Networking, Multi-platformity and Intermediality. Polish Media Convergence Strategies

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Abstract

This article aims to explore and conceptualise modern convergence strategies. The Polish market will be examined. A multidisciplinary approach to the convergence intends to explain the in statu nascendi phenomenon, to discover different aspects of the convergence. Presented analyses concentrate on introduced convergence strategies in the Polish media.Media products of the Polish Media company ITI Group will be analyzed. The analyses are of symptomatic, not universal, character. They report of a growing importance of the phenomenon which is constantly under development, and which in Poland is in the initial stage.

The analyses present different aspects of the convergence and constitute examples of new strategies on the Polish market, such as multiple-platform use, intermediality, or use of the economic and cultural synergy effect due to crossing production and promotion.

Keywords: media convergence, networking, intermediality, multi-platformity, new media

Introduction [1]

"We are living at a moment of profound and prolonged media transition: the old scripts by which media industries operated or consumers absorbed media content are being rewritten" (Jenkins & Deuze 2008, p. 6) [2]. Henry Jenkins and Mark Deuze (2008) underline that the media can be seen as key drivers of a growing integration between the culture and the commerce [3]. They perceive a chance to describe a new phenomenon in a cultural and economic integration. But these are not consistent and already accepted definitions that the activity should concentrate on, but rather on the complexity of the problem [2] [4] (Deuze, personal communication, June 9, 2009). Moreover, according to Kristen Drotner, "the more complex our media culture becomes, the less are we, as academics, currently prepared to meet the challenge of complexity" (2002, p. 12) [5]. A convergence seems to be a particular challenge. That is the reason why Kristen Drotner proposes new solutions, such as "convergent media research", "processual approaches"

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[1] The article was translated from Polish by Joanna Torzewska. The original title: *Sieciowość, wieloplatformowość i intermedialność. Polskie konwergencyjne strategie medialne*.

[2] H. Jenkins, M. Deuze (2008) *Editorial: Convergence Culture*, „Convergence: The International Journal into New Media Technologies" 5 (14), p. 6, http://con.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/14/1/5 16/04/2009.

[3] Ibidem.

[4] Mark Deuze in a debate with the author, Lejda, 9/06/2009.

[5] K. Drotner (2002), *New Media, New Options, New Communities? Towards Convergent Media and ICT Research*, „Nordicom Review" 1-2, p. 12, http://www.nordicom.gu.se/common/publ_pdf/42_011-022.pdf , 15.10.2009.

(2002, p. 19) [6] that allows to study often ephemeral forms of communication as they evolve, "conceptual convergence" (2002, p. 20) [7] . Apparently all convergence analyses have shown that the research methodology of the phenomenon should be of a more adequate nature, changeable, multifaceted. That is why a "caleidoscopic" or "dialogic" (Drotner 2002, p. 18)[8] research perspective should be adopted. The research and subject natures are similar, multidisciplinary.

Objectives

This presentation aims to explore and conceptualise modern convergence strategies. The Polish market will be examined. A multidisciplinary approach to the convergence intends to explain the *in statu nascendi* phenomenon, to discover different aspects of the convergence. Presented analyses concentrate on introduced convergence strategies in the Polish media. By strategy, I mean a prevailing direction, conscious and intentional actions (Eidman & Niedzielski 1997, Gierszewska 2000)[9] . Media products of the Polish Media company ITI Group will be analyzed. The analyses are of symptomatic, not universal, character. They report of a growing importance of the phenomenon which is constantly under development, and which in Poland is in the initial stage.

The analyses present different aspects of the convergence and constitute examples of new strategies on the Polish market, such as multiple-platform use, intermediality, or use of the economic and cultural synergy effect due to crossing production and promotion. Various TV productions using the convergence on the production, distribution and reception stage have been analyzed. "Platform-constellations" (Bechmann Petersen 2007, p. 61), "platform-palettes" (Bechmann Petersen 2007, p. 71) [10] , with their internal interactions are in the center of interest.

