Social Television: Audience and Political Engagement

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Abstract
The hypothesis of this work is that social TV can add to traditional TV audiencehood a sense of collective belonging—“we the public”—that is fundamental for any political action. After a quantitative account of users’ patterns of activity during half a TV season, a qualitative methodology is adopted to understand the variety of social TV logics. Thus, a model of four different kinds and meanings of using social TV is developed: from the most engaged (civic-informative use of social TV) to the most recreational (the game use), from the outburst of emotions (emotional use) to the identity-building and awareness use. Each of those represents various forms of relationships among individuals in a social medium environment, and between them and other actors of the wider contemporary mediated public space, such as civic and political groups, and political news media professionals.

Keywords
social television, participation, audience, engagement, social media, politics

Accounts of the political use of social media highlight the prominence of social television dynamics (Bentivegna 2014; Deller 2011; Giglietto and Selva 2014; Harrington et al. 2012), as the frequent presence of official hashtags for television shows in trending topics attests. Paradoxically, most literature on social television does not address political talk shows and public participation, mainly focusing on entertainment shows and celebrity fandom. The purpose of this article is to bridge two gaps in social television studies, one theoretical and one methodological.
From a theoretical perspective, this article analyzes how social television practices are embedded in everyday media consumption, why and how the public combines television with Twitter, and how audience engagement relates to political participation in the mediated public sphere. As political talk shows are meant to represent public debate involving citizens, at least at a symbolic level (cf. Couldry et al. 2007; Dahlgren 1995; Livingstone and Lunt 1994), this work seeks to clarify whether the possibility of real-time interaction offered by social media—especially Twitter—can enhance this involvement by stimulating civic virtues and immersive attention, which are essential prerequisites for political participation (Dahlgren 2009). From a methodological perspective, many social television studies rely upon statistical descriptions of the phenomenon (number of tweets, number of users, and so on), giving little weight to the social processes behind audience and political engagement.

Given these gaps in both the theoretical and empirical literatures, this work combines the theories and methods of media and cultural studies with those of political science to shed light on the relationship between audience engagement through social media and political participation in a mediated public sphere. The article presents the results of mixed methods research into social television audience and participation in the Italian context. A selection of thirty-two Twitter users tweeting during eleven Italian political talk shows were asked to describe their own experiences of social television and how they engage with television-mediated politics through social media. The results are collected in the first qualitative mapping of the variety of uses of social television.

Television and Social Media: A Quest for Participation

With the advent of digital media, traditional media such as television and radio have faced increasing competition; in the context of technological convergence and digitalization, traditional media have been forced to reposition themselves (Carlo and Colombo 2007). Television producers, in particular, have faced this challenge by progressively extending “the repertoire of audience participation options” and outsourcing many participation channels to the Internet and social media, starting an “internetization” process (Nightingale 2007).

Despite the fact that a shared definition of social television is still lacking, we can define it here as the social practice of commenting on television shows with peers, friends, and unknown people, who are all connected together through various digital devices. The first experiments in social television can be dated back to access programs such as BBC’s Any Questions? (1948–present) and Question Time (1979–present), in which the audience could interact with the show through telephone calls (Hibberd et al. 2003). As the Internet is increasingly replacing the telephone and letters, some scholars highlight an emerging concept of “viewertariat” to describe the expanding opportunities for the audience to intervene in shows, particularly political talk shows, through various media (Ansted and O’Loughlin 2011).

The history of social television practices is, indeed, rooted in the beginning of broadcast television but only in recent times have we faced the increasing development of
technological devices specifically designed to allow distant people to interact with each other while watching television. At the end of the twentieth century, many scholars and practitioners began to reflect that interactive television was a way to combine interpersonal communications and broadcast content. In fact, the main difference between social television and interactive television is not functional but technological. Interactive television has been described as a new technological artifact that allows the audience to navigate content, access on-demand services, and customize supply (van Dijk and de Vos 2001; van Dijk et al. 2003), while social television emphasizes the simultaneous use of many media, typically television and social media. This is why social television is also referred to as the “second screen” (Giglietto and Selva 2014).

