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Television Channels in the face of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Case of Public Television Channels in Morocco

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Abstract: The coronavirus pandemic has affected the whole world and has had unprecedented consequences on all sectors, including the media industry. Never had the need for information been so high as during this health crisis. Information has become a necessity for survival to the point that the UN has even denounced the repression of information during this pandemic. Access to information is now crucial in the face of such a crisis. The role of the public service media has never been as important as in situations of health, economic and social emergencies throughout the world. In this framework, we are interested in the media treatment adopted by the two

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Moroccan public channels SNRT and 2M to inform the population, fight against disinformation and fake news around the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: crisis communication, health crisis, media, Covid-19, Morocco

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Les chaînes de télévision face à la pandémie Covid-19 : Cas des chaînes publiques de télévision au Maroc

Résumé : La pandémie de coronavirus a touché le monde entier et a eu des conséquences sans précédent sur tous les secteurs et notamment le secteur des médias. Durant cette crise sanitaire, le besoin d'information n'a jamais été autant réclamé par le citoyen. L'information est devenue un besoin pour survivre à tel point que l'ONU a même dénoncé la répression de l'information pendant cette pandémie. L'accès à l'information est désormais crucial face à une telle crise. Le rôle des médias de service public n'a jamais été aussi important que dans des situations de crises sanitaires, économiques, sociales dans le monde entier. Dans ce cadre, nous nous intéressons au traitement médiatique adopté par les deux chaînes publiques marocaines SNRT et 2M pour informer la population, lutter contre les désinformations et les fake news autour de la pandémie Covid-19.

Mots-clés : communication de crise, crise sanitaire, médias, Covid-19, Maroc

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Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the entire world and transformed people's lives. This health crisis has affected the functioning of different social and economic sectors. The scale of this pandemic influenced the different types of media: press, radio, television, internet, social networks. The role of the public service media has never been more important than in situations of health, economic and social crises. The occurrence of a disaster, a health crisis, or any exceptional health situation, very quickly has a national or even international media impact. Political authorities, administrations, and even any citizen are subject to the sometimes very brutal impact of this media coverage (Carli, 2016). The media were called upon to fight against fake news and rumors to fight panic among the population especially as the subject affects public health. Health care has become a public sector, due to the emergence of new pathologies, economic upheavals, and the urge to cure and manage at the same time. The debate has left the sanitized atmosphere of hospitals and practices to expose itself in public places (Flaysakier, 1997). The Covid-19 health crisis has put health and particularly public health at the center of television news topics. Information has become a need to survive to such an extent that the UN has even denounced the repression of information during this pandemic.

> "A free media is always essential, but we have never depended on it more than we do during this pandemic, when so many people are isolated and fearing for their health and livelihoods. Credible, accurate reporting is a lifeline for all of us" (Bachelet, 2020, para. 2)[1].

According to the study on TV information and coronavirus in France, the National Audiovisual Institute (NAI) states that the media coverage of Covid-19 and its consequences is an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of TV information. In Morocco, the Office of the High Commissioner for Planning (HCP) surveyed the impact of the coronavirus on the economic, social, and psychological situation of households. It confirms the use of the media as the first reliable source of information by Moroccans. To follow the information on the evolution of the Covid-19 pandemic the data of this survey show radio, television, and electronic press come first among the sources of information, before the website of the Ministry of Health. They are followed by social networks, Facebook, and Twitter (HCP, 2020). The report of the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAAC)[2] on Audiovisual Services and Coronavirus showed a change in the programs and services of public television channels.

1. The Media and the Covid 19 Health Crisis

The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted all sectors around the world and has had a short- and long-term impact on populations, especially the most vulnerable. With the announcement of the Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) that we are now facing a Covid-19 pandemic affecting the 5 continents, several countries have taken immediate measures to combatit. To cope with this Covid-19 pandemic and limit its spread, Morocco has taken strict and rapid health and security measures and deployed financial compensation efforts to support the population with mitigation measures, particularly in the formal but also the informal economy.

The Coronavirus epidemic has been declared a pandemic in March 2020 when the state of health emergency has imposed the confinement of populations in many countries. Compared to other health crises, the Covid-19 pandemic is causing a universal emotional shock. Since March 2020, Morocco too has seen some of its strictest laws applied: declaration of a state of emergency, closure of air and sea borders, ban on gatherings and movements, closure of schools, shops, and mosques for months. This has been a sudden change and has brutally impacted the way of life

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[1] The High Commissioner of the United Nations the rights of man whereas a conference of press Virtual the 24th of April 2020.

[2] The Office of the High Commissioner for Planning (HCP) has realized, 14 to 23 April 2020, one inquiry nearby some households to follow adaptation mode of households living under the constraint of confinement. This inquiry targeted one sample of 2,350 households representing some different socio-Economic classes of Morocco (upper class, middle class, working class).

of the entire population. Indeed, these numerous measures have also influenced the physical and moral health of the populations.