Convergence definition

A discussion about the convergence and its studies report of a complexity of the phenomenon. It is defined as a capacity ("of media and new computer techniques interference"[11] (Miszczak & Miszczak 2008)), connection ("of traditional characteristics of such objects as computers, telephones, faxes and the Internet with their entertainment nature" [12] (Gmiterek 2008)), penetration and linking ("of some elements

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[6] Ibidem, p. 19.
[7] Ibidem, p. 20.
[8] Ibidem, p. 18.
[9] G. Gierszewska (2000), *Zarządzanie strategiczne*, Warszawa, p. 9; V. R. Eidman, E. Niedzielski (1997), *Zarządzanie strategiczne*, Olsztyn, p. 9
[10] Terms *platform-constellations* and *platform-palette* used after Anja Wechmann Petersen. A. Bechmann Petersen (2007)*, Realizing Cross Media*, [in:] *Ambivalence Towards Convergence. Digitalization and Media Change*, eds. T. Storsul, D. Stuedahl, Göteborg, p. 61, 71.
[11] S. Miszczak, A. Miszczak (2008), *Książka konwergencyjna*, „Biuletyn EBIB", 1(92), http://www.ebib.info/2007/92/a.php?miszczak_miszczak , 1/3/2009.
[12] G. Gmiterek (2008), *Prasa w dobie konwergencji i nowych mediów*, „Biuletyn EBIB", 1(92), http://www.ebib.info/2008/92/a.php?gmiterek , 1/3/2009.

characteristic of traditional media and their interactions"[13] (Gmiterek 2008)), process ("A convergence culture shows changing and penetrating interactions between media, culture and commerce information and their creators and receivers"[14] (Jaskowska 2008)) or idea ("A digital convergence is a phenomenon, a designing idea thanks to which some old devices gain new functions and acquire new meaning"[15] (Sztyński 2008)). Finally, it should be adopted that the convergence as a principle of media functioning is an assimilation of such media units as devices, networks, markets and content (Appelgren 2007) [16] , communication strategies between creators and receivers being its examples. The convergence has not only its economic, organizational, technological and sociological dimension, but also the one concerning the media. Analyses of particular cases depict further convergence aspects resulting from interference of many elements characteristic of various orders that cannot be extracted in an artificial way. Convergence studies consist in examination of the media environment with its new principles.

Media convergence networks in the light of the graph theory

"A graph $G = (V, E)$ consists of a set of objects $V=\{v1, v2, …\}$ called vertices, and other set $E = \{e1, e2, …\}$ whose elements are called *edges* (…)" [17] (Deo 1980, p. 1). A graph shows a system structure (Korzan 1978)[18] depicting its quality. "To describe a quantity of elements and relations between them the term of network (…) enlarging the term of graph is introduced (…). This enlargement consists in defining some functions in the set of vertices and edges (…). Every function sets an appropriate quatity of the graph's elements". (Korzan 1978, p. 22)[19]

The presentation of some chosen convergence aspects in the light of the graph theory has, as every research method, its limits. The network analysis concentrates on connections, not on reasons of the configuration. The network as a dimentional diagram provides us with the topological information about the connection of nodes or vertices, not about themselves (Berry 2008)[20].

The main point in convergence strategies relies on connecting many media aspects, such as institutional, infrastructural, organisational or symbolical. The convergence strategies introduction on the production, consumption or prosumption stage consists of an entrance into already existing networks and of creation of the new ones. It concerns not only a media corporation with its brands and products, but also it demands the engagement of other available media platforms. The analyses presented in the light of graphs aim at

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[13] Ibidem.
[14] B. Jaskowska (2008), *O kulturze konwergencji słów kilka*, „Biuletyn EBIB", 1(92), http://www.ebib.info/2008/92/a.php?jaskowska , 1/3/2009.
[15] T. Sztyński (2005), *Konwergencja mediów trafia „pod strzechy"*, „E-Fakty",
http://www.e-fakty.pl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4807&Itemid=73 , 1/5/2009.
[16] E. Applegren (2007), *Media Convergence and Digital News Services*, p. 7,
http://www.csc.kth.se/utbildning/forskar/avhandlingar/doktor/2007/AppelgrenEster.pdf, 10.11.2009.
[17] N. Deo (1980), *Teoria grafów i jej zastosowania w technice i* informatyce, trans. J. Kacprzyk, W. Stańczak, Warszawa, p. 15.
[18] B. Korzan (1978), *Elementy teorii grafów i sieci*, Warszawa, p. 20.
[19] Ibidem, p. 22.
[20] D. M. Berry (2008), *The Poverty of Networks*, „Theory, Culture & Society", 7-8 (25), p. 371, http://tcs.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/25/7-8/364 , 1/04/2009.
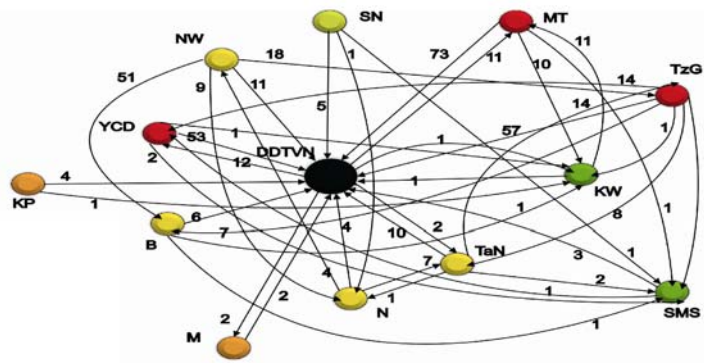
characterising some convergence strategies of connecting not only programs of a chosen TV station, but also whole platforms. These graphs can be described as convergence networks because strategies that they create are on the borderline of production, distribution and consumption – creation, transmission and reception.

