Television audience in European Minority Languages: Reality, demographic profile, and correlation

Audiencias de televisión en lenguas minoritarias europeas: Realidad, perfil demográfico y correlación

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Abstract

This article investigates the audiences of seven television stations of public ownership and general content and reach, broadcasting in Basque, Catalan, Frisian, Galician, Irish, Scottish Gaelic, and Welsh languages. The study (2021-2022) focuses on the audiences' quantitative dimensions and demographic profile and their correlation with the concept of mutual linguistic intelligibility, defined as the degree of understanding between minority and majority languages. A worthy and original finding reveals that those channels with a high degree of mutual linguistic intelligibility get a notably higher share (10-15%) than those with a very low degree of mutual intelligibility (1-3% share). The comparison of the audience metrics of minority-language televisions with those of majority-language public channels discloses challenging results. Regarding demographic profiles, there are evident audience differences among the seven televisions. At the European level, women represent 52.8%, and on the age variable, 65% of the audience is over 55.

Keywords: Audiences, audience metrics, European minority languages, minority language television, television audience.

Resumen

En este artículo se investigan las audiencias de siete cadenas de televisión que emiten sus contenidos en euskera, catalán, frisón, gallego, irlandés, gaélico escocés y galés, respectivamente. Son canales públicos, de contenido general y alcance amplio, que constituyen la columna vertebral de los sistemas mediáticos en estas lenguas minoritarias europeas. El estudio (2021-2022) se centra en las dimensiones cuantitativas y el perfil demográfico de las audiencias y su correlación con el concepto de inteligibilidad lingüística mutua, definido como el grado de similitud entre el idioma minoritario y el idioma hegemónico. Las conclusiones revelan dos grupos distintos en cuanto a su *share* y *rating*; además, indican una clara correlación entre estas métricas y el grado de inteligibilidad lingüística mutua. Se comparan asimismo las métricas de audiencia de estas cadenas con las de los canales públicos en lengua mayoritaria. En cuanto a los perfiles demográficos, existen diferencias entre las audiencias; no obstante, a nivel europeo, el 52,8% de la audiencia de estas cadenas son mujeres. En lo referente a la edad, un alto porcentaje, el 65%, tiene más de 55 años.

Palabras clave: Audiencias, audiencias de televisión, lenguas minoritarias europeas, métricas de audiencia, televisión en lenguas minoritarias.

1. Introduction

Reaching the audience, segmented and culturally diverse as it is, continues to be one of the central objectives of the media. Currently, in times of acute conflicts, crises, and information distortion, lobbied by extreme ideologies and movements in many countries of Europe (Gladstone, 2017; BBC News, 2016), society needs quality media more than ever to collaborate in creating a participatory public sphere where the audience engages in a range of vertical and horizontal interactivity (Guo, 2018).

Research on media audience, both academic and commercial, is vastly extensive, especially in majority-language media. In fact, preeminent scholars as Hamelink (2014) criticize that most scholarly research on communication and media is framed in a nation-state setting.

Data and studies on minority-language media and audiences also exist, but, in general, they are focused on individual cases and do not constitute a coherent and comparative corpus (Cormack & Hourigan, 2007b; Hogan-Brun & Wolff, 2003). Hence, this study—systematically comparative and adhering to the expanding field of comparative research with a cross-cultural perspective (Hanitzsch, 2009)—contributes to establishing a European-level frame and fills that scholarly gap by providing for the first time a collective and compared picture of the television audiences of the seven European autochthonous minority languages with a broadcasting system.

Those seven TV channels are relevant to the linguistic, cultural, social, and even political needs of their language communities (Lema-Blanco & Meda-González, 2016). They also encourage other social agents to share a public dialogue (Browne, 2005), and contribute to a robust democracy. As public broadcasters, their mission, evoking the BBC's Royal Charter (2016), is «to act in the public interest, serving all audiences through the provision of impartial, high-quality and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain» (p. 5).

This study is also framed within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) regarding equality and community cohesion (SDG-10.2) and strong institutions (SDG-17.7./10.).

The main topics analyzed in this research are the demographic profile of the television audiences, their quantitative reach within the seven communities and languages, and their potential correlation with the concept of mutual linguistic intelligibility.