The Covid-19 pandemic is a major public health problem that has changed the way people live. It has seen new rules being imposed and new practices demanded from all citizens. The lockdown and social isolation added to the socio-economic crisis have pushed people to spend more time in front of their screens, televisions, and mobile phones searching for answers and information about this new virus. "To combat the concerns of social isolation and loneliness associated with Covid-19, many individuals reported adjusting their media consumption to remain engaged and active in a lockdown world" (Kim et al., 2021, p. 2). In this context, the media have an important role to play in reassuring citizens, avoiding collective panic, and combating disinformation and fake news.

With the proliferation of digital technologies, communicating during crises (economic, political, social, health, etc.), becomes challenging with the potential that misinformation (unintentional but erroneous), disinformation (intentional and incorrect), and fake news (fabricated and non-factual) spread increasing. This has serious consequences for the populations and the strategies and policies deployed to fight and manage the crisis. Previous health crises have not been spared from the phenomenon of fake news. These include the H1N1 epidemic in 2009, the Ebola epidemic in West Africa in 2014, or the debates on vaccines that have been fertile ground for the spread of erroneous content (Smallman, 2015; Abramowitz et al., 2017; Hornsey et al., 2018; Monnier, 2020). During the Covid-19 crisis, erroneous and inaccurate information has circulated on a large scale: the mystery surrounding the virus, conspiracy theories, the ambiguity of official communications. These factors have contributed to sowing a climate of doubt and panic on an international scale to the point that the World Health Organization (WHO) named the phenomenon "infodemic" on February 2, 2020.

2. Television and the Crisis: the Emergence of a New Audience

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown how important the media sector is in motivating people during difficult times. While hundreds of millions of people were confined to their homes during the pandemic, many turned to screens. In a few days, television has become more interactive and closer to its audience. Distance learning, dissemination of containment measures, guidelines, and advice to protect citizens from the virus, real-time information to avoid panic, and the fight against fake news, programs are always adapted to the new grid of television channels.

This article deals with the media issues around Covid-19 in Morocco, studying the media coverage of the two Moroccan public channels SNRT and 2M of the Covid-19 pandemic. Several aspects of communication, awareness, and crisis have influenced the media treatment of Covid-19.

In doing so it aimed to identify what strategies concerning the national and international media scene have been adopted by Moroccan public channels to face this crisis and their interactions with target audiences. Moreover, this study aims to identify the TV programs of the two channels that fight against disinformation and fake news.

We work with the following three hypotheses:

- H1: Public communication via television channels targets different categories of the population.

- H2: The role of traditional media in Morocco such as television is decisive in the fight against fake news circulating in digital media.

- H3: The traditional media have played a role in fact-checking during this health crisis.

Our methodology consists of processing a corpus of six episodes of the special programs of these two channels from the beginning of the declaration of the emergency in Morocco until June 10, the date of the beginning of the deconfinement of the population according to the geographical areas. We analyze three episodes of the special guest show of the Al Aoula channel (the most-watched channel of all SNRT channels) and three episodes of the show "Question about coronavirus" of the 2M public channel. An analysis of audience rates is carried out based on the weekly reports of the Interprofessional Media Audience Centre of Morocco and the reports of the Superior Council of Audiovisual Communication (SCAC) and the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAAC).

For the study of our corpus, we rely on a qualitative approach by content analysis. Content analysis is a method applied to all forms of communication, discourse, and images. It describes and deciphers any meaning from a transmitter to a receiver (Bardin, 2013). The content analysis deals with messages as varied as literary works, newspaper articles, official documents, audiovisual programs, political statements, meeting reports, or minutes of semi-structured interviews. In other words, we mean a set of descriptive, objective, systematic and quantitative techniques used for a document's exploitation (d'Unrug, 1974). These techniques intend to establish the meaning and allow for an informed understanding of the documents analyzed (Picard, 1992). The aim is to determine how the structural concepts of the program - in particular, the sources of the program, the presenter's discourse, the genre of the program - relate to each other (Aslanidou et al., 2005).

Once the health crisis was declared and following the series of decisions taken at the top of the Moroccan state, television makers had no choice but to reinvent themselves in record time, to keep up with the pace imposed by crisis management. The health crisis monopolizes the news, the media have had to adapt their practices and content. Special pages, interactive maps, and graphics, new podcasts, shows go

up in a few days, or dedicated newsletters: the formats deployed are numerous and innovative.

