BBC Public Radio Channels: Struggling for Survival in a Privatized Public Sphere

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Abstract:

On the 29th September, 2022 the Guardian newspaper published a report in which the BBC announced that it would cut its World Service Output, shedding an estimated 382 jobs, and ending radio production in 10 languages including Arabic. The BBC proposed to dedicate more time on its World Service English Language radio channel to live news and sport rather than costly standalone programs, suggesting a dumbing down of content. The BBC has interpreted this decision as 'a move that could weaken the UK's soft power around the world', blaming this so-called loss of soft power in the Middle East and elsewhere on 'the government's ongoing license fee freeze', and claiming that these cuts would result in £28.5m of annual savings. The source of this crisis has been attributed to austerity cuts. Since 2010, government ministries and the British public have funded World Service projects. In 2022 BBC radio had to raise £4m to subsidize its operations in the Ukraine and Russia. Instead of providing bulletins to overseas listeners, the BBC will invest its efforts in encouraging the use of its own online platform.

Keywords: BBC Public Radio Channels, newspaper, Sphere.

قنوات راديو بي بي سي العامة: النضال من أجل البقاء في الميدان العام المتخصص

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المستخلص العربي:

في ٢٩ سبتمبر ٢٠٢٢ ، نشرت صحيفة الجارديان تقريرًا أعلنت فيه هيئة الإذاعة البريطانية أنها ستخفض إنتاجها من الخدمات العالمية ، وتسريح ما يقدر بنحو ٣٨٢ وظيفة ، وإنهاء الإنتاج الإذاعي بعشر لغات من بينها العربية. اقترحت بي بي سي تخصيص المزيد من الوقت لقناتها الإذاعية العالمية للغة الإنجليزية للأخبار الحية والرياضة بدلاً من البرامج المستقلة المكلفة ، مما يشير إلى إضعاف المحتوى. فسرت بي بي سي هذا القرار على أنه "خطوة يمكن أن تضعف القوة الناعمة للمملكة المتحدة حول العالم" ، وألقت باللوم على ما يسمى بفقدان القوة الناعمة في الشرق الأوسط وأماكن أخرى على "تجميد رسوم الترخيص المستمر للحكومة" ، وزعمت ذلك. ستؤدي هذه التخفيضات إلى توفير ٢٨٫٥ مليون جنيه إسترليني سنويًا. يُعزى مصدرا هذه الأزمة إلى التخفيضات التقشفية. منذ عام ٢٠١٠، قامت الوزارات الحكومية والجمهور البريطاني بتمويل مشاريع الخدمة العالمية. في عام ٢٠٢٢ ، اضطرت إذاعة بي بي سي إلى جمع ٤ ملايين جنيه إسترليني لدعم عملياتها في أوكرانيا وروسيا. بدلاً من تقديم النشرات للمستمعين في الخارج ، ستستثمر البي بي سي جهودها في تشجيع استخدام منصتها الخاصة على الإنترنت.

الكلمات المفتاحية: قنوات BBC، الأخبار، المجال العام.

Context

On the 29th September, 2022 the Guardian newspaper published a report in which the BBC announced that it would cut its World Service Output, shedding an estimated 382 jobs, and ending radio production in 10 languages including Arabic. The BBC proposed to dedicate more time on its World Service English Language radio channel to live news and sport rather than costly standalone programs, suggesting a dumbing down of content.

The BBC has interpreted this decision as 'a move that could weaken the UK's soft power around the world', blaming this so-called loss of soft power in the Middle East and elsewhere on 'the government's ongoing license fee freeze', and claiming that these cuts would result in £28.5m of annual savings. The source of this crisis has been attributed to austerity cuts. Since 2010, government ministries and the British public have funded World Service projects. In 2022 BBC radio had to raise £4m to subsidize its operations in the Ukraine and Russia. Instead of providing bulletins to overseas listeners, the BBC will invest its efforts in encouraging the use of its own online platform.

Purpose

This crisis in BBC Radio broadcasting in the Middle East and beyond suggests that BBC Radio is losing its political, economic, and ideological power, that its sphere of influence has been reduced to British audiences, and that it is struggling to survive in a cut-throat privatized public sphere.

