

The Changing Radio Broadcasting Structure Due to the Convergence Practices in Turkey

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Abstract

Radio which is the first electronic mass communication tool that could address large masses has been the media mostly affected from developing communication technologies and convergence practices due to its technique just based on audio. The satisfaction created by a high quality audio technique can be heard through a little music player or mobile phone. In the scope of the study, the changes in the styles of listening to the radio, listening rates and broadcasting contents which occurred by The New Communication Technologies and Convergence Practices in Turkey will be queried. In the scope of the article study, the results of convergence practices in terms of radio came to the fore with the developing technology in Turkey were discussed in the framework of radio broadcasting, radio listening rates and changes in broadcast contents taking the from 2004-2010 KMG data into account. While convergence practices are creating radical changes in styles and rates of listening to the radio, they also have required the content to be regulated again towards passive audiences.

Key Words: Radio Broadcasting, Radio Audience Researches, Convergence, Technology, Form-Content Relation.

Türkiye’de Yakınsama Uygulamaları Sonucu Değişen Radyo Yayıncılığı

Özet

Geniş kitlelere seslenebilen ilk kitle iletişim aracı olan radyo, yalnızca sese dayalı tekniğiyle, gelişen iletişim teknolojilerinden ve dolayısıyla yakınsama uygulamalarından en çok etkilenen medya olmuştur. Kaliteli bir ses tekniğinin yarattığı haz, oldukça küçük bir müzik çalardan ya da cep telefonundan da duyulabilmektedir. Yeni iletişim teknolojileri ve yakınsama uygulamaları, radyo yayıncılığında hem biçimsel hem de içeriksel değişikliklere sebep olmuştur. Yakınsama uygulamaları radyo dinleme biçimlerinde ve oranlarında köklü değişiklikler yaratırken aynı zamanda pasif dinleyiciye yönelik, içeriğin yeniden düzenlenmesini de

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gerektirmiştir. Yeni teknolojilerin kitleler tarafından hızla özümşenip tüketilmesi, bu teknolojilerle gelişen radyoyu da, hızla işlevsel olarak tüketilen bir kitle iletişim aracı haline getirmiştir. Makale çalışması kapsamında, Türkiye’de, gelişen teknolojiyle birlikte ortaya çıkan yakınsama uygulamalarının radyo bakımından sonuçları, KMG verileri üzerinden, radyo yayıncılığı, radyo dinleme oranları ve yayın içeriklerindeki değişiklikler çerçevesinde yorumlanarak ele alınmıştır. Geleneksel radyo dinleme biçimlerinde önemli farklılıklar olmakla birlikte, radyo yayın içerikleri de mobil olan pasif dinleyiciyi hedef seçerek, müzik ağırlıklı program türlerine göre şekillendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Radyo, Teknoloji, Yakınsama, İzleyici Araştırmaları, Biçim-İçerik İlişkisi.

Introduction

The rapid development process in communication technologies has also affected the broadcasting practices and the new technical and technological applications have had an impact on determining the contents of mass communication tools. Convergence practices have been the most supporting factor for this process in terms of their technological features. Communication and broadcasting technologies which are increasingly coming close to each other, going towards the same direction and meeting at a common point have paved the way for many differences in qualitative and quantitative terms from using the mass communication tools to sharing them, from content production to consumption. It is no doubt that convergent broadcasting technologies could create a usage area by the support of computer based applications established on numerical technologies. Radio was the one which was mostly affected in this process. The reason is that radio can be listened even from very small devices due to its audio-based technique and the most important thing which can satisfy its follower in technical terms is the high quality sound. The convergent devices will be able to develop if only there are integrated technologies and radio provides countless facilities for the engineers in this respect. The portable usage of video technology has very limited capacity in terms of the pleasure the audiences have. Because, the portable devices are considered more functional and ergonomic when they are smaller. However, today the audiences are tend to watch the videos on screens as large as possible. Radio provides a perfect service for mobile listener in technical and technological terms.