3. Health Crisis Communication

The crisis is multifaceted. It concerns the technological, social, regulatory, financial, commercial, or ecological fields, but is first understood from the point of view of communication. It appears omnipresent and the media, whether traditional or online, build the event as much as they amplify it. At the heart of the crisis management system, communication is the decisive element that makes it possible, according to its good control, to overcome the crisis (Libaert, 2015). Libaert (2015) also defines a crisis as a disruptive and unexpected event that jeopardizes the reputation and functioning of an organization. It highlights the issue of the reputation and image of organizations.

Crisis communication is not limited to a ballistic vision, is not limited to expressing oneself in front of the media, and that not all crises benefit from media coverage (Heiderich&Maroun, 2014). Crisis communication is now coupled with a new obstacle: removing the disbelief of the public. We find this ambition in the principles of public relations. Rather than mass or media communication, crisis communication will have to adapt more and more finely to different audiences, perfectly differentiated by strata - simple audiences, stakeholders, allies, and adversaries - and put an end to the idea of a single response in a single world[3].

People, in the case of health crises, are increasingly using the media (television, electronic press, radio, digital social networks) to learn about the disease. With debates, scandals (political, economic...) or health crises (contaminated blood, H1N1 virus, mad cow disease, Spanish flu, vaccines...) public health has not ceased to be publicly questioned, through controversies that question the relationship between public action, political responsibility, biomedical expertise, economic interests (Mayère, 2014).

In our context, this is a crisis communication on a subject that affects public health. It touches on communication for health, which is the study and use of interpersonal, organizational, and media communication strategies aimed at informing and influencing individual and collective decisions conducive to the improvement of health (Lafrance &Laulan, 2006). Communication during a health crisis is a dynamic process requiring regular updates on the definitions of suspected or confirmed cases and their management by strategies adapted to the different types of recipients: public, patients, health professionals, etc.

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[3]Crisis communication east death, Live relationships Public crisis!, Didier Heiderich and Natalie Maroun, observatory geostrategic of information, May 2013

Table 1. Analysis grid for the emissions of the study corpus

Content of the program	**Spoken language**	**Participants**	**Modality of the shooting**
Main topic	Vocabulary (easy, difficult, known, unknown, technical, specialized...)	Speakers' positions	Studio
Secondary topic	Rhythm of speech (uniform, syncopated, varied, adapted or not to the subject...)	Form of spoken interventions	Outdoor
Processed aspect	Tone (informative, dramatic, playful, familiar)		
Duration of the program Place in the diffusion grid			
Non-verbal content (clothing, environment, facial, gestures)			

The health crisis is an anxiety-provoking situation, generating continuous stress and a negative state of collective consciousness or negative social trance. The perception of risks is very variable and depends on the questions, doubts, and uncertainties felt by the citizen.

"The psychological and lifestyle adjustment needed to cope with Covid-19 has offered a significant obstacle for many families and individuals. For example, many caregivers have had to balance working at home with the additional responsibility of homeschooling their children. Additionally, the stress-related burden of Covid-19 has negatively impacted interpersonal relationships (eg., conflict with a partner, domestic violence) due to close living circumstances, social restriction, and heightened worries" (Zvolensky et al, 2020, para. 2).

According to Tudor and Bratosin (2020a), mediatization is a process of deep transformation of the media system, the media are dissolved completely and invisibly in the whole of our lives. Therefore, the political impact of mediatization produces a reconstruction of the field of governance. Moreover, over-mediatization, contradictory statements, and prejudices sometimes contribute to an "internal reality" responsible for counterproductive opinions and attitudes. The role of the media will vary according to the nature of the crisis, the nature of the society in which the crisis is taking place, and the specific nature of each media as a social institution (Dagenais & Raboy, 1993).

4. The Importance of the Media

The evolving state of knowledge about this virus, the information provided by the various media is often contradictory, even inconsistent, which can contribute to the skepticism of the population. The severe competition between the various means of communication, traditional press, news channels and radios, social networks, favors the dissemination of raw information, without a filter. At the beginning of the crisis, the fear of imminent danger, anxiety, and anguish amplified by emotional contagion (Over mediatization), justify an authoritarian, dirigiste mode of communication if they have an established bond of trust (Credibility of the nation-state).

Communication tends to propose a global approach to the field and actors of media communication. Thus, it studies the various ways in which information is produced and received, the relationships that are established between the sender and receiver of messages, the influence of the media on society, focusing more particularly on the behavior of the various actors involved in it as well as that of the users, that is to say, the public (Rieffel, 2005).

Persuasive media communication looks at how the individual, the social group, or, more broadly, society and culture, are marked by the media and media content. The media effect can be defined as the processes and outcomes of media influence that act directly on targets (individuals and macro units of society and institutions) as well as indirectly on targets via other units. These effects can be either intentional or unintentional on the part of both media senders and target receivers. They can be visible to the naked eye or hidden from it. They are ongoing and constant. And they are shaped not only by media influence but also by a constellation of other factors that work in tandem with media influence (Potter, 2012).

