brands have become platforms, as younger viewers watch less traditional television and prefer to spend their time streaming, engaging with social media

⁸ M.A. Horowitz, H. Nieminen, “Diversidad y derechos. Conectando la reforma de los medios y los medios de servicio público”, in *IC-Revista Científica de Información y Comunicación*, 14 (2017): 103-156. Accessed April 6, 2023. DOI: 10.12795/IC.2017.i01.04; D. Buckingham, “A Special Audience? Children and Television”, in *A Companion to Television*, edited by J. Wasko, London: Blackwell, 2005, 468-486.

⁹ T. Raats, K. Dönders, P. Ramsey, “Platforms, People and Politics: The Challenges for Public Service Media in Ireland”, *Journal of Digital Media & Policy*, 2022. Accessed April 18, 2023. DOI: 10.1386/jdmp_00109_1.

¹⁰ J. Izquierdo-Castillo, “La televisión pública y la audiencia infantil: valores y funciones en la era digital”, *Análisi: Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 66 (2022): 155-170. Accessed May 1, 2023. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/analisi.3345>

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² C. Fuchs, K. Unterberger, “Public Service Media and Public Service Internet Manifesto”, University of Westminster Press, 2021.

¹³ Cañedo, Segovia, “La plataforma de los medios de comunicación de servicio público”.

¹⁴ J. Steemers, “Industry Engagement with Policy on Public Service Television for Children: BBC Charter Review and the Public Service Content Fund”, *Media Industries Journal*, 4, 1 (2017): 37-61. Accessed April 18, 2023. DOI: 10.3998/mij.15031809.0004.107.

¹⁵ W. Hoynes, “Branding Public Service. The ‘New PBS’ and the Privatization of Public Television”, *Television & New Media*, 4, 2 (2003): 117-130. Accessed April 23, 2023. DOI: 10.1177/1527476402250.

¹⁶ A. D’Arma, T. Raats, J. Steemers, “Public Service Media in the Age of SVoDs: A Comparative Study of PSM Strategic Responses in Flanders, Italy and the UK”, *Media, Culture and Society*, 43, 4 (2021): 682-700. DOI: 10.1177/0163443720972909.

¹⁷ J. Steemers, A. D’Arma, “Evaluating and Regulating the Role of Public Broadcasters in the Children’s Media Ecology: The Case of Home-Grown Television Content”, *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 8, 1 (2012): 67-85. Accessed March 15, 2023. DOI: 10.1386/macp.8.1.67_1.

or playing video games¹⁸. Researchers and practitioners have discussed the need for PSM outlets to combine their digital strategies with linear broadcast content, or have questioned whether digital content alone is enough to reach these audiences. In both cases, this multiplatform strategy also fits the belief that PSM should be allowed to use the latest media technologies to serve children in a variety of new ways¹⁹.

Regarding consumption patterns, the results obtained from a 2021 study in Spain reveal that the most common online activity performed by children was watching videos and movies, which they considered more attractive than linear television²⁰. Teenagers combined both methods, spending a weekly average of 5.07 hours on conventional television and 7.94 hours on over-the-top (OTT) platforms.

According to the study, children aged 3 to 6 years spent a daily average of 3.49 hours consuming online audiovisual content, and children aged 7 to 12 years consumed a daily average of 3.61 hours of such content. Regarding the type of content consumed on OTT platforms, the first group opted for children's series and the second for children's movies, whereas teenagers chose fictional movies and series.

Users with greater personalisation and interaction needs, such as teenagers, choose large transnational OTT platforms because of the wide range of audiovisual content offered²¹. In that context, national PSM outlets should provide competitive content to attract young audiences by connecting with their consumption habits.

As young people increasingly turn to video to augment their online learning, PSM outlets should identify priority areas in which trusted, short-form video content could be made readily accessible to those seeking resources via mainstream video and social media platforms²². The first notable example in the European context was the BBC Children's iPlayer, launched in late 2008. Built for an active and activist generation, the player aims to create engaging programming and to offer more personalisation and empowerment²³.

