

The changing nature of broadcasting: towards user-generated radio

An explorative study about roles and motivations within online
independent stations' producers

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ABSTRACT

Often defined as the 'forgotten', 'secondary' and 'invisible' medium, radio has been significantly under-theorised in media studies. Due to the emergence of innovative technologies and a new participatory culture, alternative models of radio are rising, while the boundaries between producers and consumers progressively blur. In particular, online independent stations present an enviable potential for growth. Such stations are web-based and independently run, meaning they are not affiliated with any media networks. They show a correspondence with earlier models of community and pirate radio, but are also profoundly influenced by contemporary media trends such as platformisation and produsage. Because of these characteristics, this medium represents an intriguing subject of investigation. Due to the increased level of participation, it becomes relevant to analyse how radio roles related to the production/distribution and consumption evolve in the context of the converged mediascape. At the same time, exploring motivations that guide people to actively interact with this medium provides interesting insights into its converged and multifaceted nature, highlighting its connections and differences with traditional models of radio, community and pirate stations, user-generated content and music streaming platforms. Thus, this thesis aims to respond to the following research question: How can we understand roles and motivations within online independent radio? The research draws on data collected via qualitative interviews with ten stakeholders within two Dutch online independent stations, Operator Radio and Radio Tempo Nao Para. Participants have been sampled on a purposive basis, in an attempt to provide a more diverse range of answers and better illustrate the operational structure of the stations. Transcripts of the interviews are examined by means of thematic analysis with the support of the software Atlas.TI. The analysis resulted in 8 categories and 8 subcategories describing roles and motivations within online

independent radio. This thesis represents a valuable contribution to radio research, to theories about convergence, participatory culture, produsage and user-generated content, and, finally, to Uses & Gratifications research, as motivations are explored through a U&G perspective. The study also represents a starting point for institutions in The Netherlands and all around the world to recognize the potential of online independent stations to shape local and global communities, as well as promote art and culture, and hence the need for policies to support their development.

KEYWORDS: Radio, Community media, Convergence, Participation, Platformisation

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1. Introduction

Often defined as the 'forgotten', 'secondary' and 'invisible' medium, radio has been notably under-theorized in media studies. While scholars may have been reluctant to recognize its potential, and the advent of digital alternatives may have challenged its future, radio proves to be an established medium in the changing media ecosystem, promptly adapting to new technologies and convergent modes of production (Starkey, 2017). With radio "reinventing itself in the age of media convergence" (Starkey, 2017, p. 1) new practices emerge in the context of content production and distribution: while traditional participatory models of radio broadcasting rely on the polarity of sender and receiver, today radio is increasingly web-based, participatory, building content and connections with audiences across a wide range of platforms (Cordeiro, 2012). Emerging technologies have enabled radio to expand and evolve its definition to keep up with the times; in particular, the disproportionate growth of the Internet and platforms has allowed independently run stations to find airplay and popularity. These stations represent an alternative to mainstream and conventional media: by providing a space for free expression, diversity and experimentation, they function similarly to old-fashioned pirate and community radio stations (Scifo, 2015).

However, their potential is not being recognised in academic literature. The aim of this study is therefore to address these gaps in research by exploring online independent radio stations, in order to unravel their functioning, structure and appeal, as well as their role in shaping global and local communities. Online independent stations are web-based radio stations which are not affiliated with any media firms or broadcast networks. As part of a long tradition of independent distribution that began with earlier models of community and pirate radios, these stations often have a local focus, target a specific group of people and promote underground and emerging artists and music genres. Moreover, these stations are often founded on an amateur basis, and as non-profit realities, their organisations differ from those of traditional businesses, favouring participatory models. Moreover, the emergence of new technologies have enabled them to stream and produce content on a wide range of

platforms, connecting with the audience on multiple levels. Despite this, however, their core nature seems to be very detached from that of other music formats such as streaming platforms, offering a different kind of appeal. Thus, this thesis aims to respond to the following research question: *How can we understand roles and motivations within online independent radio?* Roles, defined as functions, contributions and practices that specific actors manifest within independent online radio stations, and motivations, intended as the underlying factors guiding one's usage of and participation in the radio station, appear as central concepts of this investigation.

Drawing on these premises, this thesis aims to contribute to the existing literature in three ways. First, as the majority of studies focus on traditional forms of radio - broadcast and commercial radio - this study directly addresses online independent radio stations, which are going unnoticed in academic research. It is now well established that traditional models of radio can result obsolete in the changing digital mediascape, and it is also true that music streaming platforms, with their innovative ways of distributing music and podcasts, are challenging the future of radio. Nevertheless, as this study will show, these formats have not substituted radio, which is constantly evolving, embracing diverse platforms and content formats, while stretching powerful narratives associated with its name and playing with elements of nostalgia. Radio, like any other medium, is experimenting, and we, as academics, have a duty to unravel these developments.

Second, there is an urgent need to address the changing modes of production, distribution and consumption in the context of radio: audience roles are evolving, and while new participatory models such as user-generated content are extensively investigated in correlation with journalism, music, gaming and so forth, the same academic interest has not been applied to radio. This paper intends to critically examine online independent radio as a form of user-generated content (UGC) by contextualizing its production, distribution and consumption practices in the broader emerging participatory culture and convergent mediascape. Online independent radio can be thought of as an example of UGC as its origins lay in independent, typically amateur production, deeply rooted in convergence culture. As Jenkins (2006) notes, convergence culture occurs “where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways” (p. 2).

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of convergence is the progressive blurring of the boundaries between media producers and media consumers. Within independent online radio, users are increasingly active contributors rather than passive listeners: engaging with stations on social media sites and participating in funding campaigns are common ways to contribute to their growth and sustenance. Moreover, given the amateur nature of independent online radio, it is typical for users to engage in activities more closely linked to the production side, such as DJing and podcasting, offering their creative input in exchange for visibility and promotion. The founders themselves may be regarded as “producers” (Bruns, 2006), as they are frequently consumers of the medium in the first place. The term “producer” is used to describe a hybrid role between the user and the producer. Internet technology has allowed potentially everyone to set up an online station and broadcast from home, and a number of platforms exist to facilitate this process. For example, station management platforms help users to easily create, manage and stream their online radio stations. In some cases, broadcasters even start streaming on platforms such as Soundcloud, Facebook and Youtube. Most of the independent online stations continue to use these platforms extensively as secondary channels even when in possession of their official distribution website and/or app.

As new technologies accelerate the process of convergence, traditional definitions of media producers/distributors and media consumers evolve, overlapping with each other. In this context, this thesis attempts to provide an overview of roles within independent online radio and their manifestation into concrete uses of the stations. In fact, the term *roles* aim to identify all the different practices related to the production, consumption and distribution that take place within these organisations, based on different levels of engagement, power and responsibility.

Lastly, this research aims to contribute to the body of Uses & Gratifications (U&G) theories (Katz, 1959) by analysing how specific actors within online independent radio stations contribute to their development, reflecting different ladders of engagement, and being driven by distinct sets of motivations. Therefore, U&G theories will be used to understand roles and corresponding motivations for engaging with the radio stations. U&G is a well-known media research tradition that values media use in terms of personal gratification and emotional needs. Assuming that the audiences select the medium that better meets their needs, the main goals of U&G research are to describe how people use the

media to fulfil their needs and to deeply understand motivating factors for media use. While the current mediascape continues to stretch across a variety of platforms and content formats, U&G is regarded as one of the most suitable analytical perspectives to analyse why audiences decide to interact with media channels (Shao, 2009). U&G has been applied to traditional media such as television, broadcast radio and newspaper (e.g. Herzog, 1944; Klapper, 1960, 1963; Lazarsfeld, 1940; Rosengren, 1972, 1974) but also to the Internet (e.g., Rafaeli, 1986; Singer, 1998) and, more recently, to social media (e.g. Whiting and Williams, 2013) and User-generated content (e.g. Shao, 2009). This study examines in depth why and how people use and co-create independent online radio stations, in relation to different levels of engagement, as well as what characteristics make this medium especially appealing, through a uses and gratifications perspective.

Chapter 2 of this thesis discusses the theoretical background at the base of this research. It is divided into a number of subparts: first, the medium (online independent radio) is contextualized in the broader development of radio. In fact, as previously specified, a lack of literature exists in relation to this medium and no relevant studies have been conducted addressing specifically online independent stations. Therefore, the first part of Chapter 2 aims to provide a general history of radio, from its inception to most recent development such as internet radio, passing through alternative models emerged in the second half of the 20th century, such as pirate and community radios. Next, the theories constituting the main framework of empirical analysis are explained, namely theories related to participatory culture and user-generated content (UGC) (Bruns, 2006, 2011; Deuze, 2007; Jenkins, 2006), and Uses & Gratifications (U&G) theories (Katz, 1959; Rosengren, 1972, 1974; Rubin, 2009; Shao, 2009).

Chapter 3 presents the methodology employed in this research. The investigation, carried out by means of thematic analysis (Boeije, 2009), draws its data from qualitative semi-structured interviews collected with relevant stakeholders within two Dutch online independent radio stations, Operator Radio and Radio Tempo Nao Para. The stations are non-profit organisations based in two major Dutch cities. They show a strong focus on the local community, stream content via a wide range of digital platforms, rely on partnerships with collaborators, and present a highly participatory organisational model. Interview participants are selected via purposive sampling, in order to mirror as closely as possible the operating structure of the stations by recruiting different roles within the organisation.

The results of the analysis performed on the interviewed are presented in Chapter 4, where emerged roles and motivations are explored and discussed extensively in subsections. Lastly, the conclusion and final discussion are presented in Chapter 5. The chapter also includes limitations of the study and contributions to existing literature, as well as implications for policies and suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

The following chapter discusses the theoretical foundation of this research. It is broken into three sections: first, a general history of radio and radio research is outlined, ranging from its inception to most recent development such as Internet radio, passing through alternative models emerged in the second half of the 20th century, such as pirate and community radios. Next, the impact of contemporary media trends on radio developments are discussed. These trends include the emergence of a participatory culture and converged modes of production such as user-generated content (UGC) and produsage, as well as platformisation. Finally, Uses & Gratification (U&G) theories are explored, from their emergence to most recent applications on newer media.

2.1 A brief history of radio and radio research

Radio has always been an integral part of our daily lives and a profitable sector since its early stages. The following sections aim to outline a general history of the medium, tracing its development from theoretical contributions advanced over the years.