Today, a substantial number of scholars still rely upon those “classical” studies that emphasize the technological aspects of social television. We can, in fact, distinguish between hard definitions and soft definitions of social television. The former refer to the technological development linked to media innovations, and observe various solutions along the continuum between convergence (Jenkins 2006) and second screen (Chorianopoulos and Lekakos 2008; Gross et al. 2008; Harboe 2009; Lochrie and Coulton 2012). Soft definitions of social television highlight the social practices of sharing, commenting, and networking, with little or no concern for the technological devices adopted.

In this work, we use the latter perspective to focus on audience activities. In particular, we interpret social television as an enhanced experience of “audiencehood” (Livingstone 2005), in which online content and interactions are as important as (or more important than) the shows being broadcast. Social networking sites, and Twitter in particular, enrich the perception of “liveness” as a social connection with a group of peers and a universal potential audience (Couldry 2004). Real-time sharing of this social connection introduces a ritual aspect that bonds social television dynamics to the process of building a collective discourse. The novelty of social television thus relies on a brand new blending of broadcasting and networking logics, in which citizens can access public (mediated) discourse and contribute to the social and political communication flows crosscutting the hybrid media system (Chadwick 2013).

However, many theoretical social media scholars have taken overly optimistic positions on participation practices through digital media, underestimating the power of mainstream media, most of all television, in shaping the public discourse (De Blasio 2014). At the same time, most empirical studies of social television have taken quantitative approaches, mainly applied to entertainment shows and fiction series, either simply counting user behavioral patterns or performing quantitative content analysis (Doughty et al. 2012; Highfield et al. 2013; Wohn and Na 2011; Giglietto and Selva 2014). Both these approaches fail to adequately describe the social dynamics and the shared meaning of social television practices in the public space. Although the overly optimistic accounts do not often rely on empirical investigations, most quantitative research into social television lacks a theoretical basis. The present study seeks to overcome those limitations by taking into account critical perspectives on audience participation and the public sphere to understand and interpret social television user behavior. The theoretical framework is mainly grounded in the recent reflections
about the relationship between the mediated public sphere, audience, and political participation.

Audience participation has always been a contested concept because of ongoing debates about the definition of political participation. In political and social sciences, a minimalist concept rooted in liberal democratic theories (della Porta 2013) limits participation to the decision-making process, and, as a consequence, civic participation can only be interpreted from a representative-electoral perspective. In contrast, a maximalist conception, linked to participatory and deliberative democratic theories (ibid.), extends the ways in which citizens can participate in everyday life, including not only consumption choices and volunteerism but also informal political talks with peers (Carpentier et al. 2013; Parkinson and Mansbridge 2013; Sorice 2014). Simultaneously, scholars distinguish between participation in the media and participation through the media. Participation in the media sees the audience contributing to the production and distribution of content, whereas participation through the media refers to public engagement that is allowed and sustained by virtue of mediated public space (Carpentier et al. 2013). Furthermore, some researchers prefer to evaluate participation in the media as a continuum of cases ranging from access to participation (Carpentier 2007; De Blasio 2008; De Blasio et al. 2012). Although “access” might describe the audience choosing channels and programs to watch and Internet users navigating among websites and social media, “participation” would describe procedures of co-decision between the audience and the producers about the technology, content, or production. At an intermediate level between access and participation, “interaction” refers to a dialogue between audience and media, in which the former appear to contribute but the latter still maintain their dominant position of power. This model is useful in empirical enquiries because it details different uses of social media by narrowing the definition of participation. For the purpose of this article, it provides a framework to describe the variety of uses of social television.

We cannot claim that social television represents a case of participation in the media, nor an expression of political participation in a liberal-electoral perspective. We can, however, recognize in discursive practices among audience members a form of participation in the mediated public sphere (participation through the media). Moreover, these discursive practices can represent a form of political participation according to a maximalist point of view.

With regard to the nature of social television as participation in the public sphere through the media, we find an extensive literature. Media and mediated political communication can be understood as “frames of reference,” insofar as they provide repertoires, representations, and cultural meanings that subjects can use for interpreting social reality and building their own identities (Hall and du Gay 1996; Sorice 2009). When the private experience of audiencehood is publicized through social networking sites, this reintroduces aspects of sociality essential to the construction of publics (Livingstone 2005), which are collective formations or communities of self-reflexive subjects sharing common values, aims, identities, and audiencehood experiences (Dayan 2005). In this framework, social television can constitute a crucial practice that influences those processes in multiple ways, leading to the first research question:
**Research Question 1:** Can social television practices be considered a kind of audience engagement, resulting in the form of a public with reflexive belonging and shared practices and values?