It is a known fact that today radio is often listened through mobile phones, portable media players, portable small sized computers via Internet nearly all around the world. The informing, educating functions of the radio seem to be given up completely in Turkey's broadcasting activities. On the base of the fact that music based radio broadcasting is mostly preferred, media boss' and directors having more profitable results with this system, cooperation of music industry and radios and the expectation of the audience are the inevitable facts. However in the scope of this study, the fact that convergent technologies has also impact in this process will be emphasized. The data obtained from Radio Listening Measurements which has been conducted since 2004 by Ipsos KMG Research Company and used in this study seem to support this hypothesis.

The Role of the Convergent Communication Technologies on Radio Broadcasting

"Convergent" is a term which is used frequently to imply the changes and new media occurred in media industry in the last ten years. Convergent media express the new communication media coming to the fore by the fact that communication technologies come closer to each other. Due to the fact that the contextual dimension of radio broadcasting will be also discussed in this study, it is emphasized that convergence is not only a technological phenomena based on the device it is applied on and provides new opportunities in production and distribution of the context, but also it is in a close relationship with media economy and social and legal structures and therefore the convergent devices pave the way for the changes in contextual dimensions of broadcasting practices on demand in the phase of consumption.

"Convergence" known today emerged by the result of the studies conducted by United States of America Department of Defense, researchers and universities with the aim of developing a network system which is known today as Internet (Lawson-Borders, 2006: 4). In the convergence report prepared by IRG (Independent Regulators Group), convergence has been defined as technological developments which enable to provide multiple services by improving the abilities of networks and it also implies that a certain service can be provided from many different networks (Güngör and others, 2009: 10). In the Green Paper of the European Commission (1997), there isn't any clear definition of the term "convergence" but it is generally expressed as transportation of similar service types via different network platforms or combination of the consumer devices such as telephone, television and personal computer.

As it was explained in 2002 report of Cheskin Researches, the earliest idea of convergence was that all of the devices would be integrated in one central device in a way that could do anything. According to Henry Jenkins, convergence is the change in behaviours of mobile mass audiences who seek context flow in multiple media platforms, cooperation between various industry groups and types of entertainment experience they want nearly everywhere (Jenkins, 2006: 2, 15). While defining convergence, Henry Jenkins noted the behavior of mobile mass audience in addition to all the other definitions. The general tendency while explaining the convergence concept is the emphasis on the new technologies formed by similar service groups combination as a result of web based networking and economic reflections of them. This tendency mostly features the convergent device as a good and excludes the mass audience from the process. Whereas the mass audience's likes and expectations change through the convergence practices as Jenkins has emphasized. As a result of the convergence practices in radio broadcasting technologies, the listener is more mobilized and the context should be re-arranged in this direction.

When we consider "convergence" as an economy term, we come face to face with different dimensions of the concept. ITU (International Telecommunication Union) (1999: 2) defines convergence as a technological, legal, market-related or regulatory capacity integrating the industry structures defined by different technology, market or politics in the past and points out that convergence includes an important international compound due to the fact that it enables many service and information resources which can be traditionally controlled in the country to be presented throughout the world.

In addition to the fact that it is a dynamic process, convergence can be defined as a partial integration towards market practices based on communication and information. In another aspect, convergence reveals the interlacing multiple media products and services which thus creates more satisfaction in consumer preferences (Lawson-Borders, 2006: 3). As a result of these practices, the mass audience which is the consumer can get more than one service from one device and the consumption rate increases according to this. The fact that today radio devices are integrated in even fridges shows clearly that convergence practices significantly feed the consumption culture.

Blackman states that convergence can be defined as the perceptions of many tendencies of change in technology, service, industry structure and government policies which have an impact on telecommunication and audio-video sectors (Blackman, 1998: 163-170). According to Jenkins, most of

us have seen in recent years that mobile phones increasingly become the center of broadcasting strategies of commercial movies world wide, amateur and professional mobile phone movies compete in international film festivals to win awards, mobile users can listen to the important concerts, Japanese novelists can instantly share their series with the readers, and computer players can play alternative, high reality games via mobile devices developed as a result of the increasing competition (Jenkins, 2006: 4).