This paper on the other hand disagrees. It claims that the power of BBC Radio has not diminished. BBC Radio is transferring its operations and promoting itself online, thereby embracing technological developments and cutting operational costs, so its role as a so-called agent of soft power abroad continues unabated. This article argues that the current mission of BBC Radio at home is to promote Britishness,

British institutions, British business in general, and the British music business in particular. In order to meet these nationalistic goals, BBC Radio is engaged in nationalizing audiences. It is generating, manufacturing, commodifying, and meeting public demand in information, entertainment and education. It is broadcasting to specific demographic segments and age groups, teaching them how to perform Britishness, and encouraging them to buy British.

Moreover, this paper claims that BBC Radio has engaged itself in a continuous process of justifying itself to itself, to the British government, to the so-called great British public and to the capricious, demanding BBC license payer.

This article therefore investigates BBC Radio strategies of survival through Time, suggesting that its mission and power and reach is **not** diminishing, and that BBC Radio in contrast supports and complements the dominant interests and discourse of the current privatized public sphere.

Uniqueness and importance

This article is unique in that it traces and critiques continuities and ruptures in the BBC Radio mission through Time. It re-introduces, critiques, updates, and applies three important theoretical insights into the mission of BBC Radio-- insights into the idealized and privatized nature of the public sphere (Habermas 1962; Duvenage 2005), insights into cultural imperialism and post-colonialism (Schiller 1976; Said 1979), and insights into nationalism (Andersen 1983; Llobera 1999). It provides original insight into the nature and use of multimodal discourse analysis (Bateman 2019; Phillips and Ghalwash 2019) to investigate the polysemic nature and appeal of the BBC Radio Internet platform.

This paper is based on a recent guest presentation at the headquarters of the Arab Service Broadcasting Union (ASBU) in Tunis, 11 October, 2022, in which distinguished delegates from the main Arab

public radio channels discussed and debated their own mission and strategies for survival in a privatized media landscape. This paper is an important contribution to that debate.

Structure

In order to explore the nature of the mission and struggle of the BBC through Time, this paper is divided into three parts,

1. Theoretical insights.
2. Measures and strategies of survival and success: the BBC mission through Time.
3. Moving online: methodological insights and strategies for survival and success.

1. Theoretical insights

In order to trace and interpret the mission of BBC Radio and its strategies of survival and success through Time, this paper is employing, critiquing, updating, and applying three important theoretical insights: insights into the nature of the privatized public sphere, insights into the nature of cultural imperialism, and insights into the nature of nationalism.

1) The privatized public sphere

Discussion

Habermas (1962) provides crucial insight into the democratic or undemocratic nature of the sphere of public communication, comparing the feudal public sphere in which the feudal lord, 'presented himself as the embodiment of ever present higher power' (Habermas et al. 1963, p. 3) to 'the active, participatory bourgeois public sphere in the heroic era of liberal democracy' (Kellner 2000) and the re-feudalized public sphere in which 'large organizations strive for political compromises with the state

and with each other, excluding the public sphere whenever possible' (Habermas et al. 1963, p. 7). His pessimistic conclusion is that large political and economic institutions currently control the sphere of public communication, stifling democratic or rational political participation and decision-making, promoting their own interests in capitalist production and profits. Citizens are 'content to become primarily consumers of goods, services, political administration, and spectacle' (Kellner 2000).

Ellul (1964) suggests that mainstream media conglomerates currently control the public sphere, promoting profits through propaganda. He presents propaganda as a set of methods that an organized group uses to bring about the active or passive participation of a mass of individuals-- and that modern industrialized capitalist societies are based on efficient techniques-- propaganda techniques that have promoted the out-of-control production of objects of doubtful net social benefit. He suggests that the role of propaganda is to maximize corporate profits-- and that propaganda is based on pre-propaganda-- the role of re-propaganda being to create sensitivities in the audience that can be triggered by buzzwords such as Freedom.

Herman and Chomsky (1988) produced a propaganda model to explore the route through which the public sphere has been privatized and public consent has been manufactured in so-called Liberal societies such as the US. This propaganda model provides insight into multi-billion-dollar global news conglomerates, global news production, capitalism, and the pursuit of profits at all costs.