A second question derives from previous literature about audience and political participation with regard to the actual behavior of users, in contrast with normative models of participation discussed earlier:

**Research Question 2:** Can social television practices be considered a form of participation?

To answer those questions, this work will describe the multiple implications of social television by directly asking users.

**Method**

The preeminence of television in news consumption in Italy makes this a sociologically and politically interesting case to illustrate the evolutionary trends of the public sphere. In effect, television is still the primary source of information for 98 percent of Italians (Censis-Ucsi 2013). Moreover, political scientists have defined Italian political talk shows as a “third chamber” of the Parliament because of the great popularity of the genre of “pop politics,” which blends information, entertainment, and popular culture (Mazzoleni and Sfardini 2009).

We chose to focus our attention on social television practices through Twitter because it was the most used platform for social television purposes, compared both with more specific social television services (such as Miso) and with the other mainstream social networking platform, Facebook. In 2013, 9.6 percent of the entire Italian population were Twitter users, compared with 44.3 percent being Facebook users (Censis-Ucsi 2013). Nonetheless, the relevance and impact of Twitter in Italian political communication flows has been acknowledged (Bentivegna 2014). as Twitter users include pundits, journalists, politicians, and opinion leaders who have a substantive role in agenda-building processes. As for social television, Twitter is more likely to be used than Facebook to comment on shows in real time because of its affordances and its forced synthesis (Giglietto and Selva 2014). We adopted a mixed methods perspective, beginning with a quantitative phase, which is useful to provide a description of the phenomenon in terms of reach and popularity and also to sample users for qualitative in-depth interviews.

The first part derives from a broader project in which we monitored eleven television shows for an entire season, from August 30, 2012 to June 30, 2013. These shows explicitly addressed political issues and current affairs, hosting politicians in the talk show formula. We chose to monitor only shows that aired on one of the seven free-to-air Italian channels because they had the highest audience ratings among all television outlets, both cable and free-to-air. We acquired 2,489,669 tweets through DiscoverText via Gnip access, using the official hashtags of each show and limiting the acquisition...
to the airing time (2,313 average tweets per episode). The corpus of 472,126 tweets was further limited to the period from August 30 to December 23, 2012 to proceed with the qualitative analysis before the end of the television season.

A total of 198 potential interviewees were selected according to two criteria: the activity and the assiduity of social television practices. Each episode was analyzed by executing Gawk scripts to obtain the distribution of users in terms of activity. The scripts divided users into three clusters according to their contribution: Users who produced more than around 90 percent of tweets fell into the first cluster; users who produced a further 9 percent of tweets fell into the second one; and users who produced less than 1 percent fell into the third one. Every time, thresholds were calculated specific to the overall activity of the episode. Thus, three lists of users per episode were created and then matched to each other using the Text Mining package of R, to calculate the assiduity of those users who tweeted continuously episode after episode. This procedure allowed us to identify four levels of activity and assiduity (Figure 1).

All users in those categories were contacted via Twitter’s direct messaging service. This platform function required the users to follow back the author to receive private messages, and this provoked a high rate of nonresponses (Table 1).

In the end, only thirty-one users accepted the invitation to be interviewed via Skype. The interviews had a semistructured outline, which investigated information habits, digital skills, political participation, and social television practices and meanings. Finally, the transcripts were analyzed with a qualitative textual coding technique supported by Dedoose, a free software program designed for academic research.

**The Four Uses of Social Television**

Most interviewees spontaneously introduced the idea of social television while talking about Twitter, stating that it is one of the principal uses of the microblogging platform.

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**Figure 1.** Levels of activity and assiduity of social television users.
With regard to devices, users answered in different ways, but second screen practices (television plus computer, smartphone, or tablet) prevailed over webcasting. Finally, there was a homogeneity in terms of favorite shows that were preferred over others because they provided some space for dialogue with Twitter (reading tweets, asking questions suggested by Twitter users, rolling tweets on the bottom of the screen).