2.1.1 Early days, Golden Age and decline of radio broadcasting

The first model of radio was developed by the Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi in 1896, who built the first apparatus for long-distance radio communication (Balk, 2006). In the early 1900s, various engineers, researchers and amateurs experimented with radio, developing the technology and its myriad applications. The following emergence of radio broadcast as a powerful mass medium in the 1920s, however, was quite unexpected. In fact, the first 'wireless' connections implemented by Guglielmo Marconi and other pioneers of radio were meant for one-way and thereafter two-way communication between individuals, not for broadcasting (Crisell, 1994). Yet, broadcasting has shortly after become the primary use of radio, proving a massive commercial success. By 1950, almost every nation had a radio broadcasting system, often run and controlled by the state (Lewis & Booth, 1989). The public model was typical in most European countries and remained the only option until the

late 1980s, when private companies were allowed to compete against public broadcasters (McChesney, 2003). In America, by contrast, commercial radio began appearing in the early 1920s, with the first scheduled broadcast on November 2, 1920, operated by KDKA (Severin, 1978). Australia and Canada introduced a dual system with both government-owned and commercial stations, respectfully in 1924 and 1930 (Lewis & Booth, 1989). To date, virtually every country has adopted the dual system (Banerjee & Seneviratne, 2006).

Since the beginning of broadcasting, radio has played a significant role in lives and cultures all around the world, shaping national identities, embodying political voices, and keeping citizens informed on the latest news (Delli Carpini, 1995). The quarter century to approximately 1950 is considered radio's Golden Age in most industrialised nations, where - despite war devastation - radio flourished before the onset of television (Lewis and Booth, 1989). After the advent of television, radio's function evolved to "background sound of our lives" (Hilmes, 2002, p. 1), keeping us company while jogging, commuting, and performing everyday activities. Although radio's popularity has undeniably suffered from the arrival of the visual medium, its presence remained central in people's lives, serving as core dimension of our informative and recreational worlds (Rhoads, 1995). The introduction of car and portable radio played a large part in that, of course. Yet, the attention of scholars remarkably shifted to television, the new promising medium, leaving radio significantly unstudied from the 50s through the 80s. As a result, media scholars have studied television for decades, while radio research is scarce. Many television formats such as soap operas and situation comedy emerged from the older medium, however, this is rarely acknowledged in television studies (Matelski, 1995). Radio remained an "anachronistic embarrassment" (Hilmes, 2002, p. 8) among critics; the neglected medium, unable to reach full maturity, was gradually fading in the background of television's vivid imagery.

2.1.2 The emergence of alternative models of radio

It was only in the 1980s that radio gained back popularity in academia, as scholars started to remember and reconsider the "forgotten medium" (Pease & Dennis, 1995). This renewed academic interest in radio finds its roots in the emergence of alternative models of radio, which can be encompassed under the umbrella term "community radio".

Community radio can be defined as small-scale radio initiatives mostly operated by local communities which aimed to offer content that diverged from traditional radio programming (Bosch, 2014). However, community radio is a rather broad term, and one generic definition is not enough to trace its complex nature. It encompasses multiple forms, definitions, and narratives, which are all heavily influenced by the distinct cultural backgrounds and social contexts where this model of radio has developed.

Community radio is an Anglo-Saxon expression; in France and Italy, similar systems were called "radio libre" or "radio libera" (free radio) as the majority of these channels were established in opposition to a government monopoly. Other terms indicating community radio - or at least versions of it - are micro broadcasting (i.e. Japan), popular radio (South America) and local radio (The Netherlands) (Kleinsteuber and Sonnenberg, 1990; King, 2017; Lewis and Booth, 1989; Scifo, 2015). This variety of definitions is mainly attributable to the different social and cultural contexts that affected the evolution of community radio.

Although community radio stations may vary significantly across socio-cultural contexts, a number of shared features can be identified: as Scifo (2015) clarifies, community radio operates on a no-profit basis, targets a single, specific group of people and shows strong community involvement in the management of the station. The common goal of community radio stations, regardless of their political orientation, is therefore to serve the community's interests and "give voice to the voiceless" (Correia, Vieira & Aparicio, 2019, p.32).

In this respect, community radio can be seen as a response to the disproportionate growth of television. Beginning to redesign its identity as fractured and decentralised and turning its focus to audiences beyond the mainstream, radio became a platform for culturally marginalized groups, a place where those minorities excluded from television could reassemble and pursue a new voice (Hilmes, 2002). It would be therefore incorrect to assume that television or images have replaced radio in the media landscape: indeed, following the evolution of radio over the next few decades, it becomes clear that, rather than opposing, radio and television took different paths. As Oliveira (2013) notes, "the power of sound and the power of image evoke different senses and sensitive relationships with the world" (p. 179), and that is precisely what has allowed radio to survive the advent of new media and technologies, preserving a moderate but significant role in our lives for over 100 years.

2.1.3 The cultural legacy of pirate radio

Community radio is often related to pirate radio, as in the beginning, community radio stations were mainly grassroots movements. The fight for legalisation includes a long list of illicit - and often short-term - broadcast experiences, such as pirate stations (well-known are the cases of the English Radio Caroline and the Dutch Radio Veronica, both transmitting from ships), activist stations (a notable example is Bristolian Fem FM) and ethnic-orientated stations, such as black-music stations, challenging the mainstream national culture in various countries (Barlow, 1988; 1999; Correia, Vieira, & Aparicio, 2019). Clandestine radio has also played significant roles in crucial events of global scale, such as the decolonization war in Algeria and the Cuban revolution. In February 1958, Che Gouvara himself founded one of the channels, Radio Rebelde (Raboy, 1993; King, 2017).

In the 1990s, several countries passed legislation aimed to open community radio stations, including the Philippines, Poland, Colombia, Congo, Ireland, Senegal, and more (King, 2017). Similarly, the 2000s saw an increasing number of nations legalizing community radio, allowing countless stations to sprout across the globe, including the United Kingdom in 2004 and 2011, Argentina in 2009; Nigeria in 2010; and the United States, Tunisia, Uganda, and Catalonia in 2011 (Coyer, 2011). Some of these legislative acts encouraged the growth of community radio by providing financing mechanisms, such as the Netherlands in 2008, which commissioned municipalities to finance hundreds of local stations (King, 2017).

Although clandestine broadcasting had ceased in the majority of countries, its cultural significance and influence endured. Particularly, pirate and illegal models of radio had a key role in giving young people a voice. By introducing new music genres and styles, and showing a strong bond with the community that mainstream stations seemed to lack, they also helped create and negotiate local identities. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the Netherlands, where the appeal of pirate radio has always been so strong to cause a proliferation of illegal stations despite the repeated government's attempts to shut them down (Van der Hoeven, 2012). The enthusiasm for clandestine radio, especially in the 1960s, particularly interested young generations struggling to define their own identities in the context of the then-rising beat music culture (Rutten, 2001).

Dutch pirate radio helped the emerging youth culture find a voice, generating powerful narratives and cultural practices that have persisted to the present day. After pirate

broadcasting disappeared in most of the cities, a number of platforms emerged to preserve its heritage, including pirate festivals, museum exhibitions, and radio shows. Moreover, pirate stations' heritage can be found in current online radio stations that, despite broadcasting legally, retain their pirate reputation. For instance, some internet stations use visual aids like the pirate logo as markers of an illicit history, and their names are also often associated with pirate culture (Van der Hoeven, 2012).

2.2 Evolving models of radio in the converged media ecosystem

Radio's perseverance as a medium has been proven repeatedly across the past 90 years. Some may argue that its glory days as a mass medium have already passed, and it is now doomed to decrease dramatically in usage and prominence, outpaced by new technologies and platforms that provide greater degrees of user engagement and personalization. However, radio's history, both past and recent, indicate otherwise: radio has shown extraordinary resilience in reaction to the advent of innovative media in the past, and the ways it is now responding to the changing mediascape suggests that such adaptability may prove crucial in the coming years (Starkey, 2017).

2.2.1 Internet Radio

Internet radio is born from the convergence of Internet technology and radio, positioning itself in the broader developments and implications of the advent of the Internet. Many positive forecasts and assessments have been made about the Internet, especially in the two decades since the advent of the free World Wide Web (“the web”). Some researchers have argued that the internet would promote an “information revolution” which would ostensibly increase political engagement, free the media, and promote independent communities, along with many other advantages (Bottomley, 2016), and these theoretical perspectives on the medium's liberalizing influence continue to permeate most scholarly discussions. For example, Benkler (2008) claims that the networked public domain - an expression used to describe the internet-based, open networked architecture - allows many more people to communicate their thoughts and perspectives to many others, in a manner

that cannot be easily controlled by media corporations and is not as prone to corruption as the mass media.

Other scholars have been more cautious in relation to the effects of the Internet revolution. Many academics have pointed out how Internet penetration and usage is subjected to divides, which regard both the country where one lives and other factors such as age and gender. Others have focused on potentially worrying trends related to Internet use. Castell (2002), for instance, argues that the varied and multifaceted content offered by the Internet is jeopardizing our capacity as a society to produce shared meaning and common values. Moreover, he claims that the Internet's ongoing development will lead to increased surveillance, where citizens will be constantly monitored (Castell, 2002).

Regardless of individual perspectives, what is sure is that the emergence of the Internet and related technologies has profoundly impacted the contemporary mediascape. In particular, the Internet and digitalisation have systematically restructured the radio ecosystem by providing new, innovative radio formats and listening experiences.

The first Internet radio station, called Internet Talk Radio, was founded by Carl Malmud in 1993. Initially, the station featured interviews and commentary about technology topics, and only later started broadcasting live concerts (Bottomley, 2016). Although the content was not as innovative compared to terrestrial radio, the pioneers of Internet radio had pushed the boundaries of traditional radio to innovative and experimental technologies, marking the start of convergence. The Internet allowed radio to expand its broadcasting field by overcoming the bandwidth limitations imposed by terrestrial radios; this has significantly increased the accessibility of the medium. The Internet also reduced costs of production and distribution, allowing more firms to establish a footprint in the market (Bottomley, 2016). However, the Internet has also significantly complicated radio's definition, culture and systems by introducing new interactive and cross-media practices that fundamentally question the core nature of the medium (Cordeiro, 2012).

The popularity of the Internet has also promoted community-building practices: by embracing different modes of communication (one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one), the internet has enabled a shift from the linear model of communication employed by traditional radio, allowing conversations between users (Cordeiro, 2012). The democratic aspect of the Internet-mediated communication blends perfectly with the concept of community radio: alternative web-based radio stations started sprouting like mushrooms, leveraging the online

technology to provide voice for a diverse range of perspectives, including those from ethnic minorities (e.g. Reprerented, London-based station focusing on British Asian artists), marginalised groups (e.g. Youthworx Media in Melbourne, which provides an opportunity for young people with low levels of literacy), women (e.g. Feminist International Radio Endeavour/FIRE based in Costa Rica), and advocacy groups (Zero24-7 Web Radio in Belfast, spreading environmental messages).

2.2.2 The effects of platformisation and participation on radio

While the Internet has impacted radio's structure and modus operandi, redesigning its identity, the emergence of platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music, and Youtube has further complicated the situation. The effects of platformisation on radio encompass all the different forms and practices of today's digital radio, such as webcasting, podcasting, music streaming, live-streaming, playlists creation, and so forth.