Likewise, a systematic comparison of said profiles and values is established with the audience metrics of the main public television channels in the majority languages—Dutch, English, Spanish—within the geographical scope of the seven communities under analysis.

The results and comparisons of audiences at the European level will reveal potential weaknesses, which can help scholars in future research and television managers in decision-making.

2. Literature

The theory and research on the audience inquire into and explain people's multifaceted relationship with the media using different epistemological frameworks, such as communication theory, marketing and advertising, cultural studies, sociology and psychology of the media, and literary theory, among others (Cooper & Tang, 2009).

Some authors (Webster, 1998) suggest that audience studies can be organized into three overlapping levels: Consequence, agent, and mass. As a consequence, where the influence and effects—framing, agenda-setting, cultivation, among other theories—of the media on the audience are investigated (Valkenburg et al., 2016). As an agent, where the theories of active/interactive audience (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019), de/coding of content (Rlindlof, 1988), and the theory of uses and gratifications (Ruggiero, 2000) are framed, including the role as «legitimate stakeholders with a voice in governance processes» of media (Puppis & Van den Bulck, 2024: 20). The third level, defined as mass, is concerned with programming, marketing, and advertising strategies that affect the media audience (Callejo, 2001); the quantitative and qualitative profile of the audience (Igartua & Badillo, 2003); as well as exposure to the media (Cooper & Tang, 2009).

However, it can be argued that Webster's concept of mass should be qualified as "tagged audience", that is, identified and cataloged through various variables, because, with digitalization and the Internet, the media have a large amount of data and traits about the members of their audience. On this third level of (tagged) mass is where most audience inquiries used in marketing and advertising—produced by specialized commercial and professional companies (Kantar and ComScore, for example)[1]—are registered and constantly followed by the media companies, which need to know the figures, profiles, and preferences of their audiences (Firmstone, 2024). These audience measurement studies provide data to the advertising industry and key information to the media to prepare the programming and organize their marketing plan (Lamas-Alonso, 2010).

Given the digital convergence and development of the Internet, media and their relations with the market and the audience have been changing profoundly, as are the measurement techniques (Fürst, 2020; Bermejo, 2021). Indeed, television has a consolidated audience measurement and analysis system.

1 https://www.kantar.com; https://www.comscore.com.

Even so, convergence with the Internet is forcing television channels to adapt to new digital metrics (Carlson, 2018). Therefore, some authors (Callejo-Gallego, 2019) suggest metaphorical denominations for the types of audience and their evaluation methods—solid, liquid, gaseous, among others. In any case, media design strategies integrate and combine online and offline spaces (Hanna et al., 2011).

Beyond the TV corporations in the majority languages, which absorb large audiences, there is a much less visible Europe of minority-language broadcasting groups whose reality and viewership also need to be studied. This kind of research, which is very relevant for the autochthonous language communities, also enriches mainstream scholarship and improves European societies' and institutions' knowledge and perception of them.

With respect to international studies on media audiences in minority languages, it can be pointed out the study by Nguyen, Trieschnigg, and Cornips (2015) on the audience and use of minority languages on Twitter, the importance of programming in Finland's competitive market to attract the Swedish-speaking minority to radio in their language (Moring & Husband, 2007) and, beyond European boundaries and views, Malawi's community radio (Chikaipa, 2023) and online chatting by Tanzania's Chasu language speakers (Akiley Msuya, 2024), among others.

As for other general literature on minority language media, it could be mentioned the research on models of media space for immigrants and indigenous people (Riggins, 1992), the multidisciplinary book covering regional, non-territorial and migratory language settings across the world (Hogan-Brun & O'Rourke, 2018), broadcasting and press goals in minority languages of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Scotland (Kirk & Baoill, 2003), minority language media needs and globalization effects (Cormack & Hourigan, 2007a), and a series of comparative articles on European minority language media systems, economy and funding, internet development, journalism strategies and journalists' roles (Ferré-Pavia et al., 2018; Zabaleta, et al., 2019, 2013a, 2013b; Zabaleta & Xamardo, 2022), social media (Jones & Uribe-Jongbloed, 2012) and markets in the digital age (Moring, 2014).

3. Research questions

1. Share and rating: What share and rating percentages do the seven television channels have? Are there noteworthy differences among them?