In other words, the influence of the media is the set of imprints, traces, changes, and reciprocal links, manifest or invisible, produced, in real or imaginary presence of the media, on individuals (cognitive, belief, attitudinal, affective, physiological, and behavioral), on social groups and systems, on socio-political and economic systems and societies and consequences. Tudor and Brastosin (2020b) stated, “Mediatization reflects how the consequences of multiple processes of mediation shape the understanding of the dimensions of a society” (para. 7). In fact, influence gathers

(Chabrol et al., 2003). Media communication in this sense refers to a particular form of mediated human and social interactions and concerns actions carried out through traditional media such as the press, radio, television, cinema, or posters.

Courbet and Fourquet-Courbet (2015), invite us to move from a purely "mechanistic" interpretation of the action of television and the media on their recipients [...] to a dialectical interpretation, in terms of interactions between transmitters and receivers", considering that "the "interactionist" approach is undoubtedly more appropriate than the functionalist approach or, better still, than a simple "mechanistic" approach to apprehend the media, their functions, their vocations, in a word, their "power". The media communication as human and social interactions. It is, on the one hand, a dynamic phenomenon producing a transformation: it is part of a process of reciprocal influence between social subjects. It is also, on the other hand, the interaction of minds mediated by media devices (Fourquet-Courbet, 2010).

The development of the media in Morocco is linked to the introduction of modern communication techniques and their historical, political, cultural, and linguistic evolution. The Moroccan public space has moved from a situation of domination of the media linked to the French Protectorate to where the partisan press reigns, which has given way to a certain diversity imposed by liberalization and political openness (Daghmi et al., 2012).

The current media supply situation has its roots in history and in the media, as well as in the relationship with politics and economics. In a context of control of both colonial and state power subsequently over information, the Moroccan public has always developed other forms of expression and search for information: clandestineness, preaching in mosques, handwritten newspapers in Arabic, and recently satellite television.

Indeed, before the 1990s the Moroccan media culture was influenced by an authoritarian, administrative, and partisan structure. Like other emerging countries, the construction of the media industry in Morocco has evolved according to the political climate. Until the early nineties, the ecosystem that was deployed was largely inspired by a system under control and institutionally powerless (Benabid, 2019). The wave of political liberalization and democratization that marked the second half of the 90s has significantly transformed the Moroccan media landscape. All sectors (print, radio or television, digital) developed widely during this period. The spread of Arab satellite channels, the partial liberalization, and the modernization of the audiovisual sector have led to the emergence of new commercial radio and television channels. The creation of the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAAC) has provided an appropriate institutional framework for this development.

5. Digital Media: A New Deal

Nowadays, faced with the development of digital social networks, other actors come to influence, consciously or unconsciously, public opinion: political leaders, journalists, press groups, or ordinary citizens. Fake news is therefore flourishing in a context of a widespread crisis of confidence against the "knowers", those who carry a word of truth (journalists, professors, experts, etc.) (Henric, 2018). The Internet has become the main platform for information exchange and advocacy on various issues of public interest. The media and information on the Internet are characterized by the presence of a wide spectrum of very diverse actors, composed of natural persons (journalists, bloggers, social network activists on Facebook) and legal (companies created to make a publication, online media linked to CSOs, social actors who work in networks, political parties, Islamist movements) (Luongos & Thieux, 2017). Social networks are the theatre of expression but not of information (Woltton, 2009). This information is not always credible and true. The spread of the SARS-CoV2 coronavirus (Covid-19) observed worldwide since the beginning of 2020 has been accompanied by a wave of global disinformation, unprecedented for a health subject (Monnier, 2020). Indeed, every crisis now has its web component (Libaert, 2015) From the beginning of the epidemic – and long before it was declared a pandemic by the WHO on March 11, 2020 – several erroneous or misleading statements began to circulate on the internet and within private messaging. Conspiracy theories, videos, or images recontextualized or faked, digital social networks were the scene of rapid and instant dissemination of all this news. Some of these theories appeared as early as January 2020, before the dramatic spread of the disease in Europe and the United States. Sometimes they have been issued or relayed by recognized personalities from the political, religious, etc. worlds. Although fewer in number, they have been more widely disseminated within socio-digital networks (Brennen et al., 2020). Indeed, these rumors, disinformation, and fake news were marked by a strong politicization, which stirred up passions and reinforced the divisions turning into an image race between states to know who better managed the crisis (United States, China, Iran, Russia, Turkey, etc.) (Bright et al., 2020).

The growing number of erroneous information circulating within the digital space at the international level and in Morocco has forced public actors to fight against this disinformation via different communication tools (traditional and digital media). The particularity of fake news is that it has a disproportionate magnitude because of the ease and speed of its transmission via the Internet and social networks. To deal with this fake news, our study examines how the traditional media in Morocco, especially public television, modified and adapted their program to raise awareness and inform the population.