The graph analysis demonstrates the importance of a flow. The flow is an essence of any media production and its promotion. Every graph presents that the both aspects of media activity: creation and commercialization are mutually dependent and more and more integrated. The graph analysis depicts all connections between the production and the promotion, it reveals the system and quantitative synergy character occurring between programs, media platforms or content.

Graph 1.

The following network depicts the promotional content flow between some chosen programs of the TVN station from 1/9/2008 to 15/12/2008. This period was chosen as resrpresentative for one season, so the period of time when transmission or a first emission of the majority of the station's programs are being witnessed. Chosen, mainly entertainment, TV programs which dominate in the group of home products and in the prime time of the station are the network's nodes. The edges illustrate the promotional relation which results from the flow of a particular person from one program to the other. I chose programs that were promoted in a most intense way in a promoting production. *Dzień dobry TVN* (*Good Morning TVN*) is the best example. Taking into consideration diversity, I have chosen 12 programs intensively promoted. The calculations of importance of a particular person were made on the basis of information concerning the presence of that person on the offcial production sites.[21]

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[21] The characteristics of collecting and analysing data has been omitted for it is unrelevant when discussing the convergence strategy itself.

green: talk show, orange: quiz, yellow: series, light green: reality show, red: interactive life show, black: infotainment show

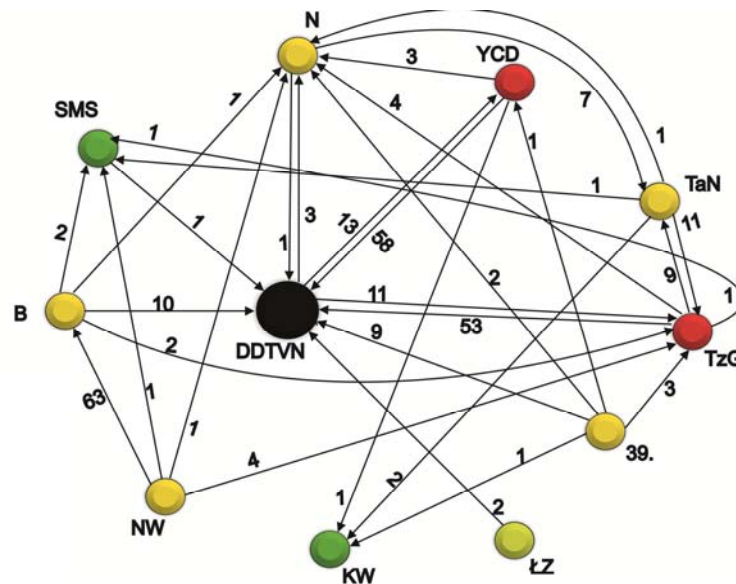|		
B – *Brzydula* (*Ugly Ula*)	**M** – *Milionerzy* (*Millionaires*)	**SMS** – *Szyman Majewski Show*
DDTVN - *Dzień Dobry TVN* (*Good Morning TVN*)	**MT** – *Mam Talent* (*Got Talent*)	**SN** – *Super Niania* (*Super Nanny*)
KW – *Kuba Wojewódzki*	**N** – *Niania* (*Nanny*)	**TzG** – *Taniec z Gwiazdami* (*Dance with the Stars*)
KP – *Kapitalny Pomysł* (*Great Idea*)	**NW** – *Na Wspólnej* (*Together*)	**TaN** – *Teraz albo Nigdy* (*Now or Never*)
		YCD – *You Can Dance*

Figure 1. Graph number 1 and genres and titles of programmes.

The presented graph containing one type of vertices is directed. It depicts connections between chosen programs of one TV station. It underlines the central position of *DDTVN* program (the node with the most of directed edges) which was visited by people connected with all twelve other productions. These are the following: *Szymon Majewski Show* and *Kuba Wojewódzki*. These programs constitute promotional platforms for people creating them. However, it is *Taniec z gwiazdami* (*Dancing with The Stars*) which is promoted most intensively through the presence of its participants in other programs. What results from this is that the internal promotion of the TVN station was concentrated on *Taniec z gwiazdami*.