Beyond high-quality content, PSM outlets should offer young audiences innovative content in their first language, enabling their discursive and creative participation. It is a mission of PSM to undertake processes of media socialisation and literacy. However, there is little research supporting the view that a range of children's content benefits their socialisation and healthy cultural development²⁴.

Faced with the dynamics of audiovisual-content globalisation, where power is concentrated in large OTT platforms²⁵, PSM outlets promote cultural proximity²⁶. In smaller

¹⁸ V. Rideout, *The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens in America, A Common Sense Media Research Study*, United States, 2015. Accessed March 1, 2023. DOI: 10.3886/ICPSR38018.

¹⁹ Steemers, D'Arma, "Evaluating and Regulating the Role of Public Broadcasters in the Children's Media Ecology".

²⁰ Pérez *et al.*, "Niños, niñas y adolescentes, revolución del consumo audiovisual. El impacto de las plataformas en línea en España".

²¹ J. Marsh *et al.*, *The Online and Offline Digital Literacy Practices of Young Children: A Review of the Literature*, Brussels: COST Action, 2017; Pérez *et al.*, "Niños, niñas y adolescentes, revolución del consumo audiovisual. El impacto de las plataformas en línea en España"; E. Prado, "El audiovisual on line over the top: El futuro del audiovisual europeo y español", in *Informe sobre el estado de la cultura en España: Igualdad y diversidad en la era digital*, Madrid: Fundación Alternativas, 2017, 127-144.

²² M. Bulger *et al.*, "The Missing Middle: Reimagining a Future for Tweens, Teens and Public Media", Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop, 2021.

²³ J. Asher, "Why Public Service Media Need To Place Our Trust in the 'Lean in' Generation", in *Our Children's Future: Does Public Service Media Matter?*, The Children's Media Foundation, 2021.

²⁴ D. Buckingham, *The Material Child: Growing up in Consumer Culture*, Cambridge: Polity, 2011.

²⁵ N. Srnicek, *Capitalismo de plataformas*, Caja Negra, 2018.

²⁶ J.D. Straubhaar, "Rethinking Cultural Proximity: Multiple Television Flows for Multilayered Cultural Identities", Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, TBA,

cultural and linguistic areas, such as Catalonia, the relevance of PSM is important in terms of normalising and promoting the use of a minority language, especially for children. Connecting with young audiences – the largest consumers of audiovisual technology – is important to guarantee the maintenance of symbolic representation. Likewise, it is one of the main drivers for ensuring the existence of a future PSM audience.

3. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Taking a case-study approach²⁷, this article examines the content and distribution strategies of Catalan PSM (Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals, CCMA) in Spain for reaching young audiences. Case studies help to analyse contemporary phenomena in relation to their context²⁸. By providing up-to-date information and exploring PSM-related trends and challenges, this study contributes to international debates on PSM and children and young people within a context of platformisation.

Historically, PSM outlets in Catalonia have been active in creating children and young people's programming, but there is a paucity of literature linking an analysis of content for these audiences to platformisation dynamics. This study excludes local PSM and focuses solely on regional PSM, since the CCMA is the actor that concentrates the most on children and young people's programming strategies in Catalonia.

The general research question for this article is as follows:

- What innovation strategies does the CCMA have in terms of content production and distribution when targeting children and young people within the context of platformisation?

The specific research questions are as follows:

- What strategies have historically been used to reach children and young people by PSM outlets in Catalonia?

- What are the CCMA's goals for reaching a young audience?

- What are the outcomes of the CCMA's strategies for reaching young people?

- What challenges is the CCMA facing in terms of providing content and connecting with young audiences?