Platformisation, described as the introduction of digital platforms in the web ecosystems, has significantly impacted the cultural sectors' processes in various ways (Nieborg, Poell, & Deuze, 2019). To begin with, platformisation provides new possibilities for cultural producers, who can utilize platforms as tools for content creation and management, as resources for research and knowledge acquisition, and as distribution channels. In this sense, platforms have become vital for cultural producers as they allow the spread of content across a wide range of devices (computers, smartphones, tablets) and networks, meeting consumers where they are. Moreover, platforms have enabled producers to engage in multi-platforms narratives that stretch across various interfaces and formats. Naturally, platforms have also increased audience participation due to their highly customisable and interactive features (Cordeiro, 2012). At the same time, platformisation inherently affects the nature of the cultural commodity by making it contingent (Nieborg et Al., 2019) This reliance stems from the fact that content distribution and popularity are governed not only by the contractual terms of a limited number of platforms but also by algorithmic systems. As a result, content production is "dependent" on platform terms for dissemination, evaluation, and re-circulation (Morris, 2015). Thus the advent of platforms urges creators to adjust their practices to the new platform ecology, developing strategies within it to benefit from their creative efforts.

In the context of radio production, broadcasters take advantage of music streaming platforms and a myriad of other digital channels to disseminate content: they start, for example, creating playlists on Spotify and music streams on Soundcloud, producing podcasts on Apple Podcasts, developing their mobile app, live-streaming on Facebook, microblogging on Twitter, uploading video content on Youtube. In this context, not only radio programming assumes the form of liquid, hybrid content to be distributed across a wide range of platforms and devices, but also, being the platformised media environment highly accessible and user-centered, new participation models arise, while it becomes unclear whether production ends and consumption begins. As users start interacting with radio stations in innovative ways, such as “liking”, commenting and sharing content, participating in funding campaigns or engaging in user-led content production practices, the steady blurring of the effective or assumed boundaries between production and consumption is being powered (Deuze, 2007).

There are several advantages and drawbacks associated with increased audience participation. According to a consistent number of scholars, the Internet and digital platforms have enabled more dynamic production practices, while weakening conventional power structures between creators and consumers (Bottomley, 2016). Bruns, for instance, has introduced the terms "produsage" and the combination user-producer "produser" to describe what he sees as a new dynamic era of successful “user-led content production” (Bruns, 2006, p.3). Similar research has been carried out by Jenkins, Ford, and Green on “participatory culture” (2013), which they describe as virtual communities using social network sites and other digital media applications (e.g., podcasting) to promote social and cultural exchange. This participatory culture is closely linked to the concept of "spreadable media," (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013), which is an innovative, widely disseminated form of content distribution, exclusive to the networked mediascape and based on the adaptability of the content to a variety of formats and devices.

Other scholars, on the other hand, have criticised increased audience participation. For example, Nielsen (2006) introduced the concept of participation inequality, arguing that digital environments which are considered inherently participatory are in truth promoting a disparity in how users participate. According to his work, over 90% of users would be in fact “lurkers”, consuming content on Web 2.0 without generating any, while only the 1% would be active contributors. . . ., on the other hand, notes that the audience is only attracted

to networked settings with the promise of unlimited participation and free access to content (“free lunch”, Smythe, 1977, p. 5), but it is in truth used as a commodity, as platforms sell their users to advertisers.

Despite different perspectives, it is clear that platformisation and increased participation have fundamentally affected radio modes of production, consumption and distribution, by merging diverse narratives across online platforms, incorporating interactive and participatory features, and reshaping content based on the influence of listeners, who are becoming increasingly producers and co-producers, as Deuze predicted (2007).

2.2.3 Defining online independent radio in the context of user-generated content

At this point, the object of my study - independent online radio - can be better defined and contextualized in the converging of community radio and new media trends such as platformisation and participation. I use the concept independent online radio to indicate web-based radio stations, dispersed across a wide range of digital platforms, which, just like community radio in its inception, operate on a local level and no-profit basis, target a single, specific group of people and show strong community involvement in the management of the station (Scifo, 2015). In the context of online independent radio, digital channels significantly impact the traditional standards of “production, distribution, and monetization” (Nieborg, Poell, & Deuze, 2019, p. 85), opening up a number of possibilities for users to engage actively with the medium and with each other, and establishing a new future for community radio. In this thesis, I argue that online independent radio is a form of user-generated content, both because its origins lay in independent, typically amateur production of community radio, and because its production, distribution and consumption practices are contextualized in the emerging participatory culture and convergent mediascape enabled by platforms and Web 2.0.

For the scope of this research, it is critical to consider the impact of new participative practices such as user-generated content on the creation, development and maintenance of online independent radio. User-generated content is a term conceived by modern media scholars to indicate digital content produced by common users working according to their own initiative and independently to brands or businesses, with the purpose of distributing on the Internet (OECD, 2007). Although the concept of User-generated content is widely used

in media research, there are disparate interpretations of it, leading to difficulties in formulating a comprehensive definition. However, a number of shared features can be observed in various types of User-generated content. First, users are also producers. This is the most significant aspect of User-generated content. Audiences, historically relegated to passive consumers, assume now a key role in the production process (Bowman & Willis, 2003). Hence, user-generated content entails the inclusion of the user into the media production process. Second, user-generated content implies a certain degree of creative efforts by the users, meaning that the content produced must be original or originally adapted from existing work. As a result, UGC creative endeavors frequently have a collaborative component (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2006). Third, UGC refers to the digital media, and is conceived to be made available on the Internet. In this regard, the recent advent of Web 2.0. is intricately intertwined with the growth of UGC, allowing for a broader distribution and easier development of UGC (Waldron, 2013).

Drawing from these inferences, independent online radio can be regarded as a form of user-generated content as not only it is set up by amateurs and not by brands, but also because its production and consumption practices are gradually merging in the new platformized participatory environment. Within independent online radio, users are increasingly active contributors rather than passive listeners: engaging with stations on social media sites and participating in funding campaigns are common ways to contribute to their growth and sustenance. Moreover, given the amateur nature of independent online radio, it is typical for users to offer their creative input in exchange for visibility and promotion. Independent online radio is therefore the product of a co-creation, constant exchange of knowledge and information and collective creative efforts enabled by Web 2.0.

2.3 Online independent radio analysed through Uses & Gratifications lenses

In this multifaceted scenario, this thesis's scope is to analyse and understand uses and motivations of producers acting within independent online radio, for which the Uses & Gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) represents a suitable framework of analysis. As roles are constantly overlapping, new production and distribution practices, as well as innovative content formats, emerge daily in the context of independent online radio.

This thesis attempts to provide an overview of the different roles and motivations in online independent stations from a Uses & Gratifications perspective, which will be explored in detail in the following sections.

2.3.1 History of Uses & Gratifications research

What is now identified as the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory in media research is generally recognized to be a branch of media effects studies. The method was established early in the history of communication studies to investigate the gratifications that draw and retain consumers to the types of media and content that fulfill their personal and social needs (Ruggiero, 2000). Since its inception, it has grown and developed as a theoretical perspective emphasizing the role of audience intention to analyse medium preference and content choice, perception, and effect (Rubin, 2009). The Uses and Gratifications theory emphasises the importance of social and psychological factors in mediated communication, diverting attention away from a deterministic perspective that seeks to identify an immediate impact of the media on recipients toward exploring how people actively use the media, that is: “what purposes or functions the media serve for a body of active receivers” (Fisher, 1978, p. 159). According to Rosengren (1972), uses and gratifications are based on a mediated understanding of communication power, which emphasizes how personal characteristics limit direct media impact. Thus, to explain media influence, we should first consider audiences' attributes, motivations, specificity, and participation. Since its inception, scholars have investigated various aspects of the theory; the following sections aim to produce an outline of the most relevant findings.

The uses and gratifications theory lay its origins in the 1940s, when media scholars started investigating the appeal of mass media such as radio shows and newspapers (Herzog, 1944; Lazarsfeld, 1940; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1949). In its early stages, Uses & Gratifications originated from a shift in the focus of analysis from the conventional query of media effects study, namely: “what do the media do to people?”, to a new question: “what do people do with the media?” (Katz, 1959, p. 2). Numerous scholars after Katz have questioned the mechanistic approach to the study of mass media communication, arguing that various factors - such as personal interpretation of the message, individual expectations and perspectives - play a role in the mediated communication process (Bauer, 1963; Klapper, 1960). In fact, in early research, the driving forces behind media consumption were

mainly linked to motives of entertainment, knowledge acquisition, relief from personal problems and social status, but little attention was directed to individual differences and psychological traits as explanatory factors for media consumption (Rubin, 2009).

As Uses & Gratifications research progressed, the focus of investigation shifted to the new visual medium: television. It is also in this period - spanning from the 1950s to the 1960s - that scholars started to define and empirically validate a variety of social and psychological variables believed to be initiators to various patterns of uses and gratifications (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994). Schramm, Lyle, and Parker (1961), for example, argued that personal intellectual capabilities and interactions with family and peers affected children's use of television. Klapper (1963) advocated for a more comprehensive use of U&G research, restoring the audience participant to "his rightful place in the dynamic, rather than leaving him in the passive, almost inert, role to which many older studies relegated him" (p. 527).

Until the 1970s, U&G studies were mainly concerned with gratifications pursued, rather than effects or gratifications received (Rayburn, 1996). In the 1970s, U&G scholars focused on media consumer motives and introduced new categories about the uses audiences made of the media to fulfill social and psychological demands (Ruggiero, 2000). Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) published a detailed list of social and psychological needs believed to be fulfilled by mass media consumption. In an effort to logically improve U&G, Rosengren (1974) proposed that such essential demands intersect with individual traits and the cultural and social context to generate imagined problems and solutions. These problems and solutions reflect various motivations for gratification activities that can be derived from media or other practices. When media consumption or other habits are combined, they produce gratification (or nongratification) which affects the person or community, resetting the cycle.

In the 1980s, Rubin and Windahl (1986) developed the dependence paradigm to incorporate the audience's need for pleasure as an immersive feature of media dependency. The mixture of pursued gratifications and socially constructed dependence induced media effects, according to Rubin and Windahl. They believed that people become reliant on specific channels or content when they either actively search for information or use particular media or content on a daily basis. Later in the 1990s, McIlwraith (1998),

discovered that self-defined "TV addicts" made use of television to divert themselves from negative emotions, control moods, and pass the time.

In terms of U&G research on broadcast radio, Mendelsohn (1964) outlined multiple factors for radio listening, such as improving mood, reducing feelings of boredom and loneliness and obtaining knowledge and information. Focusing on the dimension of participation, Armstrong and Rubin (1989) identified multiple sets of motivations for listening to and calling talk radio shows. Focusing on the dimension of participation, the study found multiple sets of motivations for listening to and calling talk radio shows. Engagement in radio talk, time spent listening, social and personal distinctions were all interconnected, and listening motivations were linked to society and interpersonal factors.