Herman and Chomsky (1988) identify five filters (ownership, advertising, information sourcing, flak, and ideologies such as anti-communism) through which information passes before it reaches its audiences and readers. The profit orientation of these conglomerates, the profits from advertisements, the use of elite sources, and dominant ideological discourses influence media and news production and promote capitalism, censorship and self-censorship. The global public sphere is dominated by a very small number of super-powerful, mostly US-based

transnational media corporations-- that denigrate journalism and culture not conducive to the immediate bottom line or long-run corporate interests (Herman and McChesney 1997). These powerful media and news conglomerates thereby support the policies and practices of the US government and big business.

Critique

Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky first used the propaganda model in the 1988 book Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media, using this model to understand the nature of US mass media news production.

The original version of the model focuses on the propaganda dimension of information by identifying five filters (ownership, advertising, information sourcing, flak, and anti-communism) through which information must pass before seeing the light

The authors claim that these filters constitute the most decisive elements that influence what appears as so-called news, pointing to the fact that one of the essential features of the information is its character as propaganda to serve elite interests. The main criticism of the model is that it is deterministic-- although Herman (2000) has argued that the main elements (ownership, advertisement, profit orientation, elite sources) do not determine news production. The propaganda model does permit dissident voices-- 'there is space permitted for intense and vigorous debates'-- but this space is generally 'restricted to the spectrum of elite opinion' (Pedro 2011). Dissident voices tend to be framed as dubious (Entman and Rojecki 1993). Radical political discourse does slip in from outside the accepted boundaries of discourse but this discourse does not challenge dominant ideologies (Pedro 2011).

Other criticisms of the notion of the privatized public sphere and the propaganda that emanates from it are based on the claim that the Internet provides a counter-public sphere (Castells 2009; 2012) and on reception studies (Livingstone and Das 2013). Castells (2009) claims that 'The interactive capacity of the new communication system [the Internet] ushers in a new form of communication, mass self-communication, which multiplies and diversifies the entry points in the communication process [thereby giving rise] to unprecedented autonomy for communicative subjects to communicate at large-- suggesting that the Internet has created a democratic counter-hegemonic counter-sphere of radical communication networks and social movements (2012). Fuchs (2009) is rather skeptical, claiming that 'The category of the producer commodity does not signify a democratization of the media towards a participatory or democratic system, but [rather] the total commodification of human creativity' (p. 7).

The other counter-argument against the notion of a privatized public sphere based on dominant ideological discourses is based on the claim that 'the meaning of a message … must be interpreted by its recipient' (Livingstone and Das 2013). In Encoding/Decoding (1999), cultural theorist Stuart Hall produces his own model of the communication process based on production, circulation, use and reproduction, claiming that both producers and readers or audiences can adopt one of three ideological positions-- hegemonic/dominant, negotiated, or oppositional-- in encoding and decoding texts, thereby suggesting that propaganda (hegemonic/dominant discourse) can be negotiated or opposed, and that audiences are not brainwashed into adopting capitalist ideologies. In other words, readers and audiences decode texts according to their own knowledge, interests, and political and social contexts (Eco 1979).

Research into the online journeys of Internet news users (Vermeer et al. 2020) suggests that online news consumers and consumption tend to reflect the interests and ideologies of capitalist news production.

Online users choose to visit mainstream news outlets-- and continue browsing inside these mainstream outlets-- and online news consumers tend to choose entertainment news rather than hard political reports. In other words, mainstream media and news production to a larger and larger extent reflects the marketing strategies, demand and preferences of the audiences that these largescale communication industries have constructed and reproduced.

Theoretical claim

Based on these theoretical insights into the privatized public sphere (Habermas 1962), propaganda (Ellul 1964; Herman and Chomsky 1988) and reception studies (Hall 1999; Livingstone and Das 2013), this paper claims that BBC Radio has survived by embracing the private sphere, by promoting a dominant hegemonic discourse that supports and strengthens powerful political and economic British institutions such as the British royal family and the British music industry, and by both dictating and reflecting so-called British tastes in information, entertainment, and so-called education. These issues are to be discussed throughout this paper.

2) Cultural imperialism and post-colonialism

Discussion

Schiller (1976) produced important research into the concept of cultural imperialism from the perspective of U.S. communication conglomerates that supported and profited from capitalism at home and acted as agents of US-based power and capitalism abroad, by spreading English language, capitalist institutions, consumerism and liberal democratic capitalist ideals throughout the world (p. 9).