6. The Media Management of the Health Crisis by the two Public Channels

Television channels have played a major role in the media coverage of this health crisis. The crisis has also, and above all, changed the content of the news media. On the one hand, the news has been almost entirely monopolized by the virus and its implications. On the other hand, public television channels in Morocco have played a leading role in fact-checking information about the virus. Today, information and fake news comprise a vast arsenal, capable of destabilizing governments and enterprises, as demonstrated by the 2018 boycott of three major industrial organizations (Benabid, 2019) [4].

With a change in programming schedules and more specialized programs, the health crisis has benefited from exceptional coverage. Neither previous epidemics nor health, in general, are usually so publicized, particularly on Moroccan public channels. In addition to highlighting news programs and newspapers dedicated to the coronavirus, the National Broadcasting Corporation has adapted its programming to include distance learning courses. Since the beginning of the distance learning operation, the channels Athaqafia, Tamazight, Laâyoune TV, and Arriyadia have been broadcasting courses.

In addition, special editions of JT devoted to developments related to Covid-19, have been scheduled to air daily on the Al Aoula channel. The channel also broadcasts awareness capsules related to general hygiene rules and measures to support the Moroccan economy among others.

This might have contributed to the channels' increased audience; all SNRT channels have reported a 49% audience increase since March 16, 2020, reaching 6 hours a day per household.

[4] During the spring-summer of 2018, the boycott campaign "Moukatioun" (boycotters) who targeted several consumer products has been at the center of the social, economic and political debate in Morocco. In particular, this campaign, launched on social networks, targeted Sidi Ali mineral water, dairy products from the Centrale-Danone group and Afriquia service stations, accused of having increased their prices regardless of consumers' purchasing power.

Table 2. Source of information on the pandemic (HCP, 2020, p. 8) [5]

Soure of Information on the pandemic

	Uban	Rural	Both
Radio/ TV spots and news 83	83.60%	93.10%	86.60%
Electronic press	4.00%	1.00%	3.10%
Ministry of Health website	1.80%	0.70%	1.40%
Health professionals (doctors, nurses, pharmacists)	0.60%	-	0.40%
Police and local authorities	0.40%	0.20%	0.30%
Social networks (Facebook or Twitter, etc.)	8.00%	2.30%	6.20%
Friends or family	1.40%	2.50%	1.70%
WHO or UNICEF sites	0.30%	-	0.20%
Other	0.10%	0.30%	0.10%
Total	**100.00%**	**100.00%**	**100.00%**

Source : HCP – 2020

To follow the information on the evolution of the Covid-19 pandemic in Morocco, the majority of Moroccan heads of households mainly use radio and television, with a share of 87%. This proportion is higher in rural areas (93%) than in urban areas (84%). Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) come very far behind with a share of 6%. This source of information is used in urban areas (8%) more than in rural areas (2%) and among heads of households with higher levels of education, with 18%, compared with 3% among those with no level.

Following the evolution of the virus, the month of March represents a shift in television information: the hourly volume occupied by the pandemic in JTs has been increasing on all channels. Since the establishment of the state of a health emergency, television consumption too has been rising sharply in Morocco, as noted by Ciaumed (Interprofessional Audiometry Center)

[5] Original table published in French under the title "Source d'information sur la pandémie".

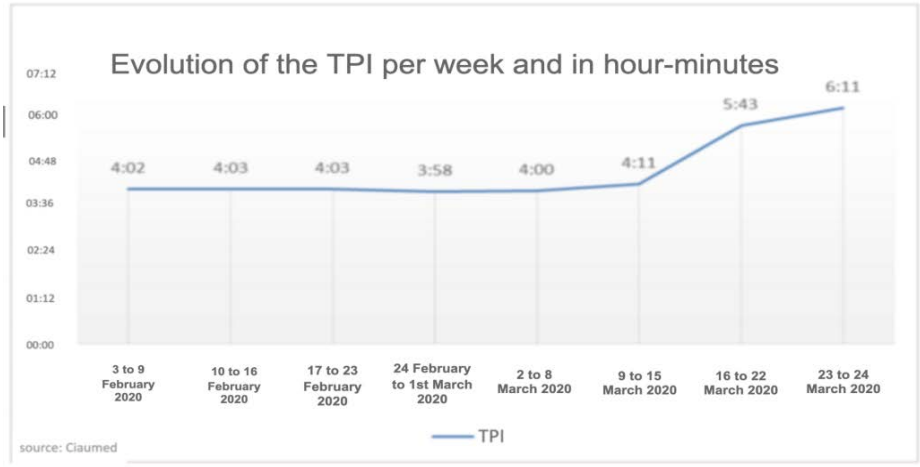


Figure 1. *Daily television viewing time per individual in hours and minutes (Ciaumed, 2020)*

The listening time per individual (TPI) also rose to 5:59 during the week of 18 to 24 March, compared to an average of 4 hours during February (an increase of 50%). The TPI began to increase from March 9, when the 3rd case of coronavirus was announced in Morocco. The first death attributed to the virus was recorded on the 10th of March. The number of cases has since exploded, and many measures have been announced by the government to prevent the spread.