Started as a theoretical approach to mass media communication studies, Uses and Gratifications research has embarked on a course from traditional media, such as broadcast radio and television, to newer media, especially the Internet and social media (Rubin, 2009). Although Uses and Gratifications continue to represent a leading-edge theoretical model to analyse the platformized, converged media ecosystem of present days, researchers must also be willing to extend the established theoretical perspective of uses and gratifications. Interactivity, convergence, fluidity of content, spreadable media, produsage and user-generated content are all characterizing constructs of the contemporary mediascape and must therefore be incorporated in the current and future versions of the theory. Scholars, thus, must also be prepared to use a more comprehensive approach to investigate behavioral and contextual components of mediated communication (Ruggiero, 2000), in order to successfully use the theory as an analytical tool in the changing media ecosystem of the 21st century.

2.3.2 Uses & Gratifications of the Internet

With the advent of the Internet, a group of media scholars assessed the new medium as the best one for individuals's personal development, by exploring effects and gratifications connected to its most common uses. Singer, 1998, for instance, claims that the Internet has allowed people to pursue knowledge and generate information easily and effectively. Some see the Internet as a great tool to develop and sustain communities through which people can develop connections online in forms that conventional media have never enabled (Ruggiero, 2000). Challenging this overly positive picture, Rafaeli (1986) reflected

on the possibility of internet use causing feelings of loneliness and alienation in its users, while Young (1998) expressed fears that disproportionate use of digital media - a personal computer, for instance - could make consumers susceptible to technological addictions such as Internet dependency.

With the emergence of social media, several scholars have attempted to demonstrate the importance of Uses & Gratifications theory in social media research, providing new useful insights. As U&G's core principle is that audiences are actively engaged in media use, this concept acquires particular relevance for research on media that especially enable consumer intention and engagement, such as social media (Ruggiero, 2000). Drawing from previous studies, Whiting and Williams (2013) identify ten uses and gratifications for social media usage, namely: social interaction, information seeking, pass time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, expression of opinions, convenience utility, information sharing, surveillance and watching of others.

2.3.3 Uses & Gratifications of User-generated content

Research on Uses & Gratifications has also been directed towards User-generated content. Shao (2009) analyses User-generated Media (UGM) attractiveness by means of uses & gratifications theories, exploring different levels of engagement with the content and related motivations. The study proposes that people engage with UGM in three different ways: by using it, by interacting with it and by creating it. The first ladder of engagement is related to motives of entertainment and information seeking (Shao, 2009). At a second stage, audiences can engage with the content by using features such as commenting, liking and sharing. At this level, participation might contribute to the convergence of individuals in countless types of communities. As Shao (2009) argues, this scope of engagement with the medium could be possibly related to motives of social interaction and community building. When individuals are able to meet people with shared interests and values by interacting with the medium, users' participation leads to the formation and maintenance of virtual - and factual - communities. The third level of engagement refers to user-led content creation, or produsage (Bruns, 2006). Produsage, regarded as the most active role in UGC participation, refers to those who produce and publish their own content on the sites" (Shao, 2009, p. 13).

2.3.4 Uses and Gratifications of music streaming platforms

Similarly to what happened with the advent of MP3 technologies, the emergence of streaming platforms such as Spotify and Soundcloud have further reshaped how people consume audio media. As channels and formats multiply, it becomes crucial to understand how and why people listen to music in its various modes. Using a U&G perspective, Krause & Brown (2019) analyse people's use of different music formats and identify three main factors influencing the use of music streaming platforms, namely functional utility, discovery and playback diversity. Anbuhl (2018) explores a number of sociocultural practices connected to the use of Spotify and their underlying gratifications. The study revealed sociocultural practices centered on the themes of “social setting, listening mode, Spotify networks, and music collection” (p. 2), and found them closely connected to motivations of mobile listening, mood management, song selection - based on the features “search” and “shuffle” - and network building, concerning the practices of co-creating playlists, sharing music with friends and discovering new artists.

3. Methodology

In this section, the empirical aspect of the research will be discussed. First, the thesis methodology is outlined and justified. Then, it follows a description of the sampling process, operationalisation, interview design and data collection. Next, the analysis procedure is broken down. Finally, validity and reliability are discussed in relation to the study.

3.1 Overview and choice of methodology

For this thesis, qualitative methods were employed, reflecting a greater focus on understanding the problem in context. Notably, qualitative methods are indeed concerned with deepening the comprehension of the subject under investigation, rather than numerical representation (Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). According to Maxwell (1996), the goal of qualitative research is to provide detailed and informative data in order to investigate meanings, motivations, intentions, opinions, and perspectives, which relate to a broader universe of interactions, practices and phenomena that cannot be confined to the operationalization of variables.

A number of qualitative research methods exist, such as ethnographic observation, interviews, case study research, and focus groups. In particular, this study relies on data collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Moreover, information obtained through online sources such as radio websites and music streaming platforms supported the preparation of the interview guide and eventually the interview process with relevant stakeholders within the radio stations.

Qualitative interviews are an established method for assessing roles, intended as uses and practices, and motivations, intended as underlying factors guiding one's uses and practices. The main benefit of this approach is that it enables the exploration of meaning in context, by employing an open-ended, discovery-oriented procedure that helps the interviewer to examine the respondents' thoughts and experiences on a given topic in depth. The key feature of open-ended questions is that they are formulated for the respondent to elaborate on the issue (not as simple 'yes' or 'no' questions), enabling participants to answer in their own terms (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). By relying on a series of predefined open-ended questions, this strategy allows the interviewer to get what he or she seeks

through an interview while also allowing new details to arise from the conversation (Jamshed, 2014).

Although qualitative methods are more concerned with the exploration of meanings in context rather than numerical representation, this does not preclude their rigorous use in academic research. For this, insights from Grounded Theory were included in the methodology of this thesis. Grounded Theory offers indeed a set of strategies and techniques to conduct qualitative analysis in a rigorous and systematic manner. The approach was initially developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, in an attempt to consolidate a methodology of equal status to the predominant quantitative approaches of the time. The theory was then refined by Strauss and Corbin (1990).

The basic principles of Grounded Theory were employed in this study, namely inductive analysis, purposive sampling, sensitising concepts, coding and constant comparative analysis. Inductive analysis refers to how trends, themes and categories originate from the data through various processes of coding instead of being forced on it before data collection and analysis (Bowen, 2006). Purposive sampling is a technique for directing data collection and happens when participants and/or data sources are purposefully chosen by researchers based on the research question (Charmaz, 1996). Sensitising concepts can be considered as interpretative devices (Glaser, 1978) for a qualitative study: in other words, they spotlight particular aspects of the problem and in doing this, they offer guidelines for the research. They are background ideas that overall direct the research (Charmaz, 1996), providing ways of organising the empirical experience without being too specific. In fact, it is important to note that sensitising concepts are not hypotheses, as qualitative research, particularly grounded theory research, does not begin with predetermined assumptions. Instead, it comprises the researcher's effort to investigate, interpret and comprehend what is happening in the research setting (Bowen, 2006). After the data is collected, the analysis is performed through various stages of coding. Coding is a technique of analysis used to identify patterns, themes and categories in the data and it is divided into a number of iterative stages (Charmaz, 1996). The process of coding is based on the concept of constant comparative analysis. Constant comparative analysis is an analytical method employed in categories (or codes) generation which entails a continuous interplay between data collection and data analysis, as new data is constantly compared to data collected previously in the analysis process.

Lastly, in order to guarantee the rigor of the research, a clear outline of the study was produced. This passage is crucial to gain a thorough understanding of the critical steps to take before commencing the empirical part of the research. The development and execution of the study were based on the following stages derived from Grounded Theory: i) sampling process; ii) development of sensitising concept (or operationalisation); iii) data collection; and iv) data analysis, culminating in the formulation of the most relevant findings (Birks and Mills, 2015; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Although these phases are mentioned separately, it is important to note that the research process is “iterative and recursive” (Chun Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019, p. 3), rather than linear and unidirectional. Theory and data constantly interconnect and inform each other, unfolding a dynamic and cyclical, although rigorous, research process.

3.2 Sampling process

Interview participants were sampled from two Dutch independent online radio stations (*Operator Radio* and *Radio Tempo Nao Para*, or *TNP*) in order to explore contextual roles and motivation. The choice of the two stations is justified by the different sizes and magnitudes for what concerns both staff and programming, aiming to produce a more comprehensive range of answers. The choice also partially reflects a convenience model (Creswell, 1998), as the two stations were easily accessible by the researcher for geographical and cultural proximity.

Initially, four stations were contacted through relevant stakeholders and invited to participate in the study. Two of them - *Operator Radio* and *Radio Tempo Nao Para* - expressed interest and consented to participate in the study. The remaining stations were not included due to hectic schedules or disregard of the invitation. Overall the number of stations included in the sample is deemed satisfactory because of the diversification of interview participants. In fact, the research is more concerned with exploring distinct roles and motivations within online independent radio rather than comparing different stations. In the following paragraphs, the two stations are briefly described.

Operator Radio is an online independent station based in a major city in the south of the Netherlands, featuring a wide range of monthly and weekly shows. Streaming from a shipping container, Operator’s multifaceted programming includes live shows and music sets, partnerships with cultural institutions, video content, events, workshops, and

conversations with relevant guests. Its global listenership allowed the station to grow over the years, helping its financing with various funding initiatives. Operator Radio spread its music and vision through its official website and app, music streaming platforms such as SoundCloud, MixCloud and Youtube, as well as social media sites. Their stated goals are to promote culture and support the local DJ community.

Radio Tempo Nao Para (TNP) is an online independent station based in a major city in the north of The Netherlands, focused on electronic and world music. The three founders have set up the station in 2018, started as a gift between friends. To date, the station features several resident DJs and a number of occasional collaborators, including visual artists, videographers and podcasts guests. The station streams its content via its official website, the platforms SoundCloud and Spotify, as well as being active on social media sites. Its programming includes monthly and weekly shows and a weekly podcast addressing scientific topics, called Talk That Science. Moreover, they organise various activities and events revolving around different forms of art, such as music, film, visual art and design. Their stated mission revolves around the promotion of world music and inclusiveness.

Within the two stations, ten subunits were selected for qualitative interviews. Participants recruitment relied on purposive sampling. As noted in Robinson (2014), purposive sampling is based on the researcher's a-priori conceptual view of the subject being investigated, for which they believe specific groups to have a special or significant viewpoint on the phenomena in question, thus their inclusion in the study should be assured. In this case, radio producers are subdivided into three main categories, and representatives of each category have been included in the sample.

This theoretical categorization illustrates various levels of engagement with the station's creation, development and maintenance. The first ladder of engagement involves the consumption of radio's content such as live and stored music streams, talk programming, blog articles, interviews, and more. Moreover, it includes active participation on music sharing and social media platforms, where interaction happens by sharing, liking and commenting, taking part in Facebook groups, participating in funding campaigns, etc. At a second level, DJs, artists, podcasters and other categories collaborate with the station's growth and development by offering their creative work in exchange for visibility or financial compensation. The third layer concerns actors such as the founders and curators of the station, who deal with content management directly and are responsible for the station's

identity and brand. The three identified categories are labelled Engaged Consumers, Collaborators and Creators. These categories are treated as conceptual guidelines, but they are also expected to be hybrid and overlap with each other.