What can be also assumed is that these are interactive shows and series that are mostly promoted through 'mutual visits'. However, all productions somehow connected gain through the promotional reinforcement resulting from advertisings and maintenance of interest for a person by its connection with the station. Nevertheless, there are other possibilities of promotion that should not be neglected because they transmit information about a production through oral statements, visual advertisements, autoadvertising, etc.

Graph 2.

The following graph depicts differences between the human flow during two subsequent seasons on the TVN station. The first graph shows the 2008 autumn season (1/09-15/12/2008), whereas the second graph presents the 2009 spring season (1/03-15/06/2009). Graph 2. is composed of 12 vertices and 32 edges, number of all visits being 295. The smaller number of edges in comparison to Graph 1. is a result of the reduction of programs promoted in *DDTVN* which is, in turn, an effect of the less considerable number of new programs during the autumn season. It indicates the concentration of promotion during the autumn period.

green: talk show, orange: quiz, yellow: series, light green: reality show, red: interactive life show, black: infotainment show

B – *Brzydula* (*Ugly Ula*)
DDTVN – *Dzień Dobry TVN*
KW – *Kuba Wojewódzki*
ŁZ – *Łapać Złodzieja* (*Catch a thief*)

M – *Milionerzy* (*Millionaires*)
N – *Niania* (*Nanny*)
NW – *Na Wspólnej* (*Together*)

SMS – *Szymon Majewski Show*
TzG – *Taniec z Gwiazdami* (*Dance with the Stars*)
TaN – *Teraz albo Nigdy* (*Now Or Never*)
YCD – *You Can Dance*

Figure 1. Graph number 2 and genres and titles of programmes.

Generally speaking, the spring season in comparison to the autumn season is a season of falls. The number of input edges and output edges decreased in 60% of the programs which in consequence promoted less. 80% of edges linking programs during both seasons were less important the number of visits or visitors being reduced. The diminishing values aim to present the direct influence of the autumn promotion and, in conseqence, the increased number of new productions during that period, on weakening of promotion based on the human flow.

Graph 3.

Graph 3. illustrates an intermedia promotion of the most widely promoted program of the TVN station, *You Can Dance*. The graph is based of the data from the period from 1/06 to 31/12/2008. It completes the preceeding graphs that included the program as a node. In this case, however, these are media platforms such as TV programs, press, publishing houses, Internet, films, events of shows that constitute nodes. The graph is limited to the chosen platforms which are much more numerous, but still it clearly illustrates the whole process of the intermedia promotion, the information flow and the creation of whole entertainment packages on the basis of one brand *YCD*.
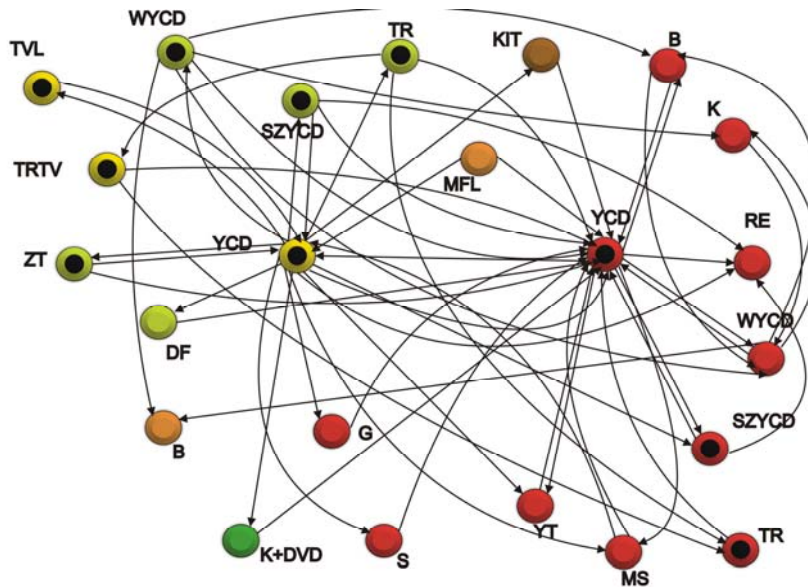
black : ITI Group platforms, green : book+DVD, orange : performance, yellow : tv programme, light green : event, red – webpage, brown : film

Figure 3. Graph number 3 and media platforms.

The presence of a person related to the program or a reference about it form a connection between nodes. Therefore, we deal with a reference if an information about the program, or event, or Website adress appears in an other program, on the Web site or on other media platform. The flow is also present when participants (dancers) appear on some platforms becoming the brand's ambassadors. The graph is directed and is characterised by different node types. One element at the time (a reference or a visitor) is enough to create a connection. The graph shows that, in the intermedia promotion of *You Can Dance,* different platforms were used out of which the official site was of the greatest importance. Platforms belonging to the ITI Group, as well as other brands, were also important.