These ever-enlarging US-based communication empires are based on investments and take-overs and profit imperatives that have imposed capitalist infrastructures around the world. These corporations

have promoted the 'propagation and extension of the US business system and its values to all corners' of the world (Schiller 1992: 136). US companies have entered other countries and other markets creating 'a largely one-way flow of media technologies and production from the U.S. to its peripheries' (Mirrlees 2013).

In the classic post-colonial text, Orientalism (1979), Palestinian intellectual Edward Said claims that Occidental discourses regarding the East mirror the prejudices and ideologies of the colonial period, Othering the East and portraying its people as primitive, irrational, violent, treacherous, despotic, fanatic, inferior, and in need of Enlightenment-- thereby preparing the ground for Occidental interventions, invasions, technologies and products. Said explored the close relationship between knowledge and power, claiming that: 'If the knowledge of Orientalism has any meaning, it is in being a reminder of the seductive degradation of knowledge, of any knowledge, anywhere, at any time.' This knowledge has resulted in discrimination and death, because 'So far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Moslems and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists' (Said 1980).

Critique

Strong critiques of cultural imperialism (Schiller 1976) and the Othering of the East (Said 1979) have emerged. Other understandings of global power based on 'globalizing modernity' (Tomlinson, 1991: 175), or the 'global cultural economy' (Appadurai 1997) have been constructed. The core-periphery model of US political, economic and cultural domination and one-way media and news flows has also been contested (Curtin 2003; Tunstall 2008; Thussu 2007).

Reception studies have once again challenged the dominant ideological influence of the US (Ang 1985) and notions of Oriental

discourse and Othering of Eaastern cultures have been contested by research into cultural hybridity and interstices or spaces in which dominant cultures can be mediated (Bhabha 1994).

Nonetheless the notion of US-based cultural imperialism and dominant US-based ideological discourses that stereotype, target and flood other societies and cultures still holds water. Mirrlees (2013) agrees, arguing that 'the U.S. Empire, cultural imperialist coercion and persuasion, state-buttressed media corporate power, and the military-industrial-communications complex persist in the 21st century,' and stubbornly insisting that 'the US Empire still relies upon cultural imperialism to advance its objectives, and at present, it continues to combine coercion and persuasion to influence, change and integrate other countries.'

Theoretical claim

Based on these theoretical insights into cultural imperialism (Schiller 1976) and the Othering of the East (Said 1979), this article claims that BBC Radio continues to promote British political, economic and media interests in the East, reflecting complementing US-based cultural imperialism and dominant US-based ideological discourses that stereotype, target and flood other societies and cultures. These issues are to be discussed throughout this paper.

3) Nationalism

Discussion

Llobera (1999) provides important insights into nationalism, ranging from primordial theories that claim that the modern state has been superimposed on ethnic identities based on blood, race and religion. Instrumentalism suggests that nationalism is based on dynamic ethnic identities that result from political, economic or social processes.

Classical Marxists for example might see nationalism as false consciousness-- as a tool of the bourgeoisie-- so the Manifesto demolishes sentimental nationalistic attachments and barriers by declaring that 'the proletariat has no fatherland.' Importantly, Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities (1983) connects the emergence of nationalism to imagined political communities and the construction and demands of print capitalism and national markets based on a fixed unified national language: 'a half-conscious, but explosive interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications and the type of fatality of human linguistic diversity' (p. 46). At a later stage in history state consolidation both at home and in the colonies created groups of people who felt politically and culturally excluded and by imagining themselves as communities were able to shake off alien rule.

Critique

Giddens (1981) in contrast insists on a socio-psychological insight into nationalism, one based on needs and dispositions, resulting from the capitalist commodification of time and space (pp. 193-194). Nationalism in that context can be seen as rooted in the need to belong, in the need to shelter from the cold winds of ontological (philosophical) uncertainties. There are parallels between this, and the claim that nationalism like gender (Butler 1988) is performed. Toktas (2020) therefore suggests that nationalism should be seen in terms of performativity (how nationalism is normally represented) and theatricality: how individuals choose to perform nationalism. Nationalism is not pre-given: members of audiences interpret and perform national identities.

Theoretical claim

Based on these theoretical insights into instrumental nationalism (Marx and Engels 1848; Andersen 1983) and socio-psychological

insights into the need to belong (Giddens 1981) and perform national identities (Toktas 2020), this paper claims that the BBC Radio channels in constructing and targeting and reflecting and enlisting different British audiences is encouraging these audiences to see themselves as British and to perform Britishness. This is how BBC Radio has remained true to its original mission and survived in a privatized public sphere that reflects rather than dominates the mission of BBC Radio.

