

OJER GOÑI, T. *La BBC, un modelo de gestión audiovisual en tiempos de crisis*. Madrid: Euroeditions, 2009, 223 p. ISBN: 978-84-937376-2-7

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The BBC and the keys to its excellence: financially safe and independent, well-run and committed to quality programming

In Europe's audiovisual industry, the BBC is considered a paradigm of audiovisual public service and a frame of reference for countries immersed in redefining their own public television, as is the case in Spain.

A lot of Anglo-Saxon authors have produced many scientific works on the BBC over the last three decades: Burns (1977), Briggs (1985), Madge (1989), Cockerell (1990), Blumler (1992), Cain (1992), Barnett (1993), Hargreaves (1993), Davies (1999), Peacock (2004), Elstein (2004), Born (2005) and O'Malley (2005), amongst others. In Spain, many researchers have been interested in the BBC, noticing any activity undertaken by the British public television company. The way in which the corporation has adapted to new technologies, the particular nature of its journalists, its singularity as a public service and its interest in the public are some of the issues considered. Texts by some authors (Villar (2005), Manfredi (2006, 2008), García Avilés (2006), Lamuedra (2008), Ojer (2008, 2009), Llorens (2008) or Medina (2009), amongst others) have been published as articles in various scientific communication journals, as papers in conferences, or as chapters in books. However, at the end of 2009 there was still no work in Spanish dedicated entirely to the BBC.

Teresa Ojer Goñi is a professor in the Media Business and Communication Structure of Communication Department at the Universidad San Jorge in Zaragoza. She is linked with the Media Business and Communication Market research group at the Universidad de Navarra, which explains why the framework for her doctorate is the purely economic and media management perspective. This book is a summary taken from her doctoral thesis defended at the aforementioned university.

La BBC, un modelo de gestión audiovisual en tiempos de crisis [The BBC, a model of audiovisual management in times of crisis] is a decisive addition to the scientific community because, on the one hand, it covers an important gap in liter-

ature (it's the first book in Spanish focusing solely on the BBC) and, on the other, it gives the reader insight into the current set-up of the corporation by studying how British broadcasting system has developed in general, and public service television in particular. In short, the author offers researchers a valuable overview of the reality of the BBC, which is the result of praiseworthy documentation, synthesis and systemisation of the information, and with a clear didactic purpose. In this work, the author does not reject analysis or reflection, although we sometimes fail to know her own position on certain questions that she herself raises, and she could also be more critical of her chosen subject. The BBC is not perfect: its commercial expansion, which strangles commercial radio as well as the private web content firms, or its journalistic scandals such as the Hunt case, is not dealt with in sufficient depth. She also does not look at the paradoxical fact that the British working classes prefer the paying platform BskyB, with its entertainment mainly made up of football and Hollywood, to the more 'snobbish' programming on the BBC, considered by some as television for the rich, paid for by the poor.

Despite this, excellence does exist. In this work, Teresa Ojer is of the opinion that the level of excellence enjoyed by the BBC is due to decisive issues, such as the conditions that the public corporation was created under, its management structure, its financing system and even the constant requirement of quality programmes. These are the aspects around which this work revolves, which is divided into five chapters.

As a point of departure, Teresa Ojer proposes an approach to the concept of public service television, which is not exhaustive, using the contributions of other reference works on this subject, thereby reviewing public service principles. She also decides to weigh up discussion on the legitimacy of public television in Europe, presenting the arguments for and against multi-channels.

The BBC's case study begins in the second chapter, in which analyses the most significant milestones that have affected the corporation's development since its origins in 1922 to 2008. The early years saw such crucial events as the status of public utility granted to the radio in the UK and, as a result of this

decision, its conversion from private radio company (British Broadcasting Company) to a public corporation. This transformation was by Royal Charter (a document which continues to protect the BBC as an independent public body, free from government influence) which is periodically renewed.

Teresa Ojer believes that it's fundamental to the British public television model that programming has remained the same since its inception, having been decided by non-governmental managers committed to public service, as well as the fact that its funding is based on a direct tax, independent of the state, through a levy on citizens. The author also highlights the BBC's crises, such as the break-up of the BBC's monopoly in 1955, the economic crisis of the 1970s, the implementation of cable and satellite broadcasting in the 1980s and the threat of privatisation by the British government in the 1990s.

For Ojer, the BBC's independence from the state, which makes it a benchmark for other countries, is due to its singular management structure which, as the researcher points out, "has remained constant for eighty years" (p. 87). In the third chapter, in order to evaluate the BBC's organisational model, Teresa Ojer examines the configuration of management tools in public television stations around Europe and presents current opinions on corporate governance — agency theory and stakeholder theory. Next, she explores the governing structure of the Corporation, explaining both the functions at the heart of management and the weaknesses in the management systems, and they way they have been rectified.

The BBC's main priority is to serve its viewers, particularly because British citizens are the Corporation's main stakeholders. In the fourth chapter, Professor Ojer, arguing that the BBC's activity depends on how they fund their public service, describes different, conventional forms of income (levies, commercial activities and grants) and new business avenues initiated by the BBC. The Corporation therefore relies on a mixed financing system, which the author openly supports and defines as "the most adequate, bearing in mind its public service nature" (p. 131).

In the final chapter, Ojer Goñi, who believes that the BBC's audiovisual products are the key feature to its identity, tackles the concept of quality, reviewing theories related to business size, television scheduling, and programmes. The author ends by exploring five BBC programmes. It is an analysis which confirms her hypothesis that "constant improvements in programming quality have contributed to its national and international prestige" (p. 14).

Despite doubts regarding the service's legitimacy and funding in a British television market that is increasingly more liberalised, Teresa Ojer concludes that, in the last few years, the BBC has continued to move towards excellence in such a way that it has not only remained strong as an independent, non-governmental public corporation, but has also intensified its commitments to citizens, has reaffirmed its commitment to quality content and it has assumed leadership in the UK's switchover from analogue to digital.

Undoubtedly, Teresa Ojer's book, both in the theme it tackles and the quality of its content, is essential reading for researchers of media business and management, as well as for those who work on aspects related to communication policies and the structure of the broadcasting system.

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