Since the emergence of the pandemic, serial records have been observed for news channels, news broadcasts, and news programs. Indeed, the two channels of the public audiovisual pole have recently regained their natural place in the media landscape. Following the exponential evolution of the number of cases and deaths, the month of March represents a shift in television news: the hourly volume occupied by the pandemic in JT's is increasing on all channels. The health crisis then sweeps away all the other themes of the JT.

From the 1st of March to the 30th of June, the Superior Council of Audiovisual Communication (SCAC) reviewed more than 6,000 hours of broadcasting of 24 radio and television services, both public and private, during this health crisis. The report reveals that 50% of the daily reference grid of all Moroccan television and radio stations has been devoted to content related to Covid-19. This media responsiveness is also illustrated by the creation of specific programs dealing with the different aspects of the pandemic crisis. These new programs accounted for more than 33% of the hourly volume, the remaining 77% being composed of the usual emissions programmed before the crisis (HAAC, 2020).

All over the world, news and television channels have seen their audiences explode since the beginning of the crisis. At a time when the whole world is suspended from the evolution of the pandemic and the lockdown has had the consequence of significantly increasing the duration of television viewing, the small screen thus confirms its status as a mass media. This is particularly the case in Morocco. For example, at the SNRT, broadcasting has increased from 6,500 hours in television to 30,000 hours today, despite the decrease in human resources, the number of which has fallen from about 2,250 in 2000 to 2,000 employees, according to figures presented by Fayçal Laâraïchi, CEO of the SNRT. The circumstances related to the Covid-19 health crisis have allowed a kind of reconciliation between the citizen and the national audiovisual field in the context of this crisis, the value of the exact information that goes to the citizen has been revised upwards through the SNRT with special programs (special guest, Covid-19 special newscast, awareness capsules) (El Khamlichi, 2020).

As for 2M, according to their director Salim Cheikh (2020), the channel played a set of roles during the period of the health crisis, focusing mainly on the definition of the pandemic, the interaction with the questions and concerns of citizens as well as the monitoring of the application of the procedures of government and public authorities. In addition, the channel broadcasted daily 20 to 30 awareness capsules related to the Covid-19 pandemic, whether issued by the Ministry of Health or by other bodies, while informing public opinion about the main novelties and institutional orientations as well as public decisions related to the management of the pandemic (El Khamlichi, 2020). The 2M channel has also modified its program schedule and devoted more time to the media treatment of Covid-19 with special programs on the pandemic.

In addition to the reports on the audience and the program schedules of the two public channels, we have selected three episodes of Special Interview of the channel Al Aoula (Minister of Health, Khalid Aït Taleb, on March 31, 2020; Head of Government, Saad Dine El Otmani, on May 07, 2020; Minister of Health on May 08, 2020) and three episodes of the program questions on coronavirus of the channel 2M (Minister of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research, SaaïdAmzazi, on April 10, 2020; Minister of Health on April 30, 2020; 3. the Minister of Employment and Professional Integration, Mohamed Amekraz on May 05). The choice of these two programs is explained by the audience rate recorded during the broadcast on both channels. The weekly program "Questions on coronavirus" broadcast at 9:15 pm from Monday to Friday, aims to address all the questions relating to the lockdown, epidemiological developments, subsidies, food aid, and deconfinement plan. This program alone attracted more than 7 million viewers. Presented by Salaheddine Ghomari in dialectal Arabic, the program provides answers to viewers' questions about the virus as well as support measures in the face of the crisis. The channel received between 30,000 and 40,000 questions per day, on its various channels (social networks, emails). The facilitator calls on a guest (doctors, ministers, sociologists, teachers, researchers, scientists) to provide answers to

questions about the coronavirus and fight against disinformation and rumors (Jaa, 2020).

7. **Interactivity and Proximity Content**

Covid-19 is the global crisis of our time, and the greatest challenge humanity has faced since the Second World War. But the pandemic is much more than a health crisis, it is also an unprecedented socio-economic crisis, putting pressure on each of the countries it affects. It has devastating social, economic, and political impacts that will leave deep scars that will take a long time to fade. Communication during this crisis was and is of great importance. Indeed, the media coverage of this pandemic through television channels, in particular our case study, has played a role in raising public awareness. It has enabled public actors (ministers, decision-makers, doctors, etc.) and civil society to exchange and share information on various issues related to this crisis.