Users talked with a double perspective about tweeting during the shows to participate. On one hand, they wanted to “contribute” to the discussion about an issue, by asking questions to the politicians or suggesting questions to the host, for example. On the other hand, they also wanted to “protest” against a politician, or more broadly, against politics and the “ruling class,” including journalists and the shows’ news-rooms. However, the desire for participation was anchored in a broadcasting logic: the activity of tweeting at the television seemed to acquire a meaning only when referring to the frame, times, and spaces that television conceded. Thus, social television cannot be considered a fully antagonistic practice: the public does not challenge broadcasters’ narrations of politics, although most interviewees manifested a desire to resist mainstream representations (phrases such as “I want to make a difference” and “I want push them to talk about real citizens’ issues” were very common). The unexpected consequence is that users end up reinforcing television’s centrality in the public sphere perhaps even more.

Twitter users’ contribution to shows’ narratives remains irrelevant. Many political shows have opened up sections designated for reading a selection of tweets or Facebook posts, but very few shows actually offer real-time participation through social media. Those few that do still limit audience intervention to specific segments of the show, such as questions from the web, e-voting on particular issues, and so on. Although they are encouraging, these experiments remain limited with regard to the whole narration of tele-politics. In other words, the editorial control over the content of the show still completely resides with the production itself. Thus, because full participation through social television is excluded, the audience’s role can range only from access to interaction. For this reason, we cannot talk about real participation in the construction of the plot but rather mere interaction with television and political characters.

From the analysis of interviews, we find that users’ reasons for the use of Twitter for social television practices are linked to desires for the full expression of citizenship: to act as informed publics and producers/distributors of information. The analysis shows that users describe social television in multiple ways, and so some contiguities

| Followed users | Users who followed back | Follower/following rate | Interviews | Interview/following rate |
|----------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Assiduous      | 10                     | 2                       | 0.20       | 2                        |
| Frequent       | 40                     | 20                      | 0.50       | 9                        |
| Active         | 51                     | 15                      | 0.30       | 8                        |
| Standard       | 97                     | 16                      | 0.16       | 12                       |
| Total          | 198                    | 53                      | 0.26       | 31                       |

Table 1. User Responses to Interviews.
can be traced in at least two dimensions. The uses of social television as described in users’ own words can be subdivided according to online behavior (essentially ranging from mere access and reading to proper interaction) and to the meaning they assign to such behavior. These descriptions can be represented in a model of four uses of social television (Figure 2).

Although the four uses are our elaboration, grounded in the users’ verbalizations, the axes are designed following previous theoretical accounts, although these axes have not been intersected with each other previously. The horizontal axis goes from access to interaction, tracing reflections about social media and political participation (Carpentier 2007; De Blasio 2008): users access Twitter to read what other people say without necessarily intervening in the flow (identity-building/social awareness and game use), or they use it to participate in the discussion (civic/informative and emotional use). Of course, the distinction between access and interaction is empirically fuzzy, but it is nevertheless present in user accounts.

The vertical axis distinguishes between the practical and symbolic meanings of the experience, in an understanding rooted in cultural studies (Hall and du Gay 1996). On one side, we can find social practices that are specifically linked to the strict context of what is happening on television, such as emotional outbursts or recreational, often satirical, uses. These were defined by the interviewees as moments in which Twitter adds something to television, such as the opportunity to pour out frustrations or to experience some kind of collective entertainment. On the other side, the symbolic meaning appeared when users described the show as the frame (that is to say, the chance) to enhance or change their mind and their self-perception (civic/informative use and identity-building/social awareness).
The civic/informative use of social television (i.e., interaction practices with a symbolic meaning) implies the use of Twitter to comment on what is happening on television and, in a wider sense, in the whole political context: “We are very interested in politics, but we realised that participation does not lead to change . . . so we take up a position from home” (female, 50); “I tweet to let people remember what has been said, promises, ideas. Sometimes I directly speak to politicians” (male, 45). Users tweet to participate in the debate, to make their own contribution, to help spread news and ideas, and to attract other users’ attention (e.g., tweets announcing the presence of some politicians hosting the show): “When my favourite politicians are on TV, I tweet. It’s like a live commentary, I do it to circulate information, to attract more viewers” (male, 19). Other uses falling into the civic/informative category are tweets directly addressing the show or the host (using @mentions) to suggest questions to ask: “I often tweet about TV, because it is a way to catch up or to try and trigger a concrete conversation, for example, questions they do not ask. That annoys me a lot” (male, 45).