2. Share of minority language television and majority language television: What comparisons can be made regarding the difference between the share of the minority language TV channels and the share of the main public TV channels—BBC One Wales, NPO1, RTÉ One, TVE1—in the majority language and in the same geographic community?

3. Share and mutual linguistic intelligibility: Is there any correlation between the TV share and the structural factor of 'mutual linguistic intelligibility', defined as the degree of reciprocal intelligibility between the minority and the majority language?

4. Demographic profile: Considering the variables of age and sex, what is the audience profile of the seven TV channels? Are there relevant differences? How does each TV compare to the European level profile, established as the combination of the values of the seven TV channels?

4. Methodology

4.1. Languages

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages[2] categorizes minority languages into five categories: 1) national languages of small nation-states that are less widely used or threatened (as Irish); 2) languages of communities present in a single nation-state (as Welsh); 3) languages of communities that reside in two or more nation-states (as Basque); 4) languages that are a minority in a nation-state, but majority languages in other countries (as Hindi in Great Britain); and 5) non-territorial languages (as Romani language).

This study is concerned with languages in categories one (Irish), two (Galician, Scottish Gaelic, and Welsh), and three (Basque, Catalan, and Frisian).

As for 2020-2022, the number of minority language speakers1[3] in millions is Catalonia, 6.1 (81% of population); Galicia, 2.3 (88%); Basque Country, 1.0 (48%); Wales, 0.9 (29%); Ireland,[4] 0.9 (13%); Friesland, 0.5 (73%); and Scotland, 0.1 (2%). These figures should be taken with some caution, as there are disagreements between statistical agencies about the definition of language proficiency, the criteria used to define each type of knowledge and fluency, and uncertainties about the reliability of some data. In the case of the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Friesland, the number of speakers corresponds to that which exists in their political-administrative community—autonomous communities of the Basque Country and Catalonia, and the Province of Friesland, respectively—, and not in the linguistic community, which is also extended to other areas with the same language.

Seven television channels of public ownership, general content and reach, and monolingual programming—over 70% in the minority language—have been investigated. They comprehend and correspond to the whole number of general broadcasting channels in autochthonous that exist in Europe.

They are the following: TV3 in Catalonia (3Cat is the new digital label since 2023), ETB1 in the Basque Country, TVG in Galicia, S4C in Wales, TG4 in Ireland, Omrop Fryslân in Friesland, and BBC Alba in Scotland.

In four communities—Basque Country, Catalonia, Friesland, and Galicia—the television channels offer 24-hour daily programming in their own language. The Welsh and Irish channels broadcast 17.5 and 13 hours, respectively, and the Scottish-Gaelic channel broadcasts 7 hours.

In four language communities—Basque Country, Catalonia, Friesland, and Galicia—the television channels are part of a public broadcasting corporation that also has radio stations. In the other three—Ireland, Scotland, and Wales—television and radio belong to different corporations or public entities.

4.2. Mutual linguistic intelligibility

2 URL of the Charter: http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ChercheSig.asp?NT=148&CM=&DF=&CL=ENG.

3 Instituto Galego de Estatística [Statistical Institute of Galicia], Basque Statistics Institute, Statistical Institute of Catalonia, Welsh Government, Central Statistics Office of Ireland and The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), Statistics Netherlands (CBS) in Friesland, National Records of Scotland.

4 Following official Irish sources—Central Statistics Office and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency—, it is estimated that there are 899,566 Irish speakers aged 4+ (13.3%) in Ireland. However, for the directors of TG4 television and RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, the universe of fluent Irish speakers over 15 years of age is approximately 185,000, considered the 'core audience'. This figure derives from data provided by the Fios Físe Audience and Listening Panel (https://www.fiosfise.ie) and represents 3.3% of the population. Extrapolating that percentage to the population aged 4+, the number of speakers would be estimated on 223,923, a big difference from the figure published by the official statistical agencies.

This concept, used in sociolinguistics (Gooskens et al., 2018), is defined as the degree of comprehension and intelligibility that two languages have with each other. There are two methods to measure the degree of mutual intelligibility: An expert opinion test via a Likert scale and a functional test using a more detailed analysis of the compression of speech fragments by a sample of people (Gooskens, 2013).