This special media coverage of the health crisis has been distinguished by increased interactivity and the offer of local content on the two public channels. They have given a massive voice to decision-makers, specialists in the medical and academic fields, and citizens. It was sometimes possible for them to send his videos. Just as they were able to express their questions, their expectations, and their feelings about the different dimensions of the pandemic crisis and sent them directly to television via SMS, RSN to email.

Thanks to the use of Darija, the Moroccan Arabic dialect, including in television news or the presentation of specific programs, viewers felt closer and better connected. Also, the use by doctors and specialists solicited by radio and television of a simplified vocabulary and a narrative illustrated with examples and data accessible to the general public appeared as a real effort to popularize science such as interviews with ministers and the head of government. The use of Darija by the guests of both programs aims at a proximity to the citizens in language, speech, explanations, and the way of transmitting.

The special interview on March 31 on the SNRT of the Minister of Health lasted 19 minutes. The minister, with a reassuring tone, simple language, and Darija, tried to answer the journalist's questions and explained the measures and health strategy of his ministry to fight this pandemic. The use of simple words in medical technical jargon was used as a means to reach the entire population and to persuade and convince viewers.

The special interview onMay 7 on the SNRT of the head of government lasted 35 minutes. The topics covered included false information about the school year, and the issue of the 27,850 Moroccan nationals stranded abroad. With a simple speech in Darija, sometimes skeptical, El Othmani (2020) stated that he had no vision at the

moment, but there is a scenario (of deconfinement) that the Ministries of Interior and Health are preparing, so the country does not lose what it has gained during the implementation of the state of a health emergency. However, the head of government tried to remain optimistic about this crisis. He also spoke of a "gradual" economic recovery, taking into account priority sectors.

The Covid-19 pandemic has seen doubts about medical knowledge. This has led to the undermining of the legitimacy of health institutions and public authorities. There were three interviews with the. There were three interviews with the Minister of Health that SNRT broadcasted. On each occasion, the intervention aimed to reassure citizens and empower them. He said that everybody was tired of the lockdown, including the medical staff, but we must be patient, vigilant, and responsible because any precipitation or uncalculated measure could cost a lot to the country (AitTaleb, 2020).

For instance, for the interview from May 8, the Minister of Health attempted to distinguish himself from the Head of Government, whose interview was broadcast a day earlier (May 7) by wearing a protective mask. Speaking of the pandemic, the Minister tried, in a pedagogical tone, to incentivize Moroccans to behave responsibly and respect the dispositions of the state of a health emergency. With concern, he warned the Moroccans about the evolution of the pandemic and possible relapse. A worrisome tone that contrasts with the reassuring tone of the head of government.

Channel 2M's "Questions on coronavirus" created a direct link with the viewers, addressing the questions sent directly to the channel. The use of different techniques during the interview, reportage, micro-sidewalk, narrative, questions; put the citizen in confidence. Indeed, it aimed at proximity and interactivity between the public and guests. The first episode selected is that of April 10, 2020. The facilitator receives the Minister of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research, spokesperson of the Government to answer the questions of citizens about distance learning and the school year. This episode lasted 50 minutes, the host first interviewed a representative of the Ministry of economy, finance, and administrative reform via Skype for explanations relating to the rules and procedures of financial aid to the most deprived. After 25 minutes, the journalist turned to the Minister to present the strategy and vision of his ministry to save the school and university year. With a reassuring and calm tone, he tried to present his strategy. According to the Minister, the biggest drawback is the notion of equal opportunity among students. Some do not have laptops, others do not have an internet connection, and live in rural areas. To cope with this, the courses are broadcast daily on the three channels, including Attakafia (Amzazi, 2020). With a simple speech in Darija. He also empowered and encouraged families to engage in this vision of distance learning. The second episode took place ten days later, on April 30, 2020, and lasted 20 minutes. The guest of this episode was the Minister of Health who was tasked to answer questions about the decontamination of the population scheduled for May 20. With a serene, reassuring tone in Darija, the guest spoke about the therapeutic protocol adopted by Morocco on

March 23. He emphasized the strategy and measures for possible removal of the lockdown.

The last selected episode dates from the 5th of May 2020 with the Minister of Employment and Professional Integration as a guest. The program lasted 24 minutes during which the Minister answered citizens' questions (job loss, unemployment,state support, and more). The Minister explained the situation of the labor market and the damage caused by this health crisis in various sectors. With a simple and optimistic speech, to reach the greatest number of viewers, the guest unveiled the strategy of his ministry to fight against this crisis. To support employees and employers, the Ministry has set up a telephone platform "ALLO 2233" to meet information needs and requests for guidance on the measures and mechanisms to be put in place to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (Covid-19) in the workplace. This platform also aims to advise and guide the parties to the employment relationship, intending to ensure compliance with the legal provisions of social legislation, especially in this particular circumstance. The guest emphasized the role of his ministry in dealing with various labor disputes that occurred between employees and their employers during the Covid-19 crisis. In a few months, countries around the world have rushed to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, a virus whose damage and speed of spread are questioning health systems, political strategies, working patterns, and consumption patterns.