Furthermore, participants' engagement as Engaged Consumers, Collaborators and Creators is not limited to the two stations taken into considerations, but expand towards different online stations based in the Netherlands and abroad. In fact, almost all participants show to have a background - as professionals or as listeners - with other online independent stations. Some exhibit this engagement currently. This allows for greater generalization of findings, resulting in a targeted and in-depth study of online independent radio.

Participants were partially recruited by directly contacting them via email or social media sites, and partially by prior interviewee referrals ("snowball sampling", Goodman, 1961). A total of 22 stakeholders were contacted to participate in the study. Ten replied affirmatively, ten completely ignored the first invitation and two responded by explaining that they were unable to participate due to a shortage of time. In Appendix (A) is included a table showing some aspects of the ten respondents included in the sample. It is important to note that, while participants were granted anonymity, the decision to display the names of the two stations was taken in agreement with the legal representative entities, i.e. the two co-founders/directors interviewed, who expressly agreed that the two stations could be identified in this thesis.

3.3 Operationalisation and interview design

The operationalisation phase identifies a number of sensitising concepts, fundamental for the development of the research and the emerging of relevant findings. In particular, sensitising concepts are employed to structure interview questions and develop topic lists in the interview design phase. According to Bowen (2006), sensitising concepts are theoretical concepts that provide guidance in the investigation, bringing focus on critical aspects of the research. However, as Blumer (1954) clarifies, sensitizing concepts lack the specificity of the empirical event studied, and therefore do not allow the researcher to navigate straight to the circumstance and its specific features. Instead, they provide the researcher with a general frame of direction when exploring such empirical situations. It is important to remember that sensitising concepts can be reviewed, modified, expanded and optimised during the research. It is also critical to remain open to the emergence of new

relevant concepts, as “emergent concepts may supplement or displace [established concepts] altogether” (Padgett, 2004, p. 301 as quoted in Bowen, 2006).

In my study, I rely on two sensitising concepts, namely Roles and Motivations, which in turn are based on a number of theoretical sub categorisations. The interview design includes questions aimed to measure each of these categories, but do not exclude the emergence of new categories, nor limit the possibilities to modify, extend, improve and merge old categories.

3.3.1 Roles

In the context of this thesis, roles are defined as functions, contributions and practices that specific actors manifest within independent online radio stations. Roles are explored through concrete practices exercised by individuals in the context of the stations, which translates into relationships with the radio. Ultimately, in fact, roles are analysed in terms of engagement with the organisation and participation in its developing processes. Given the community-oriented nature of the medium, together with the emergence of a new participatory culture based on the progressive involvement of the listener in the creation process, roles are explored as liquid and hybrid concepts which complement and overlap with each other. However, different levels of engagement are expected prior conducting interviews, based on the background data collected online. Higher levels of engagement involve an active role in the creation, development and maintenance of the radio station, and concerns actors such as the founders and directors of the station. Right below in the engagement hierarchy are the DJs, artists and podcasters who, regularly or occasionally, operate in the framework of the radio station, despite not holding direct responsibility for the station’s identity. Finally, consumers of radio content have lower levels of participation; however, they also exhibit a certain degree of contribution to the station’s growth by interacting with radio’s content and actors on social media, creating groups around the station and taking part in funding initiatives.

3.3.2 Motivations

Motivations are described as the underlying factors guiding one’s usage of and participation in the radio station. Motivations are explored through a Uses & Gratifications perspective and studied as a combination of psychological and contextual factors.

Motivation's components include, for example, needs for understanding and knowledge acquisition, need for relationships and connection; search for pleasant and aesthetic experiences, as well as detachment from the routine; attachment and identification with the station's values and vision; self-development, self-actualisation and self-promotion needs, as well as financial needs. Engaged consumers could participate in radio's content and initiatives for community building motives, as well as for entertainment and knowledge acquisition. DJs and occasional contributors might work with the station for self-actualisation and self-promotion motives, but also for network possibilities and financial compensation. Lastly, radio creators may be driven by advocacy motives which can be related to self-expression and self-actualisation motives, but also by passion and entertainment. Moreover, we expect to find in all actors' motivations a strong social component, as they search for connection with like-minded individuals.

3.3.3 Interview design

Following the operationalisation phase, a number of guiding questions and subquestions were produced. A wide range of online sources were consulted in order to produce background information for the preparation of the topic list, including: stations websites and apps, artist personal pages on music streaming platforms and online music magazines, as well as radio content on various platforms and social media sites. This background data concerns interviewees' demographic information and professional background. Moreover, it entails the radio stations' story, culture, social presence and visibility. Overall, this data aims to complement and expand the data gathered through qualitative interviews.

It is important to note that the interview design is semi-structured, meaning the researcher has the possibility to invert, change or add new questions based on the interview direction, always keeping in mind the general structure and the research question. This semi-structured design allows to originate questions from previous responses, return to a specific topic if needed, concentrate on determining aspects of the issue or decide to skip others. The semi-structured interviews comprised four parts. Every part included three versions of questions based on the interviewee's level of engagement with the station. Version A targeted founders and directors, version B addressed collaborators, while version

C revolved around listeners' experience. The complete topic list can be found in Appendix (A).

The first part of the interview was about how interviewees got involved in the independent radio station and what they did enjoy about their involvement. This part collected data on the triggering events to initiate their engagement with the station and related motivations. After several warm-up questions, interviewees were asked questions about the start of their engagement with the station and what they liked about it (1, 2). The following section (3) contains questions related to the community, examining the group dimension of roles and the connection aspect within motivations. Section 4 aimed to further investigate participants' roles with queries about participants' engagement in the station's community, activities and processes. Subsequently, interviewees were asked a number of questions about financial matters (5). This part was designed to explore both creators' financial motivations and listeners' involvement in crowdfunding activities. Next, various questions were asked to further explore participants' motivations. They encompassed queries about knowledge (6) and participants' identification with the radio values (7). The following part of the interview (8) regarded participants' opinions about the station's future and - if applicable - their future direction as content producers. Finally, section 9 aimed to collect some demographic information about respondents (Age, Gender, Nationality).

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection relied on information obtained through qualitative interviews with ten relevant stakeholders in the context of two Dutch online radio stations. The interviewing process followed a systematic yet flexible approach. In fact, the interview structure followed the topic list as described in the previous section. However, the topic list is not meant to be a catalogue of questions, but rather it serves as a guide for covering certain aspects that are considered fundamental to answer the research question (Dearnley, 2005). As a consequence, the interviewer frequently follows the lead of the respondents, who are welcomed to deviate from the planned questions in order to bring attention to matters that he or she considers to be significant.

After agreeing to participate in the study, interview participants were given an overview of the study and interview process. Then, they were asked to provide their informed consent for research purposes (oral consent has been obtained for all participants).

A time and date for the interview was then arranged based on the availability of both parties. The interviews were conducted digitally, via the platform Zoom, over a period of 4 weeks ranging from 06/05/2021 to 23/05/2021. The length ranged from 41 minutes to one hour and 18 minutes. The average length was one hour and two minutes.

Data collection through interviews did not solely focus on spoken words, but included verbal and visual cues such as figures of speech and body language. To facilitate the gathering of such communicative cues, interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and supplemented by the interviewer with written remarks. Reported information included observations on both verbal and non-verbal signals, as well as keywords and immediate thoughts on the interview. Moreover, follow-up and probing questions were incorporated in the interview design, as part of active listening techniques to interpret responses effectively. As suggested in Guion, Diehl, & McDonald (2001), the interviewer ought to understand what is being said and should strive for “clarity and interpretation” throughout the interview (p. 201).

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out by using thematic content analysis with the support of the analytical software Atlas IT. In order to guarantee the credibility of the research, it is essential to develop a systematic flow of analysis. The analysis is based on the conceptual structure suggested by Boeije (2009), which consists of two main phases: (i) data segmentation into meaningful units and (ii) data reassembly into a cohesive whole (Boeije, 2009). This is achieved through various stages of coding.

As previously specified, coding refers to an analytical process used to identify relevant patterns and recurring categories in the data. According to Boeije (2009), coding is subdivided into three iterative phases, namely Open Coding, Axial Coding and Selective Coding. These stages are cyclical and recursive: in fact, based on the principle of constant comparative analysis, categories are generated through inductive processes, characterised by constant interplay between data collection and data analysis. During the whole course of the analysis, codes and categories are constantly compared to each other, and new data is evaluated in relation to data previously obtained. This allows to identify recurring themes, as well as discontinuities, within the data, with the objective to constantly optimise conceptually meaningful categories (Birks & Mills, 2015).

To begin with, the data (in this case, interview transcripts), is segmented into relevant units, which are coded. This phase, named Open Coding, resulted in the identification of 131 codes, or labelled segments of data, and was more concerned with breaking down and storing the data in order to subsequently link and relate segments (Boeije, 2009). After that, the codes are grouped into categories. In this stage, labelled Axial Coding, the primary categories and subcategories are identified. Some labels were combined, modified or removed. Others were connected to each other to enhance the model's level of abstraction (Boeije, 2009).

The Axial Coding phase resulted in the identification of 3 main categories, 8 subcategories and 12 sub-subcategories for what concerns Roles; and 5 categories and 11 subcategories in regard to motivations. The Axial coding tree is reported in Appendix (A). Lastly, the stage known as Selective Coding (Boeije, 2009), was completed, allowing to answer the RQ. This final phase identified 8 themes and 8 subthemes connected to Roles and Motivations within Online Independent Radio.

3.6 Reliability and validity

Reliability in qualitative research is defined as “the degree to which the findings of a study are independent of accidental circumstances of their production” (Kirk & Miller, in Silverman, 2011, p. 360). In the context of this thesis, reliability has been achieved by providing detailed and in-depth descriptions of the research process. In particular, the choice and assessment of the methodology employed in this thesis has been clarified in the first section of this chapter. Moreover, a detailed description of the practical steps (Sampling, Operationalisation and Interview Design, Data Collection and Data Analysis) has been provided. In-depth interviews have been recorded and transcribed (transcripts have been made available via a separate document), while the analysis procedure, carried out by means of thematic analysis, was built on the framework suggested in Boeije (2009) and has been supported by the analytical software Atlas.ti. Moreover, an overview of the interview participants and the interview topic list have been included in Appendix (A) for clarity.

Lastly, reliability is obtained through theoretical transparency, making the perspective of the researcher explicit. In fact, as much as we researchers endeavor to be meticulous and impartial, we recognize that perfection is an illusion as the entire act of researching is based on the researcher's viewpoint and interpretation (Silverman, 2011). In

this regard, as the researcher, I am willing to be open about my position as a 24-years-old Italian female student, pursuing a Master Degree in Media and Creative Industry, who occasionally interacts with online independent radio. It is crucial to keep in mind that, as a researcher, I am expected to take a series of decisions that define and influence my work, from picking a subject to sampling participants, thus it is impossible for me to remain completely detached and objective. The solution is to be openly reflexive about my position, acknowledging and justifying the decisions taken in the research process.