2. Measures and strategies of success and survival: the BBC mission through Time

Here, this paper is conducting important research into the mission, policies and practices of BBC Radio since its inception in order to understand its strategies of success and survival. The starting point should therefore be the life and times and influence of its charismatic founder, John Reith. This article suggests that the character and beliefs of Reith give important clues to its original mission and provides insight into BBC Radio and its connection to the privatized public sphere, cultural imperialism, post-colonialism, and nationalistic interests and ideologies.

1) John Reith, nationalism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and beyond

Harris (2021) provides important insights into the original mission of BBC Radio, characterizing it as an intersection between 'the habit of government control engendered by the Great War [that] ensured the emergence of a public broadcasting corporation over a set of private initiatives' and 'the exceptional drive and sense of mission of [its original director] John Reith'. He suggests that John Reith embodied 'paternalistic central authority' rather than 'the Holy Grail' of media impartiality that the BBC supposedly represented, characterizing John Reith the original director of BBC Radio as, 'empire-builder if ever there was, driven by an unstoppable mission to improve and to civilize'.

Harris (2021) claims that Reith, 'an engineer, by training and by temperament' resented British government insistence on non-controversial non-partisan broadcasting and based his rule over BBC staff and discourse on Fear and Efficiency, arguing that 'The BBC would be made to Reith's own design, a vast machine whose every component was conceived to transmit … providential [divine] power'. Reith himself supported the Nazi regime in Germany, arguing that the Nazis 'will clean things up and put Germany on the way to being a real power in Europe again' and admiring 'the way Hitler has cleaned up what looked like an incipient revolt against him' and applauding the 'efficiency' of Hitler's military invasion of Czechoslovakia (Stuart 1995: 55-57).

Reith's sense of divine purpose and elitism permeates his journal in which he regrets the personal curse of having 'outstanding comprehensive ability and intelligence, combined with a desire to use them to maximum purpose' (ibid, p. 142). In 1924 he argued that the 'preservation of a high moral standard [*his* moral standard] is obviously of paramount importance' (p. 32).

Reith criticized Britain for relaxing its colonial grip. In the case of Persia, he advocated military intervention, declaring that 'our foreign policy today is utterly pusillanimous … and it seems now as if any dago republic can wipe its feet on us' (Reith 1949: 75). In South Africa he advocated a public broadcasting system akin to the BBC and based on so-called impartiality-- in order to protect British colonial values against 'any barbarian breach of the perimeter of his moral civitas' (Harris 2021).

Msaddek (2021) provides important insights into the continuation and adaptation of the BBC Radio mission in BBC Arabic, exploring 'the BBC's coverage of the particularly sensitive politics of the Middle East since the 1930s and thereby the delicate relationship between the BBC and the British government'. Rather than seeing this continuing mission in terms of cultural imperialism (Schiller 1976) and post-colonial Othering (Said 1979), he sees it as 'cultural interchange', arguing that

'the BBC has constantly cultivated the loyalty of millions of listeners in the Middle East and North Africa' ever since it started broadcasting in Arabic in January 1938 in response to 'Mussolini's increasingly provocative anti-British Arabic language broadcast' from Bari, Italy. He argues that until the 1990s, BBC Radio 'lived up to its reputation in the region as a broadcasting organization that was thought to be only telling the truth'. On the 4th of January 1938 the Egyptian presenter Ahmad Kamal Sourour Effendi made the Corporation's first foreign language broadcast in Arabic,

'Another Arab from Palestine was executed by hanging at Acre this morning by order of a [Zionist] military court. He was arrested during recent riots in the Hebron Mountains and was found to possess a rifle and some ammunition.'

Msaddek (2021) insists that the BBC remained impartial and credible throughout this period, and a key site of 'diasporic broadcasters' that played a key role in 'mediating relations between the UK government, the BBC and overseas audiences'. In order to meet the challenge of 'accurate, unbiased, independent' news reporting during controversial crises such as Suez and the invasions of Iraq, the BBC recruited 'among the Arab diaspora of intellectuals, writers and high-profile journalists proved to be the missing link between the broadcaster and its target audience'.