Using a qualitative methodology consisting of content observation, document consultation, interviews and a focus group, together with quantitative data provided by the CCMA, this study explores one of the main challenges for PSM. The fieldwork consisted of two in-depth interviews with (1) Enric Casas, board member of the Catalan Audiovisual Council (CAC) – the regulatory authority – and (2) Cristina Villà, director of innovation, research and digital strategy of the CCMA, which is the regional PSM corporation. The participants in the focus group were Catalan 19- and 20-year-olds. The session lasted an hour and the participants discussed the CCMA strategies being used to connect with them at that time, and the ones it used to use to connect with them when they were younger²⁹.

Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 2008. Accessed March 23, 2023. http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p232732_index.html.

²⁷ B. Flyvbjerg, "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research", *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12, 2 (2006): 219-245. Accessed February 26, 2023. DOI: 10.1177/1077800405284363.

²⁸ R.K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Thousand Oaks, 2009.

²⁹ The interviews were carried out on the 21st of January 2023 (CAC) and the 18th of April 2023 (CCMA). The focus group was developed on the 23rd of March 2023.

4. THE STRATEGIES OF CATALAN PSM OUTLETS FOR REACHING YOUNG AUDIENCES

4.1. *The evolution of children's content at the CCMA*

The kids' programme *Club Super3* first aired on the CCMA's generalist channel TV3 in February 1991. It was a 'content-programme' that broadcast mostly cartoons. It also had the dynamics of a club that children of any age (up to 14 years) could join to take part in a variety of activities it offered. From 1996, there was also an annual club party called *Festa dels Súpers*³⁰. After 30 years on air, the club had 1.6 million members, making it the biggest in Catalonia.

In 2006, the *Club Super3* programme was revamped with a new style and characters and, in 2009, it became a channel, Super3. It shared a schedule with a series channel after the CCMA offering had been redefined due to the digital terrestrial television (DTT) switchover. According to the CCMA, bringing Catalan programming to new viewers was essential, as was offering quality content adapted to the needs and characteristics of a particularly sensitive age group³¹. The launch of the channel was accompanied by an online strategy, including a redefinition of the website that provided on-demand content (*Super3 a la carta*) which enhanced the site's video elements and contained all the programmes. Games became one of the strengths of the site, bringing in half of the audience.

From 2010, the CCMA chose to combine all children and young people's programming into a single channel, with two slots (day and night): Super3 during the daytime and 3XL from 9:30 pm onwards, with the latter targeting teenagers and young people under the age of 29. There was a clear predominance of third-party productions on the channel, which represented three quarters of all programming³². Lafaurie noted: "the little attention being given to the generation of in-house products by public television outlets that have chosen to include children's channels as priority options for that target audience"³³.

Among the CCMA's own productions were *La família del Super3*, which identified with the club and had specific characters; *Info K*, a newscast adapted to a young audience; and some animated series, such as *Les tres bessones* or *Els Futtis*. In 2012, due to budget cuts, Super3 was merged with the culture channel El 33, and 3XL was shut down³⁴.

In the 2010s, the CCMA faced years of economic constraints because of the economic crisis that badly affected Spain and Catalonia, and therefore its public media due

³⁰ A. Fernández, "Televisió pública i convergència: Continguts infantils y juvenils crossmedia a la CCMA i EITB", PhD diss., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2014. The club members have discounts for family activities and can participate to contests. Moreover, the club is popular for congratulating all kids for their birthday, with their name and age appearing on the screen -now also on the website-. The club members are regularly called to send videos to be broadcasted. The membership is materialized with a card, which has its digital version. The club creates a feeling of belonging that attract kids, both for off-screen activities but also to consume contents.

³¹ CCMA, "Memòria anual d'activitats", 2009. Accessed April 2023. <https://statics.ccma.cat/multimedia/pdf/nohash/memoria-anual-2009.pdf>

³² Fernández, "Televisió pública i convergència".