As regards validity in qualitative research, it is defined as “the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers” (Hammersley, 1990, in Silverman, 2011, p. 367). In the context of this thesis, validity is reached through the rigorous and systematic application of qualitative methodology, in particular, by means of inductive analysis, constant comparison analysis and deviant-case analysis. As previously explained, inductive analysis is a principle of Grounded Theory and refers to how the themes and categories emerge naturally from the data during the analysis process, without being forced on it. Analytic induction is based on the initial formulation of sensitising concepts that would inform the research, as well as expectations, originating from the literature and the knowledge of the field. Next, a small sample of data is analysed and the expectations are tested on it. Expectations are then adjusted if necessary. As the coding proceeds, new data is introduced, new codes and categories are produced, constantly compared, in a recursive and cyclical analysis process, until all the data fit the model produced (constant comparison analysis). The constant comparative method is employed to “describe the variation that is found within a certain phenomenon” (Boeije, 2009, p. 83) and thus implies active search of deviant cases, namely cases that do not fit expectations.

By applying such principles to this thesis methodology, validity is reached, allowing the findings to be “persuasive and plausible, reasonable and convincing” (Riessman in Silverman, 2011, p. 351).

4. Results

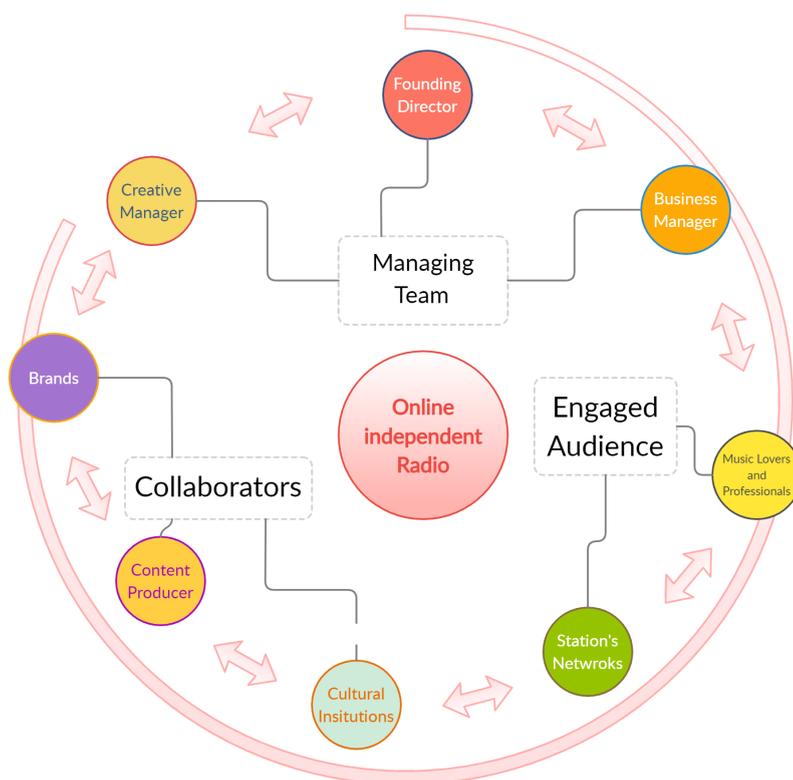
The findings are separated into two parts: First, the respondents' roles in the context of the station they are involved with are examined; second, their motivations to engage in online independent radio are explored.

4.1 Roles

In the context of this thesis, roles are defined as functions, contributions and practises that specific actors manifest within independent online radio stations. Roles are explored in terms of engagement with the organisation. Various factors come into play: involvement with the radio community, time and energy investment in the radio station activities and processes, as well as participation in the radio content in its different forms. Some roles can be defined as more dominant, as they regard more closely the creation and management of the radio station, while others concern the fruition of radio content and participation in its initiatives, despite also actively playing a part in the development and sustenance of the station. This trend is attributable to the emergence of a new participatory culture which has encouraged the progressive involvement of the listener in the creation process, thus redefining audience roles within radio.

Within the context of the stations analysed, roles have been defined based on online background information and data gathered through in-depth interviews. Three main categories of roles have been discerned: The Managing Team, The Collaborators and The Engaged Audience. The findings illustrate that, although distinct functions can be identified, such functions are not necessarily performed by a single individual in the context of online independent radio, nor do single individuals cover single functions. The fluidity of roles and levels of involvement is a recurring theme across the two organisations. However, despite this fluidity, the three groups of roles identified present an internal congruence, given the fact that more dominant roles, related to managerial functions, are often filled by the initial founders of the station, while support and contribution roles are exercised by individuals involved or interested in the creative industry or close to the people working within the stations. The partition of roles within online independent radio is illustrated in Image 1.

Image 1. Roles within online independent radio stations.



4.1.1 The Managing Team

The first category of roles concerns the management of the station and includes individuals with different skills, backgrounds, tasks and responsibilities within the station. In particular, it comprises the founding director(s) and a number of members executing creative and business functions. These roles have been categorised as Founding Director, Creative Manager, and Business Manager. It is important to notice that one role is not necessarily covered by one single person, nor does one person necessarily cover one single role. As previously specified, roles are hybrid and overlapping with each other, and this is particularly evident in the category Managing Team. The following sections will analyse these managing roles in-depth, providing an overview of related functions, responsibilities and actors covering them within the two radio stations.

Starting from the founding director, the level of engagement within this category is significantly high. In both stations, the director(s) are also (co-)founders of the station, denoting an elevated degree of attachment to the organisation as the next section about motivations will clarify. At Operator Radio, the role of director is covered by two individuals - the creative director and the business director. Both the directors were part of the founding team of the station, back in 2017, which was made of five people with diverse professional backgrounds. Interviewee 2 (Creative Director at Operator Radio, Male, 36, Dutch), defines himself as “creative director” of the station, however, when asked about his function in the context of the radio, he mentions technical set up and maintenance, which would not be typically connected to creative roles. On top of the technology, Interviewee 2 manages major partnerships with cultural institutions and festival brands, and he is in charge of the overall strategy of the station, together with other two team members.

On the other hand, Interviewee 1 (Male, 26, Dutch) defines himself as the only Director at Radio Tempo Nao Para (TNP), underlining at the same time the significance of his team’s support and efforts in managing the station. As he explains, the main responsibilities are effectively split between him and other two team members. These functions include determining the overall strategy, managing collaborations with artists, organisations and brands, as well as programming. In particular, Interviewee 1 stresses the importance of one team member, who will be soon added to the director board. Interestingly, the team member is not an original co-founder of the station, disputing the intrinsic involvement of the director role in the initial creation process.

Furthermore, while Interviewee 2 has previously worked in the context of online independent radio, hosting a periodical show at a former well-known Dutch community radio, Director at TNP does not have a professional background with radio, despite having musical experience as a DJ.

As regards the Creative Director role, relevant functions mainly include the programming and therefore the content selection and curation processes. At Operator Radio, we find a lead programmer and a second programmer, who also manages the promotion aspect. At Radio Tempo Nao Para, we find a different situation: as the director explains, “everybody does programming”, which revolves around specific themes. All team members have equal right and responsibility to add their input, resulting in a varied but thematised

composition. He compares the radio programming to a puzzle, where everybody can add their own piece, provided it fits with the bigger picture.

With respect to the Business Manager role, related functions are mainly operated by one member at Operator Radio, the Business Director, also part of the board. The member also directs the team of volunteers and interns who support the station. Moreover, a second member is said to manage the promotion aspect of the station, as well as the website. At TNP, the director of the station claims the same team member who is also going to join the director board is mainly responsible for financial matters. Furthermore, he manages the statistics, trends and data concerning the members of the organisation, aiming to prioritise diversity and inclusion within the station.

4.1.2 The Collaborators

The second main category of roles within online independent stations is represented by The Collaborators. The category includes different individuals and organisations, covering various functions in relation to the creation, development and sustenance of the station, without being directly involved in the management role. Engaging in collaborations with artists, brands, venues and cultural institutions is one of the core activities at independent online stations. The Collaborators comprises three kinds of entities: Brands, Cultural Institutions and Content Producers.

Starting from brands, collaborations often play a supporting role in the station development and maintenance. As the stations' directors clarify, engaging in partnerships with brands represent one of the main sources of income for the radio. Operator Radio regularly cooperates with brands: an example is the recent collaboration with a well-known retail and apparel brand, which allows the station to produce its own merchandise. Other examples include festival brands and venues renting the radio equipment and hiring the staff to stream content. In this context, the station's team is convoked for their expertise and technical skills in the field, denoting a high level of professionalisation. However, the director, referring to these projects as "commercial jobs", is hoping to reduce their number in the future, in order to give more space and visibility to the station brand.

Radio Tempo Nao Para, given its younger nature, has not yet engaged in collaborations with brands, however the director expresses the willingness to start sponsoring the products that are most used by the team, in order to boost the station income.

In general terms, collaborations with brands are viewed by directors in close correlation with the economic sustenance of the station. They are considered as necessary especially in the early stages of the radio station's existence, but also potentially harmful if happening too frequently, as they may tarnish the brand of the station, while leaving little time and energy for the production of original content.

The second category of collaborators is represented by Cultural Institutions. Operator Radio is particularly active in this context, having a long history of partnerships with museums in the city where it is based. These collaborations entail the organisation and curational process of live and streamed events taking part in the museums, and sometimes revolving around specific themes and exhibitions. Such events may include DJ sets, but also talks, as well as performative and visual arts. Notably, the creative director at Operator Radio shows to be especially proud of these partnerships, which have led the station to be recognised as “cultural elite” of the city, to be included in the civic cultural plan on a par with renowned museums, and to receive a consistent art grant by the municipality.

The third and most consistent category of collaborators is represented by the artists, DJs, producers and podcasters who regularly or occasionally produce content for the station. Within the sample, four respondents are regular collaborators with the stations, one is an occasional collaborator, and one is in the process of setting up a collaboration, whose nature is still unsure.

DJs and music professionals who periodically host their own shows at the stations are called Residents within online independent radio. This category is vital to the functioning of the station, as it really determines the content that will populate the station channels, shaping its identity. Choosing the right artists to collaborate with is a fundamental job, as director at Radio Tempo Nao Para notes, because they serve as a shopping window for the whole station, potentially attracting new artists and collaborations. Besides Residents, Content Producers also involve artists that are not collaborating with the station on a regular basis, but are engaging in occasional partnerships. Such artists can be DJs and music professionals, but also visual and performative artists. For example, TNP holds a weekly show where guest DJs have an opportunity to play. At the same time, they offer a space in their studio where visual artists can exhibit their works. Interviewee 5 (28, Female, English), passionate listener of the station, has applied to make use of that space to showcase her works of art.