When interacting with the show or the host, the civic/informative use can also be very close to pure attention-seeking (Giglietto and Selva 2014; Wohn and Na 2011). The difference between civic/informative use and attention-seeking is both substantive and methodological. At the substantive level, attention-seeking is just a specific variant of a broader civic/informative use that, in turn, consists of many empirical manifestations. At a methodological level, the attention-seeking label results from the textual analysis of a single tweet (the presence of mentions or direct questions are indicators of attention-seeking), whereas civic/informative use refers to users’ accounts of their own user experience and might be actualized in more varied textual forms. Another variant of the civic/informative use is real-time fact-checking: “I try to correct mistakes in what they say when talking about [Human Resources] HR management and fiscality. Because it’s my job and they say a lot of lies. We always need to verify” (female, 50).

Identity-building and social awareness (i.e., access practices with a symbolic meaning) are deeply blended together: “It’s like a parallel world where you can confront other people. You have the chance to verify if you have a common point of view” (male, 48). Here, users revealed that they accessed Twitter as a way to monitor what other users think and compare it with their own thinking, to verify if they are the only ones to see it that way: “You try to find other people who think the same way as you do, count how many we are, find out if you’re wrong and why” (male, 41). This dynamic has been confirmed also in the viewing communities of television series, but here, it has a more emotional nuance (“to feel not to be alone”; see Schirra et al. 2014), and it also seems to be very specific to social television. Also, such monitoring activity can imply a subsequent interaction, but interaction is not the primary goal. Social television is often a way to compensate for the absence of other people in the physical realm of the living room and to have the chance to control others’ reactions: Once, you watched TV, got angry and asked “am I the only one to think that way?” With Twitter, you verify you are not alone. Some evenings I don’t want to tweet but then I listen to such lies on TV and I desperately need to switch on the PC and tweet. (Male, 41)
In other words, Twitter functions as an awareness system (Hermida 2010), as the control of what others share on Twitter is part of the identity-building process. The concepts of “how I distinguish myself from others” (individuation) and “how I join others” (identification; Hall and du Gay 1996) are essential for the construction of one’s self-perception with regard to public discourse, both tele-political and grassroots.

The emotional use (i.e., interaction practices with a practical meaning) describes social television as a way to satisfy expressive needs, such as outbursts, frustration, and indignation: “Talk shows and live tweeting is a way to express frustration against those in charge” (female, 45); “I use it to comment on what politicians and journalists say because sometimes I need to speak out, even if it doesn’t change anything” (male, 38). As many interviewees said, Twitter perfectly represents the vices and virtues of Italian society, highlighting in particular relational and communication habits among political opponents. Most of the interviewees describe this characteristic by using metaphors such as “cheering”—that is to say, the reaction of a spectator to a show, irrespective of genre—and the profound, irremovable gap between rival teams. Twitter is often described as being like the bar: a third place between the private and public realms (Chadwick 2009; Oldenburg 1991). It is seen as a protected environment where one can meet other people to freely share reactions and emotions with no need to discuss reasonable opinions:

It is like watching a soccer match at the bar, Twitter becomes the bar, a place where collecting comments: someone shouts, someone calms down the others. It’s a way to confront people who are watching the same thing as you and are angry exactly as much as you are. (Male, 58)

This kind of use confirms the need to include emotional publics in the political and social research agenda, shifting away from normative ideals of the public sphere (Higgins 2008; Livingstone 2005).

Game use of social television (i.e., access practices with a practical meaning) occurs when users access Twitter to find out “how it is going.” Although it is similar to the identity-building and awareness uses, in game use, there is a specific orientation to entertainment: irony, sarcasm, and satire are added to television and to political talk shows as grassroots frames that subvert the original meaning. This is a particular way in which politics and culture are mixed together (Street 1997; Van Zoonen 2004, 2005), resulting in multiple expressions that vary in critical awareness and efficacy. Amusement is even enhanced when users are embedded in a group or circle; some described the presence of a core group of users in effect meeting each other on Twitter after an episode, with the expectation that someone would make the first joke or create the satirical frame (in a similar way to “let’s find out what s/he says”): “There is a closer circle of people. We know each other and often comment together. Two or three of them have become friends of mine and we have a lot of fun” (male, 41). Another kind of entertainment is linked to disputes occurring between users and famous subjects, mainly politicians who are inexpert at using Twitter: “It’s my favourite entertainment, mainly if there are big disputes or people teasing politicians” (male, 63).
Although the small number of interviews in this study restricts the possibility of generalizing the results of this work, the analysis presented here provides a first attempt at describing how discursive practices in a hybrid media system (Chadwick 2013) relate to the public sphere and to political engagement (Dahlgren 2009). More precisely, after a quantitative description of a dataset of 472,126 tweets collected during eleven Italian political talk shows, this work moved to the analysis of thirty-one interviews of social television users, to answer two research questions:

**Research Question 1:** Can social television practices be considered a kind of audience engagement, resulting in the form of a public with reflexive belonging and shared practices and values?