In Palestine, BBC Radio broadcast to 'the three faiths of the local population' and promoted modern farming techniques. In Egypt, the BBC hired literary giants such as Taha Hussein, Tawfik all-Hakim and Abbas Mahmud al-Akkad. Local musicians and singers broadcast through BBC Radio. Programs teaching English language were broadcast, reflecting changes in pedagogical methods. Female news presenters were also recruited in the 1960s and 1970s, reflecting gender struggles back home. In 1996 a seventeen experienced BBC Arabic broadcasters joined al Jazeera applying the broadcasting skills that they

developed through the BBC to their own interpretation of political and social justice.

Interpretation

This paper suggests that the mission and discourse of nationalism, neo-colonialism, cultural imperialism (1976) and Othering (Said 1979) still permeates BBC Radio in spite of-- or rather because of-- its insistence on so-called 'accurate, unbiased, independent' news reporting (Msaddek 2021) and its recruitment of so-called 'diasporic broadcasters' (ibid) and collaborators. Propaganda need not be continuous in order to be effective nor do hybrid identities (Bhabha 1994) mitigate the political, economic and cultural role of BBC Radio in promoting British interests in the Arab world.

2) Targeting audiences, performing Britishness

In 2016, the British Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published a report on the current mission and standing of the BBC. In terms of numbers or statistics, the power of the BBC is impressive. It is the largest player in the British media market in terms of audience share (33% television; 53% radio), in terms of revenue (£5 billion of annual revenue; 3.7 billion from license fee), in terms of Internet sites and news and information sites (101 million browser visits in January 2015), in terms of used on-demand services (iPlayer), in terms of media production (65% of all domestic radio production), global audience (348 million).

This report, presented on behalf of the Queen and the British government to the Parliament argues that because of its public service ethos and unique funding model (license payment) The BBC should be 'innovative, ambitious, inspirational and bold' and should challenge private media businesses by 'giving listeners and viewers more choice,

more variety, and more high quality content'. The report claims that the British public concurs: '74 per cent of people believe that the BBC delivers fresh and new programming and … outstanding content, including … natural history, comedy, science, arts, news and current affairs'.

The BDMC report (2016) therefore challenges the BBC to provide 'impartial news and information … championing freedom of expression … so that all audiences can participate' in democratic processes, to support 'accessible, engaging, inspiring and challenging' learning for people of all ages, to produce the highest quality unique creative output across genres, to serve diverse racial and ethnic communities across the UK, and to reflect UK culture and values globally.

The BBC Trust Music Radio Service Review (2015) focuses more strongly on 'the best interests of [British] license fee payers'. For them, the mission and success of BBC radio is presented and assessed in these terms,

'BBC Music Radio plays a very important role in the development and promotion of UK music, both culturally and economically, due to its high level and consistent support for new, UK and live music. This outcome is fully in line with the BBC's culture and creativity public purpose.

The BBC's music radio services provide significant value to their audiences. Perceptions ofthe quality of the stations are high, and a large number of people listen each week.'

The BBC Trust (2015) argues that BBC Radio should continue to distinguish itself from other private radio channels in order to meet audience needs and support (commercial) British music and should continue to invest in distinctive online content. The report then measures the success and challenges of BBC Radio 1, BBC 1Xtra, BBC Radio 2, BBC 6 Music and BBC Radio 3. It claims that Radio 1 has reached its weekly target of drawing in 40% of the 15-29 year-old listeners. Its

online provision has contributed to its mission of serving a young audience. It broadcasts a broad range of music from established British artists and develops (hires and constructs) so-called emerging British musical talent. It does not tread on the toes of commercial stations-- the musical overlap is low. Its news programs deliver what the BBC Trust (2015) deems to be high quality news to young audiences. It also delivers so-called public purposes through entertainment programs.

This same report (2015) celebrates Radio 1Xtra on meeting its goal of serving 15-25 year- olds, increasing its reach to 7.6% of its target. It attributes this success to specialist music and expert presenters and its distinctive appeal to lovers of black British urban music. Like BBC Radio 1 it serves a public purpose and social action output, delivered through news bulletins. BBC Radio 2 reaches more than 15 million people, increasing over time. Its so-called mature focus on current affairs is valued. Radio 2's older target audience has increased, and listeners aged over 65 have increased.