Szymon Majewski Show, *You Can Dance*, *Teraz albo nigdy* and *39 i pół* as particular cases of nodes

Despite all the limitations applied, the proceeding graphs are examples of a relatively high degree of complexity of the strategies. Connections between programs set standards of modern promotional and convergence strategies. In fact, it is difficult to imagine a modern strategy of a media corporation which

resigns to connect different items, such as societies, organizational structures, particular brands and media productions, platforms or their parts.[22]

Four out of all productions described, where extremely complex convergence strategies are applied, require particular attention. They seem to be connected with the convergence promotion visualized with the help of graphs. The talk show entitled *Szymon Majewski Show* is one of the main promotional platforms of the TVN station. During the 2008 autumn season, 11 persons visited it and promoted other programs, during the 2009 spring season, the number decreased to 5. At the same time, the host, the main talk show character, promotes his program with a minimal use of the strategies described earlier (3 visits in *DDTVN*, one in *You Can Dance* during the autumn season and one visit in *DDTVN* during the spring season). Then, the intensity of an interior promotion is very limited. Simultaneously, the program records high audience. It is not only a result of an extraordinary shape of a program, the original host and an external advertisement, but also it is caused by particular strategies created for that program such as Ędward Ącki - character, played by Szymon Majewski, who communicates with spectators in a specific way. These are rather staggered actions based on various media platforms than the host's presence and his interview once a week that exploit the program to its full potential. It allows to involve media users that co-create not only the program, but also its transmedia brand.

You Can Dance program is characterized by diversity of complex convergence strategies and its use of various platforms. During both analyzed seasons, the intense promotion in *DDTVN* was present, creators also took advantage of already popular stars (Kinga Rusin, the *DDTVN* host, and Agustin Egurola, *Dancing with The Stars* choreographer and *You Can Dance* juror). However, taking into account the young target group and participants, *You Can Dance* bases its strategies on connected and varied media platforms that demands physical or virtual mobility. In that way, it divides its presence and involves efficiently its receivers who move from one platform to the other (TV, Internet, events, magazines, presentations, films, etc.) and create their own reception paths based on created connections.

Teraz albo nigdy (*Now or Never*) and *39 i pół* (*38 and the half*) series are examples of two different ways of using promotional potential. *Teraz albo nigdy* was rather a corporate series. Depending on the season, it received 2 or 3 stars from other productions of the same station becoming a promotional platform for them. *39 i pół* was an independent series – the presence of actors was not a result of a flow from other TVN programs. It was not intensively promoted either in the rest of the station's programs. It does not mean, however, that the series was not promoted at all. It was a platform rather for external brands and synergistic packages created together with sponsors resulted in its different character. The mutual

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[22] The strategy described is controversial. Jarosław Murowski (2008) writes: 'On the TVN, they talk only about the TVN and the promotion is so intense that it seems that apart from the TVN, no other TV station, entertainment programs or success do not exist.' The author claims that the reason of the situation lies in the fact that the TVN has created a separate self-promotion department.

promotion of the series and its actors, products or services made from *39 i pół* an intertextual multipromotion platform. The promotion of *Teraz albo nigdy* instead, similarly to *You Can Dance*, was based on the connection of different platforms (mainly on the TV, Internet, books and events). Relatively low promotional intensity in other TVN programs was compensated by an intermedia package. Its shape offered some possibilities to play with a receiver who, being involved in the story on various platforms, was to ask himself about the distance keeping him away from the presented world.

By that means promotional strategies of a chosen station link. A promotional character based on connections (of people or information) corresponds with its internal convergence strategies created around one brand, one program. Connection, intertextual and transmedia aspects of a production bind together, and their analyses demands a use of the whole set of integrated methods. The limitations underlined by David Barry (2008, p. 366) should be taken into account. Graphs depict a limited image of a situation. Other perspectives should be considered in order to compensate disadvantages of tools[23]. Other methods, however, when omitting the network aspect, could also easily distort a view of the phenomenon. That is why research is being enlarged by case studies, which allows to observe particular nodes and to restore a convergence strategy.

Footnotes

[1] The article was created with financial support from the Foundation for Polish Science. The article was translated from Polish by Joanna Torzewska. The original title: *Sieciowość, wieloplatformowość i intermedialność. Polskie konwergencyjne strategie medialne.*

[2] Mark Deuze in a debate with the author, Lejda, 9/06/2009.

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[23] D. M. Berry (2008), op. cit., p. 366.

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