In this study it refers to the mutual intelligibility between the minority and the majority language. It has been hypothesized that if it is high, the possibility of audience growth also increases since even those who do not speak—or do so at a minimal level—the minority language can also understand to some degree what is broadcast on television in the minority language.

A survey was conducted to evaluate the mutual intelligibility between minority and majority languages (Authors, 2024). A balanced sample of 33 university scholars (45%) and professionals (55%) from the seven language communities, including the directors of seven radio and television channels, were asked to rate the degree of mutual intelligibility on a 0-5 Likert scale. A rating of 0 indicated no mutual intelligibility and a rating of 5 very high. As for the sample distribution, 15 were scholars and 18 professionals, proportionally distributed by languages.

The results indicated that the Catalan, Galician, and Frisian languages have a high mutual intelligibility (4 points) with their respective majority language, Spanish or Dutch. Conversely, the Basque, Irish, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic languages showed very low mutual intelligibility (1 point) with Spanish or English, respectively.

4.3. Questionnaire and data

The questionnaire provided to and filled in by the directors and editors of the seven television channels —in addition to queries about online and social media data, and structural factors for audience development—contained questions about relevant audience metrics—share and rating, and the demographic profile by gender and age—, and about the main challenges they face to increase their audience and attract the youth. Similarly, hypothesizing a potential correlation between TV audience share and the concept of mutual linguistic intelligibility, an opinion test using a Likert scale of five values was conducted to assess the degree of mutual intelligibility between the minority and the majority language.

The period of analysis is 2021 and 2022. The data collection has been carried out using several methods and time sequences: First, trips and visits to the television headquarters—carried out between May, June, and July 2022—to conduct face-to-face interviews with the directors and editors; 2) reception of the responses to the questionnaire between September and November 2022, including follow-ups and clarifications; and 3) data update in 2023 about the audience metrics of television audiences in 2022.

The metric of audience rating corresponds to the percentage of average viewers of a TV channel concerning the total population or universe considered, and the share represents the percentage of viewers who watch a television network or channel out of the total consumption of that type of media. In both cases, the values are framed within a set period—a year, for example. In Spain, Kantar provides the data, BARB in the UK,[5] Nielsen in Ireland,[6] and SKO in the Netherlands.[7]

5 https://www.barb.co.uk/frequently-asked-questions.
6 Contracted by TAM Ireland, an organization of broadcasters and agencies.
7 Since 2002, Stichting KijkOnderzoek (SKO) has been responsible for reporting and monitoring audience figures (https://kijkonderzoek.nl).

In Scotland, there is no share and rating data for BBC Alba because its audience is not controlled by the BARB. Instead, only the weekly reach is measured,[8] which is obtained through the PRAEG (Pannal Rannsachaidh Amhairc & Èisteachd na Gàidhlig) weekly survey conducted by TRP Research at the request of MG Alba for Gaelic speakers, and by Kantar for the reach across the entire population of Scotland.[9]

Another research topic has been comparing audience share in the minority language television versus the share of the main public television in the majority language and the same geographical regions. The main television channels in the majority language are TVE1 in Catalonia, Galicia, and the Basque Country; BBC Wales in Wales; RTÉ One in Ireland; NPO1 in Friesland, and BBC One in Scotland.

5. Results

The 1st research question—minority language TV share—has revealed a thought-provoking finding. In the years 2021 and 2022, the audience share results (Table 1) of the minority language television channels reveal two clearly identified and differentiated groups: 1) Share between 10-15% in the TV of three communities—Catalan, Frisian, Galician—; and 2) share between 1-3% in other three—Basque, Irish, and Welsh. As said, BBC Alba does not have audience share and rating values, but weekly reach.

The average share of the three televisions in the first group is 11.5%, and the Catalan TV3 channel is the one with a higher figure (13.9%). In the second group the average share is 1.8% and the Basque television ETB1 has the higher value (2.2%), followed by the Irish TG4 (1.9%).

As for the interannual variation, the values between 2021 and 2022 remained consistent and very similar among all channels, with the observation that the Frisian, Galician, Irish, and Welsh language channels slightly increased their share in 2022, especially the Galician TV. Only the Catalan channel lost 0.2% of its share and the Basque television stayed even.