**Research Question 2:** Can social television practices be considered a form of participation?

With regard to the first question, the empirical study has shown that users assign a major role to social television practices in the everyday consumption of politics: the combination of television and social media enhances the whole experience of audiencehood and constitutes an innovative pathway to the constitution of publics, to political engagement, and to collective shared identity. However, despite many interviewees claiming to use social media as participation and contestation tools, a broadcasting logic is still dominant in the use of social television.
This leads to the second question. Participation in the television discourse is restricted by the television producers, limiting the public’s opportunities for access or interaction. In effect, the uses of social television can vary significantly, depending on the audience’s behavior (access/interaction) and the meaning (practical/symbolic). We have synthesized this variety for the first time into a model of four uses of social television, which also reflects the variety of the (platform-mediated) relationships among social television practitioners and between them and the actors of the wider contemporary mediated public space. As the model shows, civic/informative uses appear to be nearly emotional outbursts, hybridizing the definition of public and suggesting once again the need to overcome the normative ideals of the public sphere by acknowledging the increasing importance of emotional publics in mediated political communication (Higgins 2008).

This work also confirms that Twitter functions as an awareness system (Hermida 2010), which can have great importance for identity-building and self-representation. Other evidence supports the presence of diffused practices of grassroots ironic and subversive frames. Audiences use these frames to comment on current affairs and political characters by embedding irony, sarcasm, and popular culture in a subversive manner (Lievrouw 2011). Signs of these frames are visible, for example, in the creation of hashtags (e.g., unofficial hashtags for a show or hashtags involving political characters) and fake or collective accounts on social media. Further research ought to combine user accounts with a textual analysis of social television expressions to analyze the multiple forms of irony on social media.

In conclusion, television and social media appear to be deeply connected with each other. Users recognize the efforts made by television producers to (slowly) reinvigorate languages and formats to include social media practices and conversations in their narration, although it still remains fundamentally centralized. For this reason, social television is a practice of audience engagement resulting in interactions more than participation. Moreover, despite users’ self-descriptions as members of a subversive and critical audience, their online behavior results in an unintended consequence: social television practices legitimate television as a central front stage (more than a source of information) where politics actually happens. These results seem to contradict some overly optimistic accounts of social media as alternative, sometimes subversive and revolutionary, outlets (Castells 2012; Jenkins 2006). This suggests that we move toward more critical accounts (De Blasio 2014; Fuchs 2014) to detect the relationships between citizens and the mediated public sphere.

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Notes

1. As a confirmation, Twitter’s director for media partnerships, Fred Graver, revealed that 95 percent of tweets are related to television, and Nielsen launched a specific service for Twitter ratings of television audiences in 2012 (Giglietto and Selva 2014).

2. The eleven TV shows analyzed were Porta a Porta (Rai1), L’ultima parola (Rai2), Agorà, In ½ ora, Ballarò (Rai3), Omnibus, In onda, Otto e mezzo, L’infedele, Piazzapulita, and Servizio Pubblico (La7).

3. The aims of the original research project were to explore patterns of use of social television in Twitter and to develop a regression model to predict audience rates (Giglietto 2013; Giglietto and Selva 2014).

4. One of the most important reasons for this choice was the sudden change of political scenario that year. An electoral campaign, which started in late December 2012 and ended in late March 2013, was followed by a month of political deadlock and the election of the President of Republic (head of state) in June 2013. Those events determined a substantive revolution in all outlets’ schedules, the emergence of new talk shows, and, ultimately, an increase in the public’s attention to political issues, which could constitute a relevant bias.

5. As of June 2015, the Gawk script Metrify automatically calculates percentiles, describing a right-skewed distribution (so-called long tail), so as to recognize the niche of users who produced most of the content, the average values, and the majority of users who published the residuals.

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