Radio 3 broadcasts educational programs and documentaries and a broad range of music but its range amongst non-white (British) audiences should be increased. Radio 6 is the most listened-to online radio platform, because of its knowledgeable presenters and its unique music mix. Radio 3 has around two million listeners, plays the best classical, opera, jazz and contemporary music, and provides the best opportunities for rising musical talent.

The report concludes that BBC Radio is in excellent shape, producing high quality British music and programs and documentaries to impressive (British) audiences, but should cooperate more with commercial music and stations, cut costs on live sessions, and keep the BBC Trust in the loop in matters related to the development of online services: the key to its survival through Time.

Interpretation

This paper suggests that the current mission of BBC Radio is to target and cultivate British audiences across segmented demographic audiences (Radio 1 targets 15-29 year-old British listeners, by broadcasting British artists and emerging British talent; BBC 1Xtra targets 15-25 year-old British listeners, by playing black British urban music; BBC Radio 2 targets older listeners, by broadcasting a broad range of music, educational programs and documentaries). BBC promotes the performance (Butler 1988; Toktas 2020) of British nationalism--providing models of British identity that audiences of different ages can engage with, transform, and make their own. BBC Radio survives by encouraging audiences to listen to and dance to and buy into the British music industry, thereby connecting the public and privatized public sphere, and empowering the privatized public sphere and the music and entertainment business monopolies on which it is founded.

3. Moving online: methodological insights and strategies for survival and success

Goal

To explore the mission and strategies of survival and success embedded in the BBC Radio Internet platform (BBC Sounds 6-11-2022).

Method

This paper uses multimodal discourse analysis to investigate the use of language and images on the BBC Radio Internet platform. Discourse analysis is based on three types of meaning (Halliday, 1978): ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning. Ideational meaning is based on the so-called material world. Interpersonal meaning connects us to the social world. Textual meaning

is based on coherence. Multimodal discourse analysis suggests that language and images are interrelated systems of meaning that communicate ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning (O'Halloran et al. 2018: 460). Norris (2019) notes that much research into multimodality has examined texts or images or the interplay between both texts and images in the production, transmission, and reception of meaning. Interest in music, semiotic modes such as color, and the online dimension are growing, and this case study of the BBC Radio platform is intended to contribute to this.

This type of discourse analysis provides useful insight into the persuasive power of a media outlet such as the BBC Radio platform (Radio Sounds) and into the strategies of persuasion it might use to attract large audiences. It is important at this stage to provide awareness of polysemy, the interweaving of semiotic resources such as language, sound, and image to capture the hearts and minds of BBC Radio listeners of all ages.

Radio Sounds

This case study is based on a series of screenshots of the BBC Radio Internet platform, downloaded on the 6th November 2022.

This Internet platform is extremely simple to use and effective and quickly draws the user in. The click of the first icon conjures up **Your world of sounds**-- and encourages listeners to plan and structure their lives around BBC Radio and BBC Radio programs, to 'Login or register. Save shows to listen to later, subscribe, and get recommendations'. The red and orange image of a rebellious young woman holding a microphone fills the screen, channeling and performing the teenage spirit of rebellion (Abrahamson 2003) through the sounds of British music, promoting Britishness and British music through the BBC Radio platform.

The second row of icons connects the user to BBC Radio stations: Radio 1, Radio 1 Dance, Radio 1 Relax, Radio 2, and Radio 3. The Radio 1 icon has a medium close-up shot of a good looking young white female presenter. The Radio 1Xtra has a good looking young black male presenter-- attracting and molding young multicultural British listeners. Radio 3 has a mature older man with a jacket, a tie, and a beard-- appealing to older, more mature British listeners.

The third row of icons connects the user to specific programs that promote passions and addictions: to football, to business, to cricket, and to musical celebrities. There is football daily, a financial advice podcast, a test match special (cricket), rugby, and a BBC Radio 1 album: this time it features the singer, Rihanna. The fourth row of icons takes the user to a footballer's football podcast (Insider football), a 5-minutes-on program (can Lulu save the Amazon?), a business program (how we hustle with Yianni), and a miscarriage of justice program, Mattan: Injustice of a hanged man.

The fifth and sixth row of icons take the user to music mixes: Indie tracks, BBC television soundtracks, Japanese ambience, sleeping music, escape to the rainforest with two hours of immersive sound.