Table 1. *TV share and rating of minority language TV in 2021-2022, and correlation with Mutual Linguistic Intelligibility.*

	No. speakers (%) (1)	Avg. share % 2021-2022 (year variation) (2)	Avg. no. viewers 2021-2022	% Weekly reach (No. viewers)	Rating population in millions	Avg. rating % 2021-2022 (Year variation) (2)	Mutual linguistic intelligibility 1-5 scale (3)
Share between 10-15%: Average=11.5%					**Rating between 1-2%**		
Catalonia (TV3)	6.1 (81%)	13.9 (-0.2)	127.697		7.5	1.7 (-0.2)	4.0 (High)
Galicia (TVG)	2.3 (88%)	10.3 (0.4)	37.854		2.7	1.5 (-0.1)	4.0 (High)
Friesland (Omrop Fryslân)	0.5 (73%)	10.2 (0.1)	7.416		0.6	1.2 (0.2)	4.0 (High)
Share between 1-3%: (Average=1.8%)					**Rating between 1-0.5%**		
Basque Country (ETB1)	1.0 (48%)	2.2 (0.0)	6,680		2.1	0.3 (0.0)	1.0 (Very low)

8 Number of people who say they have tuned in and watched BBC ALBA for at least 15 minutes in the past 7 days.
9 Information from BBC Alba (2023).

	No. speakers (%) (1)	**Avg. share % 2021-2022 (year variation) (2)**	**Avg. no. viewers 2021-2022**	**% Weekly reach (No. viewers)**	**Rating population in millions**	**Avg. rating % 2021-2022 (Year variation) (2)**	**Mutual linguistic intelligibility 1-5 scale (3)**
Ireland (TG4)	0.9 (13%)	1.9 (0.1)	5,598		4.4	0.2 (0.0)	1.0 (Very low)
Wales (S4C)	0.9 (29%)	1.2 (0.1)	2,358		2.9	0.1 (0.0)	1.0 (Very low)
Scotland (BBC Alba)	0.1 (2%)	n/a	n/a	52.7% among Gaelic speakers (45,835); 6.8% among Scotland population (358,993)	n/a	n/a	1.0 (Very low)
Total	**11,721,432**	**6.6**	**31,864**		**24.9**	**0.8**	

Source: Authors. Notes: (1) No. and % of speakers extracted from official statistical agencies and censuses. Irish language radio and TV directors consider that the core of fluent speakers is 200,000 people; in Scotland, the data comes from the National Records. (2) Share and rating variation from 2021 to 2022. The age for rating and share is 4+ in Basque, Catalan, Galician, Irish, and Welsh; 13+ in Frisian TV; and 16+ in Scottish Gaelic TV. (3) Evaluation and values provided by TV directors/editors.

The inquiry to the 2nd research question—minority versus majority language TV share (see Table 2)—has also produced noteworthy results. While the European audience share of TV in minority languages is 6.6%, the average of this metric among the majority language television channels is 18.8%, representing a 12.2% difference. But under that general frame there are, again, notable differences among language communities and television channels.

In two communities—Catalonia and Galicia—the audience share of their minority language televisions —TV3 and TVG, respectively—is higher than the share of the main general public televisions in Spanish (TVE1) in the same geographic area. In the Catalan case, TV3 has a 7.1% higher viewership, while the Galician TVG has a 1.6% advantage over the Spanish TVE1. It is an indication of their high degree of penetration in society.

On the other hand, in the remaining five communities—including Scotland, although the metric is not available—the share of television in minority languages is lower than that of the main general public television stations in the majority language.

The community with the lowest difference is the Basque Country, where the share of ETB1 channel (2.2%) is only 6.6% lower than that of TVE1 (8.8%). Behind are the Irish television TG4 (-16.9% compared to RTÉ One), the Welsh TV S4C (-22.5% compared to BBC ONE Wales), and the Frisian TV Omrop Fryslân (-36.1% concerning NPO1).

As for average viewership in the geographic areas of the communities, minority language television reached 196,348 viewers, and majority language channels got 440,812, resulting in a difference of 244,464 viewers.