8. Public Communication of Membership

In a situation of health risk, trust is a complex cognitive state characterized by a mixture of rationality, feelings, and commitment about a relationship with the communicator (Institution). Several factors amplify this bond of trust, including transparency. Public channels have changed their program schedules and adapted them to the needs and requirements of such a situation. The programs analyzed showed that the two public channels as well as the guests (decision-makers and public actors) communicated in a transparent way on the strategy of their organizations to fight against this pandemic. Through their media appearances, the guests, as well as the journalists, tried to communicate to convince and persuade the viewers. A simple communication simple, use of Darija, no hiding of the epidemiological situation in Morocco, and recognition of the uncertainties regarding the origin, research, and spread of the virus. The participatory attitude that favors dialogue and cooperation that has been carried out during the "Coronavirus Questions" program allowed easy communication to answer the questions of viewers. The interactivity, proximity, and simple communication of this program created trust between television and the audience. An effective and emotional trust that was based on the relational proximity and the discourse of the journalist and his guests. Indeed, continuous, effective communication, the sharing of news and developments in real-time, have fostered this trust. It allowed doctors, decision-makers, academics to raise awareness of the means of prevention against Covid-19.

This communication is one of the essential tools to better manage a health crisis. It requires competent communicators (in public health and communication) who are available, credible, and reassuring to create and develop the necessary bond of trust throughout the process. Communication must convey early, transparent, coherent, reassuring, simple, usable, and personalized information, taking into account the realities of the recipients, the anxiety-provoking context, and the socio-economic impact. The broadcasting of daily epidemiological bulletins on the two public channels at 6 p.m. and through special editions of the JT and broadcasts on this pandemic has created confidence in public television. The communication of the guests (ministers, officials, medical specialists, academics, sociologists, psychologists, economists...) on both channels created a link between the media institution, the State, and the public. Indeed, this link is persuasive through an act of communication mediated to all citizens.

Conclusion

During health crises, real-time information is essential. The Covid-19 health crisis characterized by severity, surprise, and over-mediatization (Information flow / Disinformation) has allowed traditional media to play a key role. Digital social networks have allowed rapid dissemination of information, fake videos, misinformation, natural remedies, conspiracy theories on a global scale. Indeed, social media, and in particular large platforms such as Facebook or YouTube, are double-edged swords for informing the masses. The Fight against fake news that proliferates about the disease and its treatments, especially on social networks, has mobilized the traditional media.

The particularity of the health crisis required a user approach by relying on health professionals (Credibility assured) for a mobilization, awareness of the population in the television sets. While the media world plays a key role in informing citizens about the developments of the Covid-19 pandemic and the vital measures to be applied, audiences have rapidly exploded nationally and internationally.

Covid-19 has marked the comeback of traditional television. Audience rates have exploded on television channels since the beginning of the pandemic, especially for our case studies of the two public channels: the SNRT and 2M. Televisions are considered to be the safest and most reliable media. When it comes to the most credible source of information for citizens, the reports and surveys, on which we have relied, show that television is paramount in this crisis. Regarding sources of information (media, health professionals, politicians, family/friends), television news is considered the most reliable source of information to provide information on the coronavirus, epidemiological developments, the economic and social situation, aid, and subsidies to families, distance learning...

Through special editions, television has given the floor to officials (ministers, doctors, researchers, academics, etc.) to explain the measures taken, the risks, the

preventions, the solutions, and/or the possible scenarios after a deconfinement of the population. The current crisis represents an opportunity for public television to rebuild Moroccans' confidence in public television channels.

This study explained the influence of the media on Moroccan citizens during the health crisis of Covid-19. The audience rate exploded by the two public channels with an increase of 50% (fig. 1) recorded in the second week of March 2020. The invitation of high authorities representatives, experts, researchers on the television sets constituted a form of influence on the public. The focus on the proximity with the public, which is new for the two public channels, has allowed direct interaction with the public (direct questions by SMS or via email addresses of the programs). Both public channels anticipated the public's information needs, which allowed them to define the intervention axes and guarantee a high audience. This study also showed us a shared involvement of the three actors of the crisis, namely journalists, experts, and citizens through the traditional media.

The change in the media landscape imposed by the health crisis in Morocco has reflected a change in the way the public treats and consumes information. A craving for information and a search for reliable and verified answers have led the Moroccan public to take more interest in traditional media such as television. The renewed interest of Moroccans in the two public channels is due to the health crisis, however, there is no evidence that these two channels could keep this reliability and high ratings longer.

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