Content producers generally show a high level of engagement with the station, at least at a conceptual level, although not being directly involved in its management. Some of them are currently only committed to one station, while others run several shows at multiple stations, both based in the Netherlands and abroad. In any case, all have had experience with other stations, determining familiarity with the medium per se, independent online radio, and the dynamics that take place within it. For example, Interview 6 (Resident at TNP, 30, Female, Mexican) is involved with numerous projects within online independent radio, which are not limited to Radio Tempo Nao Para, where she hosts a monthly, one-hour long show. In fact, on top of being a music curator and selector, she is a long time successful radio host, producing content for a number of radio stations based in major European cities, such as Berlin and London. A similar case is presented by Interviewee 3 (Resident at TNP, 41, Male, German) who currently hosts only one monthly, two-hour show at the station, but who has a residence background at a former well-known Dutch community radio. In such instances, the nature of the engagement is based on an inherent trust and interest in the medium itself, based on previous experiences. Especially when the collaboration is fresh, there is a tendency in respondents to refer to previous or contemporary engagements with independent online radio, sometimes using them as terms of comparison. The following quotes exemplify this tendency.

“My first show was in Berlin, at [a Berlin-based station]. They were really new when they asked me to join them. And it’s funny because now Radio Tempo Nao Para is like [a Berlin-based station] was at the time. When they invited me, they were in the same initial stages that Radio Tempo Nao Para is right now.” (Interviewee 6, Female, 30, Mexican)

“I haven’t met many people at the station. It’s not like you can hang out and have a few drinks and get to know each other. With [a former Dutch community radio], we were always hanging out because we had the yard, the record store... and if somebody was playing after you or before you, you would show up and you would hang out and connect through that way. Hopefully Radio Tempo nao Para will be exactly that, that you actually can hang out and you exchange vibes.” (Interviewee 3, Male, 41, German)

Another identified trend is that the engagement of content producers with the stations is almost never limited to the creation of content, but extends to a wider universe of shared values, and often reflects an identification with the mission of the radio station, leading producers to see their collaboration as a starting point for other ideas, projects and commitments. For instance, the involvement of Interviewee 3 with Radio Tempo nao Para is

not limited to the monthly show, but extends beyond, with an ongoing music collaboration with one member of the team. Similarly, Interviewee 5, who has applied for showcasing her works of art at NTP a studio, seems to be already concerned with the next steps in the collaboration:

“Hopefully, next week I’ll be exposing something. And after that, I want to organise a workshop with the station about drawing sounds... and maybe a pizza workshop, too, with live music!” (Interviewee 5, Female, 28, British)

As previously noted, this extended engagement is often justified by producers' identification with the broader mission and function of the medium in society. Interviewee 6, Resident at TNP, claims:

“I love doing my radio shows, especially because I am from Latin America and because I'm a woman. I feel that a lot of women have a lot of things to say and I feel like I can help on that. I feel I can represent a lot of groups, and I want to take this role of being a representative of Latin American music and of women selectors, and I think I can do that through radio.” (Interviewee 6, Female, 30, Mexican)

As producers relate their role within radio to the broader function of the medium, they reserve confidence for its future and stress its societal relevance. However, the answers show a diversity in how this conceptual role translates in their individual practices in the context of the stations. Many respondents, as noted before, mention projects and activities extending beyond their current collaboration with the radio. But in less frequent cases, interviewees present a disconnection from what they think radio's function should be in society and their individual contribution to the stations, which remains limited to the production of content. For example, Interviewee 4, Resident at Operator Radio, shows that it is integrated with the station's funding value to support emerging artists, and describes a number of ideas and projects to increase the impact of the radio in this sense. However, due to lack of communication with the managing team and a partial loss of enthusiasm given the length of the collaboration, he has not implemented them. In this case, we find a detachment between conceptual roles and their materialisation into individual practices. This leads Interviewee 6 to question the nature of his collaboration with Operator Radio:

“Personally, I wouldn't define the one with Operator Radio as a collaboration, because I think with collaboration there is more interaction and exchange, so there's more discussion about what you

want. They just let me do what I do and I also don't present anything that's maybe... different from what I usually do." (Interviewee 6, Male, 34, Dutch)

4.1.3 The Engaged Audience

Audience roles within online independent radio are highly fluid concepts, closely related to the other two categories of roles. As it emerges from the data, listeners of the two stations are in most cases involved with the music industries, and they might even collaborate with the station. In some cases, the audience is related to the founders or the artists performing at the stations, and their support to the station is justified by personal connections; in others, listeners got to know about the station through social media or personal networks, and are now closely involved in the radio community, activities and processes. Whatever the nature of the engagement is, listeners of online independent radio prove to be active contributors and supporters of the stations.

The Engaged Audience is divided into two subgroups: The Music Lovers and Professionals and The Station's Networks. The most prominent category of listeners is represented by the music lovers and professionals. All interviewees highlighted the role of radio in connecting people who love and practice music. For instance, Interviewee 9 (23, Male, Italian) is a DJ and producer deeply involved with the local DJ community. He is a listener of Operator Radio. His engagement with the station is strictly related to his profession as a DJ and producer, especially for what concerns the development of professional networks and the discovery of new content. Naturally, his passion for music makes the listening experience not only strategic, but also enjoyable.

The second subgroup of listeners concerns the radio station's networks. As previously noted, in several circumstances the audience is constituted by the radio team's personal connections. In this case, listeners support the station by various means. For example, Radio Tempo Nao Para has organised a crowdfunding campaign to help finance the equipment and the studio. Friends and connections of the radio members supported the initiative, including Interviewee 6 (27, Male, Italian), who defines himself as a close friend of the station's funding director. A second way to support the stations is actively engaging in networking activity, reaching out to artists for collaborations. In this sense, the station's networks may be seen as collaborators, supporting the notion of convergence between producer and consumer roles. It is relevant to note that this could also happen because of the

proximity and confidentiality they exhibit with the managing team or other relevant members of the station.

The last way these networks show support to the radio stations concerns the promotion of the station, by means of social media liking, commenting or sharing, as well as physical word of mouth. Interviewee 7 stresses his contribution in this sense:

“I try to bring people to their events and to share their names around. I also reshare their content on social media to increase their visibility.” (Interviewee 7, Male, 27, Italian)

Another interesting example is represented by Interviewee 5 (Listener of TNP, Female, 28, British), who discovered the station through personal connections that were in turn linked to the station. Since that first encounter, she has engaged actively with the radio content by religiously listening to their streams, as well as participating in their events and initiatives. Notably, she has recently applied for a collaboration, intending to showcase her artworks at the station studio.

These examples further highlight the fluidity of the audience roles within online independent radio, as roles blend both with each other and with the broader category of collaborators. They also support the theoretical claims at the base of this research, for which the emergence of a new participatory culture among consumers have redefined roles within online independent radio. As listeners exhibit a higher degree of contribution to the station’s growth by interacting with radio’s content on social media, creating communities around the station, participating as collaborators and taking part in funding initiatives, it becomes unclear where production ends and consumption begins (Bruns, 2006; Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013; Nieborg, Poell, Deuze, & Prenger, 2019).

4.2 Motivations

Motivations are defined as the underlying factors guiding one’s usage of and participation in the radio station. Motivations are explored through a Uses & Gratifications perspective as a combination of psychological and contextual factors, such as needs related to identity and purpose, as well as socio-cultural and environmental influences. While roles have been explored through interviews and supporting documentation, interviews are a particularly relevant tool in examining motivations, as they concern meaning-making practices among participants.

The findings illustrate that motivations guiding radio actors' behaviour are mainly intrinsic. Intrinsic motivations are defined as factors associated with one person's ethics and inner beliefs, as opposed to extrinsic motivations, which are described as external stimuli such as money compensation (Frey, 1997). This finding is coherent with the non-commercial orientation of independent online radio stations. In fact, as these are non-profit organisations, any generated income is reinvested in the organization to pursue its mission (Riccitelli, 2018). As a result, actors working within online independent radio are not motivated by the perspective of financial gain, but rather by the enjoyment of the job itself. Specifically, five main categories of motivations have been identified among participants: Connection, Cultural Knowledge, Entertainment, Local Interest and Professional Development. The following sections will analyse these categories in-depth.

4.2.1 Connection

The first category of motivations concerns the need and desire for connection. Connection is the most mentioned concept throughout the interviews, regardless of the interviewee's specific role. Interviewee 1, for example, Director and co-founder at TNP, explains that the idea to create a radio station is born from the desire to connect different people through music and events. He says:

"We created the radio to connect different people to what they love, music. I want to be a bridge between different age groups and ethnicities. For example, in our last event, we organised a program of DJ sets in a Turkish supermarket. We printed flyers in Dutch, Arabic and English as it was a very multicultural neighborhood, to attract as many nationalities as possible. We also caught the attention of older people that came to the store to do their groceries. They would stop to listen to the DJ playing and engage in conversations with other people. It was just amazing to see." (Interviewee 1, Male, 26, Dutch)

As it can be noted, Radio Tempo Nao Para is particularly oriented towards promoting interracial, inter-age and intercultural connections. Their efforts resemble the ones of early community radio stations, which in the last decades of 1900 helped local minorities find a voice, offering a platform for under-represented groups to express their diversity and playing a key role in the popularisation of underground music genres, such as beat music, among the broader public (Barlow, 1988; 1999; Correia, Vieira, & Aparicio, 2019; Rutten, 2001; Van der Hoeven, 2012).

Interviewee 6, Resident at TNP, confirms the station's intention to foster intercultural connections and the emergence of musical genres that are distant from Western traditions. She joined the station as she felt it could represent a meeting point for DJs playing her music style, focusing on Brazilian, South-, Central-American, and Caribbean sounds. She explains:

“What convinced me to join TNP is this feeling I have, that something is missing in our city. Like a base, a center for people playing music from Afro-Latin American roots. We are all over the place now. The station can be that place where we all connect with each other and form a network that’s a little more steady.” (Interviewee 6, Female, 30, Mexican)

On the other hand, Operator Radio does not exhibit the same inclination. Despite identifying the desire of building connections as one of the major motivations, Interviewee 2, Co-founder and Creative Director at Operator Radio, explains his focus lies on a specific professional and cultural group: the local DJ community. His main intention is to foster connections within this particular category, in order to promote professional networking and help local DJs to take off in their careers, but also to provide them with a support system. He says:

“We wanted to help local DJs connect with each other through our station. It’s a perfect spot to meet like-minded people that are into the same stuff as you are. Some great collaborations started from there, and people became even friends through the station. These things are really lovely to see.” (Interviewee 2, Male, 34, Dutch)

When asked about the importance of expanding the station's reach among different demographics and ethnicities, Interviewee 2 denies this as a core goal, affirming:

“Expanding our audience isn’t that important to me. It’s more important to me to reach the right people”.