Via the convergence practices, broadcasting and distribution of every kind of audio and video communication element which gets beyond the geographical borders have become possible. Today many radio broadcast can be listened via Internet throughout the world. In our country, many (98 %) private radio channels broadcast to whole world via Internet (Aziz, 2007: 85). Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) is able to reach large masses via Internet with its high quality audio by using its economic power. Podcast application can only be used by TRT radios in most comprehensive and effective way.

There are some communication scientists who claimed that traditional mass communication tools communicate its messages unidirectionally. Geray (2003: 18) who criticizes the idea that in the process of communication in new media, the source can be the receiver and the receiver can be the source by emphasizing on interactivity claims that in traditional media, the number of sales, watching rates, audience letters and calls are interaction tools. According to the author, interaction in terms of communication technologies is the fact that the receiver can be the transmitter or the source can increase its control on the message by means of technical regulations added to communication process with this aim. In another aspect, the other feature of Internet which reveals the difference in terms of interaction is that it is based on a vertical structure. Message is transmitted to heterogeneous societies defined as masses from a certain center by a linear way. The masses are not the ones determining the production of message and in feedback the technology presented by the tool is not sufficient. The feedback of the mass towards any communication channel needs another communication channel. Internet has made the possibilities of intervention between message production and message receive become more and more (Timisi, 2003: 124).

We see that Bertolt Brecht who is known as an opposing poet/author wrote in 1932 in his "Radio Theory" article about his future expectations about interactive broadcasting that:

Radio should become a communication tool rather than a transmission device. If it could gave the opportunity to not only sending messages but also

receiving them; for the audiences not hearing but speaking and not isolating but interacting them, radio could have create the greatest relation between people in public life. But these suggestions about the natural possibilities come to the fore with the technological developments are impossible to be realized in the current social system. But if they can be applied, they can help the others to be formed and improved. (Alankuş, 2005: 36). We can say that a huge part of Brecht's this expectation has been realized and we definitely can not neglect the role of convergence practices in this process. The facts that today nearly all mobile phones have radio features, it is possible to listen to the radio from mini computers via Internet and radio has come closer to the audience again by means of Internet technology are the indicators that radio is a communication tool.

The Brief History of Radio Listening Researches in Turkey

It can be claimed that radio has more difficulties than television in terms of researches due to the fact that many times there aren't any statistical information about programs. It is difficult to sort out the stations. Radio receivers and the ones using them are movable. The people do not listen to the radio but hear it. All of these factors make it difficult to obtain even the main information elements. And also it is mostly very difficult to determine who, how many people listen to a certain program or channel (Wedell and others, no date: 75).

When we consider that the number of radios was four when Turkish Radio and Television Corporation, TRT had the broadcasting monopoly, it is normal situation that the first measurement methods were through feedbacks coming with letters and calls. The measurements done on the conditions of there were no competition was mostly realized by the examinations towards audience's satisfaction or expectations. But by the commercial radios rapidly entered in our lives and increasing in number in an uncontrolled way, harsh competition conditions emerged and measurements had become to be conducted only in the framework of commercial concerns towards getting advertisements.

The emergence of first private radios in Turkey was after the private television channels' start of broadcasting in 1990. Television broadcastings which was started although Turkish Radio and Television Law with number 2954 which is in force today and on which TRT broadcasts are based on and other related legal regulations which are executed on the base of 133rd article of the Constitution encouraged the private entrepreneurs who wanted to make private radio enterprise and in 1991 the first private radio broadcastings started (Aziz, 2007: 226).

This private radio broadcasting adventure started non-professionally due to all legal impediments and ambiguities in 1990s and continued to develop rapidly with the support of society. Executing a public opinion research was very far away for the sector dealing with all these problems. However in the next period, especially when the radio was started to be used seriously as an advertisement media, towards the needs of advertisers, the researches done by many different research company started to participate in the sector.

There hadn't been any radio research towards sector except for the TRT's public opinion researches since 1995. And the TRT researches made through surveys are not the use of all radio institutions and related sectors. These researches were mostly towards TRT's own radios.