The seventh row is dedicated to COP27, the UN Climate Change Conference 2022. These programs supposedly address the looming climactic apocalypse: 'The big green money guide to COP with the UK Climate change committee', 'Dealing with drought' (31 minutes), and 'The lost world of ice' (28 minutes).

The icons in the last two rows are divided into genres: comedy, drama, documentaries, sport, science and technology, true crime, podcasts, pop and chart, dance and electronica, rock and indie, Hip hop, RnB and dancehall music, and classical music

Interpretation

The BBC Radio platform is up-to-date and effective-- providing simple and rapid access to a broad range of channels, programs-- and grouping and targeting British listeners across a broad range of demographic characteristics and interests (age, musical taste, passion, and genre). The order of the icons provides insight into the main tastes that BBC Radio is cultivating based on their continual market research into number of listeners and choice of program: in this order, British music, British football, British business, British cricket, British rugby, the British justice system (compared to the one in the United States), and the concern that the world is entering a climate change apocalypse. The role of British politics and big business both home and abroad in creating and investing in the destruction of Nature and Life is a given: but these programs help the British public to deal with it in a British way, calmly and logically.

In sum, this multimodal discourse analysis of the language and images and design of the BBC Radio internet platform suggests that BBC Radio has indeed embraced and triumphed through its move online. The online platform is excellent in terms of segmenting and targeting and nationalizing British audiences, reflecting and promoting British tastes in music, sport, politics, business and justice.

In contrast to the original mission of the BBC under John Reith-- the original director of BBC Radio and '[an] empire-builder if ever there was, driven by an unstoppable mission to improve and to civilize' (Harris 2021)-- this BBC Radio platform reflects tastes as much as it dictates tastes to the British masses. It prides itself both on audience numbers and on quality content: quality (of program) is defined by quantity (of listeners). In so doing, BBC Radio supports British music and entertainment business monopolies as the BBC Trust (2015) advocates.

The mission of BBC Radio has indeed moved on from the 'mission to improve and to civilize' (ibid) that caused the crisis in the 1960s in

which the so-called pirate radio channels broadcast more radical music from the English Channel, cutting into the BBC radio market (Rudd 2007). But it is still British rather than regional or local-- the regional news in Scottish, Irish and Welsh communities still reflects British rather than regional or local grievances (Cammaerts 2009; Kocic et al. 2020). Nevertheless, Fuchs et all (2021) in their Public Service Media and Public Service Internet Manifesto claim that the BBC Radio Internet platform is a state of the art online musical platform that should be used as the model and basis for more radical niched private online radio initiatives.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a nuanced understanding of the mission of BBC Radio since its inception under John Reith, the Mussolini of British broadcasting, with his British nationalism, colonialism, militarism, elitism, and racism-- his sense of cultural superiority based on modernity, science, and technological development-- masquerading behind a discourse of so-called impartiality.

This paper argues that there are still strong elements of British nationalism, cultural imperialism, in the mission of BBC Radio. This paper suggests that BBC Radio is in a continuous process of broadcasting and re-constructing British nationalism through tis radio programs, popularizing elite capitalist interests, and teaching the broadest range of demographic segments and ages how to perform Britishness: how to construct their own British identities and act them out.

In terms of its survival in a privatized public sphere, this article suggests that BBC Radio has acted since the outset as the medium of powerful British political institutions and interests-- the British monarchy, the British government, and monopolistic British businesses in general and British cultural, educational, entertainment and music businesses in particular-- and has survived by continually justifying itself

to these British institutions and to the so-called British public as BBC Radio listeners and as BBC Radio license payers.

In its periodic mission statements, the BBC continues to pledge its energies and support to the dominant political and economic institutions of Great Britain, to the British public and license-payer, and most of all to the British music industry-- and in that sense, BBC Radio is one of the pillars of the privatized public sphere-- surviving through rather than in spite of the privatized public sphere.

So, in answer to the doubts that might have arisen at the beginning of this paper in response to the closure of foreign language services in the Arab world and elsewhere, the shutting down of offices and the dismissal of foreign staff is merely a cost-cutting exercise to reassure the British government and British public of license payers that their money is well-spent. Much is currently being invested in the move online-- so more listeners, domestic or otherwise, can access their (opinion of) high quality radio programs than ever before.

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