³³ A. Lafaurie, "Interactividad en contenidos multiplataforma (TDT i Internet) dirigidos a audiencias infantiles: un análisis a partir de casos de TVE i TVC", *Comunicació. Revista de recerca i d'anàlisi*, 28, 2 (2011): 149. DOI: 10.2436/20.3008.01.89.

³⁴ Fernández, "Televisió pública i convergència".

to cutbacks in the public budget and a decline in advertising. At the CCMA's Parliamentary Control Committee held in 2022, the CCMA's president, Rosa Romà, reported: "taking public and private resources together, we have €157 million less in available resources than we had ten years ago"³⁵.

The capacity to innovate or to create new projects was limited, and efforts were focused on the generalist channel TV3 instead of prioritising other areas, such as strategies for young audiences. As a result, the Super3/33 channel reached a historic low in terms of viewership in September 2019. The channel share was 0.6 per cent, three times lower than the leading kids' DTT channel Clan (by RTVE, which broadcasts in Spanish)³⁶. The same source reveals that none of the 18 series that had more than 50,000 viewers aged 4 to 12 years was broadcast by the CCMA (11 were broadcast by Clan, 5 by Disney and 2 by Boing).

Original production accounted for just 15 per cent of Super3's content in 2019, and the capacity to buy programmes fell by 20 per cent³⁷. During a session about the CCMA at the Catalan Parliament, the CCMA's former president, Núria Llorach, complained about the situation, arguing that even though Super3 was a strategic channel, it did not receive enough funding³⁸.

Regarding radio, the CCMA's programming has historically been aimed more at parents and educators than at kids, with programmes such as *Eduqueu les criatures* (2006-2010), *L'ofici d'educar* (2014-) and *KidsX3* (2020-). *Adolescents iCat* (2018-) is the digital radio programme aimed at teenagers aged 13 to 18 years, while *Adolescents XL* (2020-) targets young people and is broadcast daily at 11 pm on the generalist radio channel Catalunya Ràdio. *El búnquer* (2020-), a comedy programme broadcast daily at 9 pm on Catalunya Ràdio, is popular among young people, who mostly listen to it as either an audio podcast or a video podcast. Finally, the cultural public radio station iCat offers *Lofi* (2022-), in which the presenters are communicators who are popular with young people on social media.

In both radio and television, the 2010s were characterised by a limited number of programmes for children and young people. Since 2022, a number of initiatives have been launched to try and turn that situation around.

4.2. Children and young people's offerings in platformised dynamics

In terms of content and quality standards, the CCMA had overlooked young audiences for many years according to a CAC board member (Casas, 2023, personal interview). After a period of producing little content for children and of not integrating it into platforms to meet new consumption habits, the CCMA launched the SX3 OTT platform in October 2022. The platform, accessible via an app (compatible with all types of audio-

³⁵ Catalan Parliament, "Diari de sessions del Parlament de Catalunya de la Comissió de Control de l'Actuació de la Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals", October 16, 2022. Accessed July 2023. <https://www.parlament.cat/document/dspcc/318419246.pdf>.

³⁶ À. Gutiérrez, "Mínim històric al canal Super3: radiografia d'una renúncia". *Ara.cat*, December 10, 2019. Accessed March 12, 2023. https://www.ara.cat/media/minim-historic-super3-radiografia-renuncia_1_1047453.html.

³⁷ Gutiérrez, "Mínim històric al canal Super3: radiografia d'una renúncia".

³⁸ Catalan Parliament, "Diari de sessions del Parlament de Catalunya de la Comissió de Control de l'Actuació de la Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals", October 4, 2019. Accessed April 2023. <https://www.parlament.cat/document/dspcc/65110070.pdf>.

visual devices, including mobile phones, tablets and smart TVs) and a website, divides content by two age groups: S3 for toddlers and X3 for children and pre-teens. It includes linear broadcasts (the same as those on DTT) and on-demand services.