The first radio research towards the entire radio sector was realized by "Referans Papay" company in 1995. The company used "questionnaires" as the method of the research. The questionnaire was applied in several shopping centers. The results of the survey were submitted to sector representations in three month periods (Tufan, 2009: 48-49). The fact that surveys were only made in shopping centers created incredibility in survey data and it was brought forward that the results were not the notion of common public. The fact that surveys were executed in the shopping centers where high socio-economical status people were present such as Akmerkez and the others disturbed the radios addressing the common public but could not rank high at the survey results.

After this situation, AKAMEDYA (Academical Media and Public Opinion Research Group) in İstanbul University Faculty of Communication started to conduct a radio listening tendency research so-called "Radiometer". At first the research coordinated by Ali Gizer and Sinan Dirlik was made regularly. Then, radio listening research made by Academic Media and Public Opinion Research Group continued by Diyojen Research Company with the name of RADAR (Radio Listening Research) for nearly 3 years in monthly base (Tufan, 2009: 49).

Since the radio advertisements incomes were low, the radios had difficulty to budget the researches. Separate researches of some institutions and corporations except Referans Papay and Radyometre were satisfying the sector for that period. But the radios were complaining about the fact that there weren't regular research data and the radio measurement was difficult. It is frequently discussed which methods should be used in radio researches and radio media's preferences in Turkey where even the broadcasting practices have not been established yet. Sema Akçil, Media Planning Specialist in Lotus Media says that there were problems for many years

because of the researches and adds that radio in Turkey is a media which could not been measured for years and due to these difficulties it has become third or fourth preference after television and press. Akçil who claims that since the radio can not be measured, it has kept in the background emphasizes that the most supporting media for television and press is radio (www.radyoskop.com 13.02.2011).

Ipsos Kmg Radio Listening Measurements and the Method of the Study*

KMG Marketing Services Group was established by 10 people who had worked in different professions of marketing services in July, 2001. The group firstly incorporated HTP (House Consumption Panel). Simultaneously it bought house consumption panel in GFK Turkey company and combined it with HTP's panel services. HTP also executes Turkish Radio Listening Measurement System so-called RIAK.

KMG Marketing Services Group re-established as KMG Research Company by merging its research-related activities under for professional companies in one brand by January 1st, 2007. Customer satisfaction measurement department of Retailing Institute, HTP, HTP Exclusive and BİL started to provide services under the name of KMG Research in 2007. Vural Çakır, CEO of KMG Research said that KMG became a company having the richest research portfolio in Turkey by the merge of activities in four companies and KMG research measured the customer satisfaction rate of one from every two cars (www.milliyet.com.tr 14.02.2011). After the France research company Ipsos bought 51 percent of KMG Research, the company continued to act with IPSOS KMG name (www.cnnturk.com 14.02.2011).

Since 2003 Ipsos KMG has been realizing radio listening measurements on behalf of Radio Monitoring Corporation RIAK which has an aim of developing a continuous, valid and trusted system enabling to determine the advertisement strategies of radio stations. The measurements are checked by Middle East Technical University, Department of Business and an independent surveillance company Grant Thornton.

The rating measurements for radios in Turkey are realized by "diary method" as it is applied in many countries including Britain. In this method, the people record their radio listening practices for five minutes in a diary for one week and give detailed information about the radio stations they listen to, where they listen (home, car etc.) and how they listen (by radio,

* The information was obtained from Ipsos KMG Research Company.

internet, mobile phone etc.). The study is carried out in 24 cities with 14.500 people which were selected to represent 12 and older ages and urban and semi urban population. The results of the measurements have been reported since January 2010, in a way to include the last three months. In this system, all the radios in the city are measured but only the access of the radios which are subscribed to RIAK are published and reported to member radios and radio/media agencies.

Access and other details can be found by MediaMonitor program. Under the light of the data, the information on the base of radio categories, program types, the place where the radio is listened, status and geographical regions can be obtained and also different target mass classification can be made in terms of sex, age, education level, socio-economic status and the size of family. With these studies, applicable results can easily be obtained about determining target mass, positioning radio, planning, making examinations based on competition.