Table 2. *Share difference between minority language and majority language TV channels (2021).*

(1)	Share % in minority language TV	Majority language TV channels	Share % in majority language TV	Difference of share	Average no. of viewers/day on minority TV	Average no. of viewers/day on majority lang. TV	Difference of viewers
TV3 (Catalonia)	14.0	TVE1 (Catalonia)	6.9	7.1	135,209	66,000	69,209
TVG (Galicia)	10.1	TVE1 (Galicia)	8.5	1.6	39,000	33,000	6,000
Omrop Fryslân (Friesland)	10.1	NPO1 (Friesland)	46.2	-36.1	7,150	152,100	-144,950
ETB1 (Basque Country)	2.2	TVE1 (Basque Country)	8.8	-6.6	7,000	26,000	-19,000
S4C (Wales)	1.9	RTÉ One (Ireland)	18.77	-16.9	3,550	85,200	-81,650
TG4 (Ireland)	1.1	BBC One (Wales)	23.6	-22.5	8,600	86,000	-77,400
BBC ALBA (Scotland)	n/a	BBC One (Scotland)	21.7	n/a	n/a	148,000	n/a
Total (average)	**6.6**		**19.2**	**-12.2**	**33,418**	**85,186**	**-41,298**
Total (sum of viewers)					**196,348**	**588,812**	**-244,464**

Source: Authors. Notes: (1) Figures rounded according to the 0.5 rule to the nearest integer, which might cause minor apparent errors when calculating differences.

The answer to the 3rd research question (Table 1) has substantiated the relevant correlation between the percentage of share and the structural factor of "mutual linguistic intelligibility". Thus, subsequent to the result of the first question, the television channels with share between 10-15% have a high degree (4.0 points in a 1-5 scale) of mutual linguistic intelligibility. On the contrary, those with very low degree (1.0 points) only have a share between 1-3%. This finding is very novel.

The audience rating metric, which takes as reference the whole population over a certain age, shows an equivalent two-group configuration but with different and, evidently, lower percentages: Rating between 1-2% in the three communities with high degree of mutual linguistic intelligibility, and less than 1% in those with very low degree.

Table 3. *Gender and age of minority language TV audience in 2021-2022.*

	Gender				Age					
	%		Difference		%			Difference with European value		
	Men	Women	Women vs men	Women vs European women value (1)	14-34	35-54	55+	Age 14-34	Age 36-54	Age 55+
Catalonia (TV3)	43.9	56.1	12.2	3.4	6.8	18.9	73.5	-5.0	-4.2	8.5
Galicia (TVG)	45.2	54.9	9.7	2.1	6.5	20.5	72.5	-5.4	-2.5	7.4
Friesland (Omrop Fryslân)	53.0	47.0	-6.0	-5.8	20.0	41.5	38.5	8.2	18.5	-26.5
Basque country (ETB1)	51.7	48.4	-3.3	-4.4	15.4	20.6	64.1	3.5	-2.5	-0.9
Ireland (TG4)	55.2	44.9	-10.3	-7.9	11.3	22.2	66.5	-0.5	-0.9	1.5
Gales (S4C)	42.5	57.5	15.0	4.8	12.0	16.0	72.0	0.2	-7.0	7.0
Scotland (BBC Alba)	39.4	60.6	21.2	7.9	11.0	21.5	68.0	-0.8	-1.5	3.0
European total	**47.3**	**52.8**	**5.5**	-	**11.8**	**23.0**	**65.0**			

Source: Authors. Notes: (1) Figures rounded according to the 0.5 rule to the nearest integer.

The results to the 4th research question—demographic profile (Table 3)—indicate that, at the European level, 52.8% of the audience is made up of women and 47.3% of men, a mentionable difference of 5.5%.

The television channels of four communities—Catalonia, Galicia, Scotland, and Wales—have a higher percentage of women than the European average. On the contrary, television stations from Friesland, the Basque Country, and Ireland have a lower percentage. Obviously, the results are the opposite with men.

Pursuing an inter-community comparison, two groups could be established: a) Between 50-60% of women: In the television stations of four communities—Catalonia, Galicia, Scotland, and Wales—the percentage of women in the audience is between 50-60%, and likewise, their percentages are higher (between 3-8%) than the aforementioned European average of 52.8%; b) between 40% and 49% of women: In the television stations of three communities—Basque Country, Ireland, and Friesland—the percentage of women in the audience is between 40% and 49%, that is, between 4% and 8% less than the European average value of 52.8% mentioned. Evidently, the values of the men's category are percentage-wise inverse.