This strategy focused on conveying more energy and dynamism and was accompanied by new social media accounts under the name of Som SX3 (which translates as ‘We Are SX3’) on YouTube, Spotify and TikTok, among others. These new dynamics embraced the creation of native content in the codes of each platform as well as hybrid formats with a major video component to target a more segmented audience (Vilà, 2023, personal interview).

The platform provides a dozen new video programmes and also expands audio content with the podcasts *Van fer història* and *Superheroïnes de l’esport*. The S3 Alexa skill offers a collection of stories in audio format aimed at children aged 2 to 5 years, who can enjoy them without the need for a screen³⁹. These podcasts are available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Amazon Music and iVoox.

SX3 retains the possibility of club membership, offering members a virtual card instead of a physical one. The card gives them access to activities and experiences in Catalonia. The channel includes games, quizzes, drawing tools and the new Zona S3 and Zona X3, which are spaces designed for building community and promoting participation. Moreover, it offers content dedicated to families and schools, with articles, proposals, activities and resources intended to accompany their role as tutors.

Registration is not mandatory to use the platform. However, registration is the only way to analyse audiences better and to offer recommendations. For registered users, the system personalises its programme recommendations based on their preferences. At the same time, the CCMA gathers users’ data.

According to the CCMA’s annual report, SX3 is a driver of cohesion and an integration tool for transmitting values to children. and it plays a role in the promotion of the Catalan language⁴⁰. Externally produced programmes still predominate: 80 per cent of the platform’s content is produced outside the CCMA, 15 per cent is produced in house, and 5 per cent is co-produced.

The launch of the specific platform for kids was accompanied by the release of *Eufòria*, a music contest targeting families (kids/teenagers and parents) and young people, which also includes transmedia dynamics: a Twitch channel and a podcast that amplify information after the programme; an app that allows audience interaction; a summer camp for kids aged 8 to 14 years; and other social media accounts such as the one on Instagram, in which news are posted. All participants in the two editions (March-June 2022 and March-June 2023) were aged 16 to 30 years, and diversity and inclusion criteria were considered in the selection of contestants. Moreover, in July 2023, the CCMA announced EVA, a new brand for content aimed at young audiences on social media.

In a short period of time, the CCMA had boosted its social media presence and its content for children and young people, in consideration of the fact that reaching young audiences needed to be a priority (Casas, 2023, personal interview).

³⁹ CCMA, “El nou SX3, en marxa a partir de dilluns: totalment renovat, amb gran oferta de continguts i disponible a tot arreu”. CCMA.cat, October 7, 2022a. Accessed April 2023 <https://www.ccma.cat/premsa/el-nou-sx3-en-marxa-a-partir-de-dilluns-totalment-renovat-amb-gran-oferta-de-continguts-i-disponible-a-tot-arreu/nota-de-premsa/3188733/>.

⁴⁰ CCMA, “Estat d’informació financera”, 2022b. Accessed April 2023. <https://statics.ccma.cat/multimedia/pdf/7/2/1681988317627.pdf>

4.3. Are children and young people consuming content from Catalan PSM outlets?

The general belief that young people are disengaged from PSM outlets is confirmed if we look at the Catalan PSM audience. The viewers of Catalan public DTT channels decreased in the decade 2012-2022, especially among those aged 13 and 14 years (Generation Z). The numbers also dropped substantially among kids in Generation Alpha (aged under 12 years) and among Millennials (aged 25 to 44 years). According to the CCMA, more than 80 per cent of teenagers and young people aged 13 to 24 years in Catalonia consumed public channels in 2012, whereas only 50% per cent did so in 2022⁴¹. In terms of radio, young audiences are also disengaged: the percentage of those aged under 34 years who listen to the generalist radio station is below 8 per cent.