In December which was the last measurement month of 2010, there were 27 national, 24 regional and 73 local radio stations included in KMG Radio Listening Measurement System (KMG). There are totally 1078 radios in Turkey 35 of which is national, 99 is regional and 944 is local (www.milliyet.com.tr 18.02.2011). It is seen that the difference between the numbers of radios included in KMG Measurement System and the other radios in Turkey wide is especially against the local radios. It is a fact that especially local radios are having difficulty to pay the subscription amount for the access rate in order to be included in KMG measurement system. This paves the way for the fact that local and regional radios are having less from advertisement incomes and an unfair competition.

In the scope of the article study, the results of convergence practices in terms of radio came to the fore with the developing technology in Turkey were discussed in the framework of radio broadcasting, radio listening rates and changes in broadcast contents taking the from 2004-2010 KMG data into account.

Findings and Result

In Radio Listening Measurements led by Radio Monitoring Research Company RIAK and in Ipsos KMG Research Company, House Consumption Panel since 2004, the changes in listening media was examined in detail and the data obtained was shown in related figures.

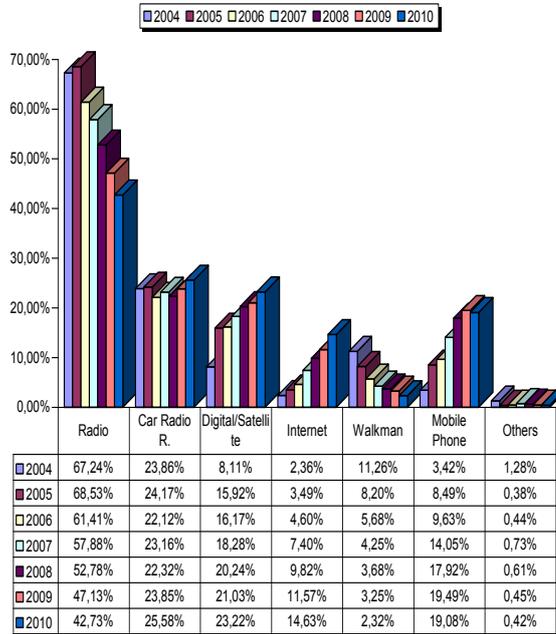


Figure 1: Proportional Distribution of Radio Listening Habits by Years in Turkey

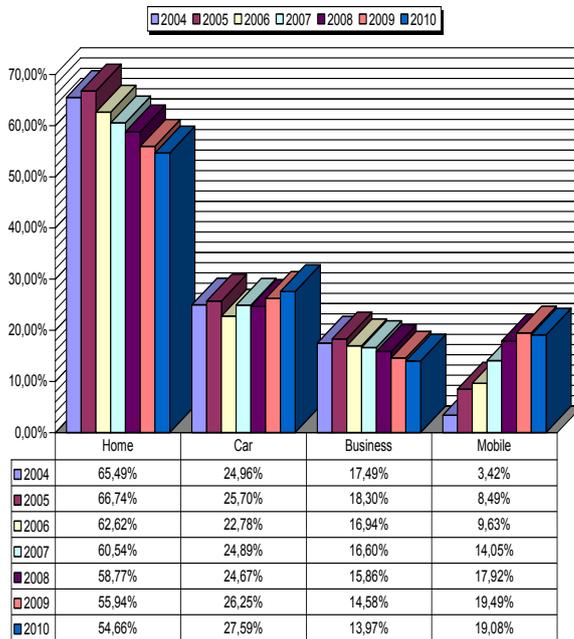


Figure 2: Proportional Distribution of Radio Listening Locations by Years in Turkey

As it can be seen clearly in Figure 1 and 2, by technology's and convergence practices development in years, there have been significant changes in types of listening and the media on which it's listened. The reason that the ratings do not equal to a hundred percent stems from the fact that any subject can be listened to more than one radio station for at least 5 minutes in 15 minutes time and these listening are included in the report separately. While the rate in traditional radio listening types and media is regularly decreasing, the rate in the new media coming with new technologies and convergence practices is regularly increasing. Correspondingly with the increase in the number of mobile listeners, most of the radios in Turkey acted with the policy of less speech, more music and re-arranged their contents in this direction. In the broadcasting policies of the most listened first 10 radio stations in KMG measurement system, music based broadcasting attitude comes to the fore. It is seen that the ones who persist on broadcasting speech-based programs has to change their broadcasting policies and reformed their contents.