Concerning the age variable, the total European values in the three age groups is a crucial benchmark: 11.8% in the 14-34 range, 23.0% in the 35-54 range, and 65.0% in the 55 years and older range.

- Age group 14-34 years*:* The television stations of two communities—Friesland and Basque country—have a significantly higher percentage—between 8% and 3.5% higher, respectively—than the European average of 11.8%, which means that, proportionally, they are closer to youth or have greater appeal to young people than the rest of the televisions studied. In contrast, on the television in Catalonia and Galicia, the percentage is around 6% lower than the average European value. Finally, televisions in Ireland, Wales, and Scotland have values almost identical to the European average.

- Age group 35-54 years: In four communities and television stations—Galicia, Basque Country, Ireland, and Scotland—the audience in this group is around 20-22%, a figure similar to the European average of 23.0%. For its part, Catalonia is 4.2% below the European average and, moving quite far from this notable percentage uniformity, Welsh television S4C is below with 7% and Frisian television Omrop Fryslân significantly above with 42%. % that is, 18.5% more than the European average.

- Age group 55 years and over: In three communities and television stations—Catalonia, Galicia, and Wales—the percentage is higher than the European average by approximately 8%; in three other communities—Basque Country, Ireland, and Scotland—their values are similar to the European value. Frisian television deserves a special mention since only 38.5% of its audience is in the 55+ group, that is, 26.5% less than the European average.

6. Conclusions

Minority language televisions are essential in the endeavor to satisfy the linguistic, cultural, social, and even democratic needs of their language communities and, beyond that, to the whole and varied society. Evoking the BBC's Royal Charter, they act in the public interest, serving all audiences by providing impartial, high-quality, and distinctive programming and services that inform, educate, and entertain.

As public broadcasters that pursue excellence, the seven television stations—presumably the only ones in Western Europe with general reach and content with over 70% of their programming in the minority autochthonous language—act as important agents in improving and sharing the culture and values of their communities and others, as well as the lesser-used language´s vocabulary, syntax, and other areas of verbal communication. They also help enrich the literacy and speaking quality of the viewers in their language, who expand and spread all that knowledge in their social context and relations.

It is remarkable that, at the European level, close to two hundred thousand people (196,348) of all ages watch their language TV daily, achieving a modest but meaningful audience share of 6.6%.

The significant contributions of this study lie in its systematic and comparative approach, which has allowed to establish a European-level audience reference, revealing two distinct groups regarding the audience share and rating; and, above all, uncovering the correlation between these metrics and the degree of mutual linguistic intelligibility, which should not be framed as causality. This correlation conclusion is believed to be forwarded for the first time in scholarly research. Nonetheless, it should be noted that other structural factors, such as quality programming and the political situation and framing, are also relevant to the development of the audience.

The Catalan, Galician, and Frisian TV channels have an audience share between 10-15%, and their languages have a high degree of mutual linguistic intelligibility concerning the majority language—Spanish and Dutch. On the contrary, the other four televisions—Basque, Irish, Welsh, and Scottish Gaelic—have a share between 1-3% and a very low degree of mutual linguistic intelligibility with Spanish and English respectively.

The comparison between minority language and majority language audience metrics, which provides an innovative viewpoint, has brought forth the noteworthy result that the share of the Catalan and Galician television channels—TV3 and TVG—is higher than the share of the public Spanish televisions (TVE1). This positive difference is especially evident in Catalan TV, which has a 7.1% higher viewership than Spanish TVE1, a clear indication of the high degree of penetration in society.

Regarding demographic profiles of gender and age, the main conclusions are that more than half of the viewers are women (52.8%), which might suggest a gender vision in TV programming, and around two-thirds (65.0%) are 55 years old and over.

When looking at the young viewers, a primary focus and objective of all televisions in all countries and languages, the European figure of the minority language TV channels is 11.8%. Probably, because young people spend more time-consuming audiovisual content via streaming. Only the Frisian and Basque channels have a notably higher percentage than the European average (8% and 3.5% higher, correspondingly), which means that they are closer to youth or have greater appeal to young people than the rest of the televisions studied.

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