In the focus group with 20 young people (aged 19 to 20 years) on how PSM outlets could reach young audiences, the predominant idea was that the CCMA has been slow in adapting to young people's consumption habits. Moreover, the participants complained about the lack of information regarding its strategies: "a marketing campaign to reach the young audience is missing, like communicating the launch of the SX3 platform, for example" (a focus group participant, 2023). They felt that PSM outlets had overlooked their generation, offering only a limited number of cartoons in Catalan. Due to the huge number of platforms used by young people to consume audiovisual content, the participants argued that it was difficult to reconnect with PSM, despite their recent digital strategies of developing more apps and engaging more with social media.

The CCMA management assumes that reconnecting with young audiences will take time, especially since the outlet has lacked relevance among this demographic for some time. Nevertheless, the assessment of the first six months after the launch of the SX3 platform in October 2022 has been positive. The data reveal that 3 million viewers had connected to the linear broadcast of S3, and that 1.3 million people had connected monthly, with around 600,000 doing so weekly. Regarding age groups, 125,000 viewers were aged 4 to 12 years, 90,000 between 4 and 9 years, and 35,000 between 10 and 12 years.

In addition to the relevance of the absolute data, SX3 was the second most viewed children's channel on television in February 2023, only surpassed by Boing and ahead of Disney Channel and Clan, according to the data available to the CCMA management. In the 4- to 12-year-old target audience, the channel obtained a 12 to 15 per cent share while leading the 7:30 pm to 10:00 pm timeslot in January 2023.

In the digital landscape, 350,000 unique users accessed SX3 content every month on the CCMA platform via the website, apps, smart TVs. The number of videos watched reached 2.5 million on the CCMA platform, 2 million on YouTube, 600,000 on TikTok and 200,000 on Instagram, the main social media platforms on which SX3 is present. According to the CCMA, there was a growth of 72 per cent in watched videos over one year (2022-2023) thanks to the SX3 platform.

The programme *Eufòria*, through which the CCMA intends to reach young people, is the leading one in terms of share in linear DTT broadcasts and on the Twitch channel, especially among young audiences, reaching a 30 and 40 per cent share among the 4- to 12-year-old group and the 13- to 24-year-old group, respectively, with those aged 9 to 16 years being the most engaged⁴².

⁴¹ CCMA, "Pla Estratègic de la nova CCMA", 2022c. Accessed April 2023 <https://www.ccma.cat/pla-estrategic/>.

⁴² CCMA, "824.000 espectadors van connectar amb la primera gala de la segona temporada d'Eufòria". CCMA.cat, March 11, 2023. Accessed April 1, 2023. <https://www.ccma.cat/premsa/824000-espectadors-van-connectar-amb-la-primera-gala-de-la-segona-temporada-deuforia/nota-de-premsa/3217205/>.

Despite these actions to reconnect with kids and young people, the lack of priority given to high-quality content for these groups over the years is claimed to have affected language and cultural normalisation (Casas, 2023, personal interview). The interviewee argued that the use of the Catalan language in popular culture had decreased due to the limited audiovisual strategies aimed at children.

4.4. *Challenges and strategies for the (near) future*

A new generalist OTT platform for all CCMA content – being launched in 2023 in an initial provisional stage, with the final version becoming ready in 2024 – will incorporate the SX3 platform into its catalogue; the children’s platform will also remain accessible independently (Vilà, 2023, personal interview).

The new platform is expected to improve the current recommendation systems, personalising content according to previous user consumption, localisation and editorial work (Vilà, 2023, personal interview). The goal is to identify trends and create a system for actively listening to citizens on social media and to have a better understanding of the audience. User relationship and consumer data processing tools will be developed for this purpose according to the CCMA interviewee.

The strategy to reconnect with young audiences revolves around the creation of a new social-first vertical channel aimed at generating communities. The first phase consists of building loyalty so that in the second stage, through experiential and transmedia strategies, the audience will mostly use exclusive content on the CCMA’s digital platforms.