As a result of the fact that radios became aware of the increase in Internet broadcasting and invested on this, increased their server capacities and audio qualities, an increase was observed in listening to the radio on Internet. When the research results are examined, it is understood that people mostly listen to the radio on Internet mostly in offices, while working. The fact that users can also listen to the radio on computer where they do routine works is an important factor encouraging them to listen to the radio. This is a driving force. But this listening practice must be a passive listening which will not distract attention. And this brings forward the music broadcastings which can be used as background music rather than speeches which need attention. The same thing is applicable for the mobile listeners.

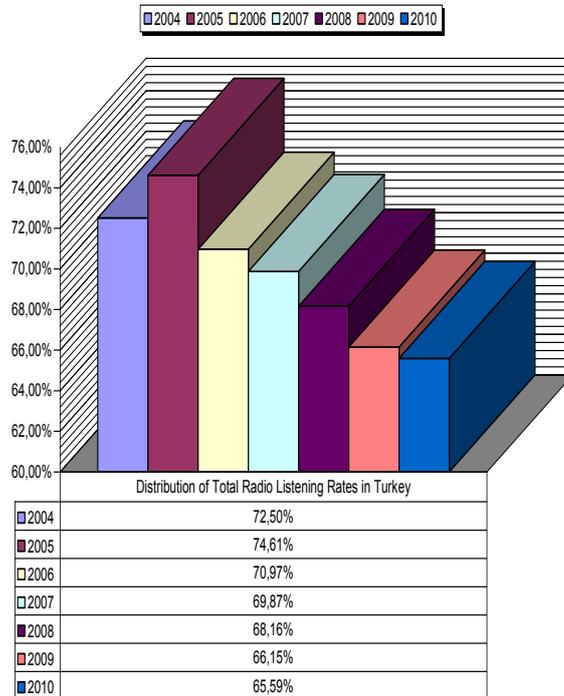


Figure 3: Distribution of Total Radio Listening Rates in Turkey

When Figure 3 is examined where total radio listening rates between 2004 and 2010 in Turkey are detailed, it is obviously seen that all these changes did not make any positive contribution to radio listening rates. Except the increase in 2005, a regular decrease is observed every year in radio listening rates. It can be considered that radio's completely getting far from its main functions and adapting music based broadcasting policies do not satisfy the audience. It can be evaluated as a positive development that the radio which lost favor by the invention of television is again in the center of our daily lives via convergence practices. However it shouldn't be neglected that technology may have destructive sides with the constructive ones in this development phase and the policies should be determined toward this fact. The trusted results of listening measurement systems are very important in this process. The data which can be obtained by Portable People Meter or digital and mobile measurement systems will be the fundamental assisting measure in terms of applying true policies in both qualitative and quantitative contexts.

Due to the fact that academic studies about radio are very insufficient in Turkey, it is difficult to provide a leading resource for sector.

Radio professionals just act with their professional experiences instead of developing their broadcasts under the light of scientific data. While the developments in broadcasting technologies provide great advantages for broadcasters in terms of reaching more audience, they cause structural transformations in broadcasting contents. The contents of the programs are based on music in order the audience can listen to the advertisements, thus the main function of the radio becomes less important.

The new communication technologies and convergence practices have paved the way for form and content changes in radio broadcasting. While convergence practices are creating radical changes in styles and rates of listening to the radio, they also have required the content to be regulated again towards passive audiences. Because of the fact that the new technologies are absorbed and consumed rapidly by masses, the radio which develops with these technologies is also rapidly converted a consumed mass media. Not only are there important differences in the traditional radio listening styles, but also the radio broadcasting contents have been shaped through the music based program types by choosing the mobile, passive audiences.

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