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FROM #XF6 TO #SERVIZIOPUBBLICO: CROSS-GENRE ANALYSIS OF TV AUDIENCE PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES IN ITALY

Giovanni Boccia Artieri
University of Urbino Carlo Bo, Italy

Laura Gemini
University of Urbino Carlo Bo, Italy

Fabio Giglietto
University of Urbino Carlo Bo, Italy

Mario Orefice
University of Urbino Carlo Bo, Italy

Trans-media usage practices, with a specific reference to the ones that imply strong correlation between TV viewing and online content production, are quickly becoming a fascinating field of study for scholars and practitioners. According to Nielsen, during 2013, about 36 million people sent out 990 million of Tweets about TV (Nielsen SocialGuide 2014). At the same time, growing number of studies focus on users' communicative dynamics while watching specific TV programs or genres (Geerts and De Grooff 2009). From surveys about participatory viewing styles and repertoires (Mitchell et al. 2010, Cesar and Geerts 2011) to market-oriented researches (Proulx and Shepatin 2012), and more general attempts to go beyond Habermasian definition of public sphere (de Zúñiga, Jung, and Valenzuela 2012, Fuchs 2014). From media adoption perspective, Italy seems to be in line with general trend. Showing increasing shares both in TV viewing and Internet usage. In fact while, on the one side, average TV audience in a normal day raised of 1.8% from 2012 and "average time viewed" (the average daily time spent by every TV users) of 1.3% (Nielsen 2013), on the other side, total amount of people using social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, wikis or traditional websites passed from 53,8% to 58,7% (+5%) during 2013 (Istat 2013). Despite this complex and interesting scenario, analyses and researches aimed at highlight some kind of correlations between different TV viewing styles and online contents actually represents an underestimated field of study. Opposite to this trend, this paper presents the first large-scale comparative study of Twitter contributors' behavior in commenting two different types of TV format.

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Trying to validate (or refute) the main assumption according to which, while TV programs based on pure entertainment are more likely to develop within participatory audience some kind of self-representative or conversational practice tout court, political TV show viewing should be mainly focused on developing a sort of conversation-based civic engagement in which information as well as communication production and sharing appear to be highly covered with political/civic sense (Bruns and Stieglitz 2012). Therefore, we will especially attempt to answer the following research questions:
RQ1. Are Twitter contributors taking part to conversations around political talk shows, different from contributors commenting around talent shows? Do they show different patterns of behavior concerning form, topic and the explicit Twitter recipient?
RQ2. What are (if there is) the most significant elements of continuity/discontinuity between these contributors regarding contents as well as communicative styles?
RQ3. To what extent socio-technical features of “Twitter as platform” influence the emergence of TV-based participatory practices?

To answer the above research questions we collected, during TV season 2012/2103, two complete datasets of Tweets. The first consists of Tweets (n=474,167) belonging to one of the most engaging Italian political talk show named “Servizio Pubblico”. During the 28 episodes aired during the season, we observed an average of 17,196 Tweets per episode. The second dataset contains Tweets (n=772,018 Tweets) published during the 9 live episodes aired during the season 2012/2013 of “X Factor” Italy. In both cases, we choose to collect only the Twitter messages marked by the official hashtags launched by TV program itself (#ServizioPubblico, #XF6). Instead of random sampling the data – a strategy not always effective with highly skewed distribution such the one we are dealing with – we decided to focus our analysis on peaks of Twitter activity. For both datasets we calculated a by minute time series of original Tweets (excluding both reply and RT). On these time series, we run an algorithm for peaks detection (Marcus 2011) identifying 115 peaks in the #XF6 dataset and 127 peaks in the #ServizioPubblico one. A content analysis was carried on Tweets (n=3,000) created in a random sample of 10 peaks for each dataset. For these 10 peaks we also analyzed the corresponding TV scene.

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