To generate content for a young audience, it is considered essential to promote Catalan-speaking influencers to encourage the co-creation of content that connects with emerging audiences (Vilà, 2023, personal interview). The strategy of incorporating influencers as communicators into PSM is viewed with concern by young people (as pointed out in the focus group) because it could mean that PSM hire people based on their following count or digital success rather than their qualifications or ability to provide rigorous content.

The CCMA will also launch a strategy for developing video games in Catalan with a focus on Catalan culture. The CCMA’s priority is to complete multi-device implementation of the SX3 platform with the addition of new features such as expanded audio and a gamified offering with metaverse content. In terms of challenges, offering parental control and security tools will be one, and restricting consumption time will be another.

Finally, the CCMA is aware that the content on offer should not only connect with consumption habits, but also promote values to build a fairer society, which protects vulnerable groups.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the 2010s, budget cuts affected innovation within the CCMA, which in turn impacted on its creation of new programming and its presence on digital platforms. Audiovisual content in Catalan for children and young people was scarce; neither private nor public media outlets provided enough of it. The CCMA was more focused on other strategies, such as maintaining its generalist channel’s leadership.

Regarding television, teenagers and young adults were more overlooked than children. This was highlighted by the shutdown of 3XL in 2012 (aimed at 16- to 25-year-olds) while retaining Super3. However, there was little new programming for many

years, and viewership was falling. As for radio, there was a lack of children's programming, which was only redressed from 2022, with the launch of podcasts on the SX3 OTT platform.

Whilst the trend in Europe has been for PSM outlets to focus on children and young people, this could not be confirmed in the Catalan case⁴³. Despite the importance of these target audiences, the content and distribution strategies between 2010 and 2022 were found to be very limited. This was deemed to have had an impact on Catalan-language normalisation, identity creation and new audience engagement.

An OTT platform for children's content was launched in 2022 after many years of little new audiovisual programming for kids. In the CCMA's catalogue, third-party productions remained predominant while in-house programming was modest. This strategy was accompanied by the creation of a new music programme for young people, with multimedia and transmedia dynamics, resulting in good child and teen audience data.

Despite the delay in implementing strategies to connect with young people and their new consumption habits, the CCMA followed one of the platformisation trends pointed out in the theoretical framework by converting the Super3 brand into the SX3 OTT platform.

The new OTT platform has been found to connect better with children under the age of nine than with teenagers (they have other media habits, and it is difficult to reconnect with them), thus confirming the difficulties of retaining adolescents as PSM viewers/listeners. Offering content for young audiences is important because, as they grow up and become adults, there is a greater likelihood of them being more engaged with PSM outlets. Therefore, children and young people should be considered key audiences of PSM.

Furthermore, PSM outlets should offer content for young audiences via their own platforms and social media accounts in order to provide services overlooked by commercial media channels. This goal reinforces the argument that connecting with children cannot be left to the market.

This study has confirmed that young people, and especially those living in urban areas, are the least engaged with PSM outlets, and that more marketing efforts to reach them are required. Strategies for the near future should consider their diversified consumption habits through digital platforms, especially when such platforms serve a broad range of viewers. Transmedia narratives and the creation of communities in social networks are methods that could help bring viewers to OTT platforms.

It is hoped that plans for introducing metaverses and videogames in Catalan PSM outlets will be key to connecting with a young audience. Finally, improving the current recommendation system on SX3 and on the new OTT platform being launched in 2023 is seen as one of the CCMA's main challenges; it must adapt distribution to the personalised consumption habits of young people without overlooking its public service goals, especially when presenting content to vulnerable groups like children and teenagers.

⁴³ A. D'Arma, J. Steemers, "Public Service Media and Children: Serving the Digital Citizens of the Future", in *Reinventing Public Service Communication*, edited by P. Iosifidis, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 114-127. DOI: 10.1057/9780230277113_10; Hoynes, "Branding Public Service. The 'New PBS' and the Privatization of Public Television".