Connections with like-minded professionals appear to be a major motive of engagement for Interviewee 3, Resident at TNP, who describes playing for the station as a way to connect with potential collaborators. He elaborates:

“Playing my music at TNP is like sending a message to people who vibe on that. It’s a way to reach people who can collaborate on this frequency. If someone really feels that will get in touch and say: ‘I hear what you do. And I like it. Let’s see what happens when we make it together’. It’s like sending a signal to aliens to meet someone from earth. Like, ‘Hey, we’re here. Come and play with us’.”
(Interviewee 3, Male, 41, German)

4.2.2 Cultural Knowledge

The second identified category of motives is Cultural Knowledge. It regards the acquisition and provision of knowledge in various sectors: music, visual arts, design, dance, heritage and museums. From a creator’s perspective, the station can be a platform to promote cultural knowledge among the audience. For example, Interviewee 1, Director at TNP, finds it important to dedicate specific web pages to foreign artists who collaborate with the station, in order to promote their music among the public. One of the main objectives of the station, in fact, is to introduce world music, or music originating by non-Western traditions, to a broader public. TNP also organises events concerning art forms other than music, such as film screenings and art exhibitions.

Operator Radio is very active in the promotion of culture at a local level. By collaborating with various museums and cultural institutions, they intend to take on an educational role, says the creative director. Their efforts allowed them to be included in the city's cultural plan, designed to promote cultural education, and to receive a substantial art grant by the local institutions.

From a listener's perspective, a motive of engagement with the stations is often the acquisition of cultural knowledge, especially for what concerns music. As Interviewee 5 clarifies, listening to Radio Tempo Nao Para has exposed her to music she could not have discovered in any other ways. She says:

“I really like this discovery aspect of online radio. Spotify, for example, is like an echo chamber: you are exposed to music that is likely to be already close to your tastes. So you don’t have an opportunity to discover new music. When I listen to TNP, I never know what to expect. I just tune in and discover new artists, mixes, and music.” (Interviewee 5, Female, 28, British)

This comparison with music streaming platforms represents an interesting finding, as it emerged among several participants and shows a diversity of opinions. Some respondents associate such platforms to the concept of online independent radio, according to expectations. In fact, a strong connection between online independent radio and the

emerging platforms environment has previously been suggested, as the emergence of platforms is seen to have significantly impacted the traditional standard of production, consumption and distribution within online independent radio, by introducing new practices such as podcasting and archiving shows on music streaming platforms.

On the other hand, other respondents view radio and music streaming platforms as separate entities responding to different functions, thus not recognising the platformised nature of online independent radio. The cultural knowledge aspect is a relevant factor of differentiation according to these respondents, who feel platforms such as Spotify work as “echo-chambers”, catering the existing tastes of the users rather than exposing them to music beyond their personal realm of listening (Pariser, 2011). In this context, online independent radio positions itself as a bridge between different genres, cultures and identities, by uncovering artists and musical genres that would not be found out within the infrastructures of music streaming platforms. Not only this viewpoint questions the hypothesized connection between platforms and online independent radio, but it also seems to contradict Krause1 & Brown (2019), discussed in the literature section, which identified discovery and content diversity as major factors influencing the use of music streaming services.

4.2.3 Entertainment

Entertainment is another major motivation to engage with online independent radio - starting from the founders, who are often passionate about music and enjoy getting together with like-minded people for entertainment purposes.

For instance, Interviewee 1 founded Radio Tempo Nao Para after receiving an usual birthday gift from his best friend: a cassette containing over two hours of music mixes and conversations among friends, a sort of personalised radio show. He enjoyed listening to the recording so much that he decided to initiate a radio station. He says:

“It was such a special gift. So after listening to it, I said to my friends: ‘why don’t we do this? I mean, doing radio. Because I enjoyed that. You very much enjoyed recording it and I very much enjoyed listening to it’.” (Interviewee 1, Male, 26, Dutch)

Likewise, Interviewee 2 describes the experience of running Operator Radio as fun and enjoyable, affirming: *“It’s about getting together with people, having drinks and enjoying quality music and podcasts”*.

Content producers are also driven by entertainment motives, recognising that gatherings and parties at the stations' as important factors for their engagement. For instance, Interviewee 6, resident at TNP explains that, of her experience with online radio, she particularly appreciates the dimension of togetherness. She explains that recording her show at the station is an opportunity for her to meet DJs playing before and after her, making new interesting encounters. These encounters would translate into drinks and pleasant conversations, and in some cases, into actual parties.

In a similar way, listeners find engaging with radio content and initiatives entertaining. Interviewee 5 enjoys listening to TNP music mixes while cooking pizza with her roommate, associating the station to fun moments. For Interviewee 7, also a listener of TNP, participating in radio events is an occasion to enjoy a night out listening to quality music in the company of good friends.

4.2.4 Local Interest

A third prominent category of motivations among radio actors is Local Interest, defined as attention and curiosity for the local community. Ranging from directors to listeners, all interviewees emphasised the local dimension as a determining factor to engage with online independent radio. Interviewee 2, creative director at Operator Radio, founded the station to help the local DJ community to emerge nationally and internationally. He says:

“For me it's the urge to promote the local artists, to show the world that a lot of cool stuff is happening here. You have a lot of festivals in the Netherlands, but in the past, not many people from our city got booked. Now they get booked more often, because promoters know our station and get in touch with us. For artists, being part of our station is a form of validation.” (Interviewee 2, Male, 34, Dutch)

Interviewee 6, Resident at TNP, particularly enjoys being part of a community radio station to get to know the local reality, having just moved to the city. Comparably, Interviewee 5, listener of TNP, referring to the station affirms:

“I really like that it’s local, that is based in the city. So when I listen to the mixes, I know that I’m listening to a local artist.”(Interviewee 5, Female, 28, British)

Interviewee 9 and 10, both listeners of Operator Radio, affirm that promotion of local art is a key component of online independent radio. In particular, Interviewee 10 (Female, 28, Italian) describes the station content as *“a crafted programming reflecting local art, to not just commercial music, but something more specific to the community”*.

The local dimension of online independent radio reflects early models of community radio, defined as small-scale radio initiatives mostly operated by local communities, which aimed to offer content that diverged from traditional radio programming (Bosch, 2014). The role of online independent radio in supporting the local community is widely recognised among participants and institutions. In the Netherlands, local governments are starting to turn their attention to this medium. For example, the former well-known Dutch community radio, mentioned by nine out of ten participants as the pioneer of online independent radio, has been operating for over ten years thanks to municipality concessions. In 2010, the municipality decided to acquire properties in a degraded neighborhood in order to combat crime and drug nuisance, turning buildings into creative spaces. Thanks to one of the initiatives, the former radio station was allocated a space in the district, from where it started streaming and hosting events. Supposed to last for just a few months, the station has been operating for over ten years, becoming a leading international platform for electronic music artists, launching hundreds of careers and collaborating with festivals, museums and other cultural partners all over the world. The station has set an example for upcoming projects and initiatives, leading local institutions to progressively acknowledge and support this medium. This is reflected in the case of Operator Radio, which has been inserted in the civic cultural plan aimed to support cultural education, receiving a subsidiary from the municipality.

4.2.5 Professional Development

Professional development represents a significant motivation for the roles of both Founding Directors and Content Producers. For directors’, creating a radio station is an opportunity to help DJs and artists grow their networks, acquire new skills and perfect their techniques in order to launch and elevate their careers. As previously noted, Interviewee 2, Creative Director at Operator Radio, aims to support the local DJ community by offering

them a platform to emerge nationally and internationally. He suggests several DJs became better at their profession by hosting a monthly show at the station. As they were required to select and play music periodically, their curation and presentation skills progressively improved. He adds:

“I am so proud when I see people who came to Operator Radio at the beginning of their careers, when they had just started making music, putting their tracks out, getting signed to labels, or getting jobs in the music industry. I feel we succeeded in getting people closer to their goals and their passion, working in the music industry or the creative industry in general.” (Interviewee 2, Male, 34, Dutch)

Interviewee 1 (Male, 26, Dutch), Director at TNP, is driven by similar stimuli. He states: *“We make radio for the artists. We feature them to give them a space, a platform. We want to help them gain visibility”*.

Content producers seem to acknowledge and appreciate the support received by the stations, highlighting professional development as a motivation to engage with them. Interviewee 4, resident at Operator Radio, defines radio as a great tool to improve his selection and presentation capabilities. He explains that, thanks to his show, he is forced to explore and perform new music on a monthly basis expanding his repertoire and refining his delivery skills. Interestingly, he describes this approach as “ego-centric” and “self-serving”.

Comparably, Interviewee 10, listener and guest artists at Operator Radio, started her experience with online radio with an internship. She recognises the crucial role that interning and later playing at online radio stations has played in her development as a DJ. She says:

“It was like being in school, pretty much. The moment that I started interning there I honestly didn't even know how a mixer works. I remember they gave me a little training because of course you have quite a responsibility, and my knowledge at that time was pretty much nothing. So I learned everything there, by observing the DJs coming and asking them for track titles. And I observed them while playing, while talking on the microphone, it was really four months of learning about radio hosting and streaming.” (Interviewee 10, Female, 28, Italian)

At the same time, Interviewee 6, Resident at TNP, notes her evolution as a professional radio host came with practice and the willingness to do better. She identifies self-improvement as a pillar of its professional identity, explaining:

“By hosting radio shows, I’m not so scared of the microphone anymore. But that requires continuous practice and self-evaluation. It means listening back to all my shows and taking notes. That’s not a problem for me because I really want to improve. When I care about something, I want to become better at it.” (Interviewee 6, Female, 30, Mexican)

Another component of professional development emerged among content producers is self-promotion. Four out of five content producers say the stations helped them reach broader audiences and establish themselves in the music scene. For instance, Interviewee 10, guest artist at Operator Radio, refers to her collaboration with online independent stations as an exchange: she produces content for free, and in exchange receives visibility. She seems to enjoy the absence of commercial relationships between radio stations and artists, explaining:

“If you have talent and passion, radio gives you the tools for really spreading your music quite far. It’s beautiful because it’s free, so there is not that type of money pressure between the artist and the radio itself. And this type of free exchange has made it possible for huge names to play in such settings, and for unknown artists to become huge names as well.” (Interviewee 10, Female, 28, Italian)

Notably, some respondents acknowledge online independent stations as necessary but not sufficient for fostering self-promotion. In fact, they list complementary activities - such as sharing their tracks on social media - among essential conditions for effective self-marketing. Interviewee 4, for example, referring to Operator Radio where he is resident, says:

“I think it’s a platform for you to grow as a DJ, but still, as a DJ, you need to put effort into writing posts and connect with people outside Operator Radio. When you already have a consistent network, they’ll start listening to your show.” (Interviewee 4, Male, 34, Dutch)

Similarly, Interviewee 3 and 6, both residents at TNP, stress the importance of social media for self-promotion practices, acknowledging that promoting their content on social media helps them get more engagement in their shows.

Some relevant observations can be made on these results. First of all, as noted before, actors operating within online independent radio are driven by intrinsic motivations, in alignment with the non-commercial nature of the medium. Second, the operating structure of these stations presents very high levels of engagement from the creators to the audience,

including a strong identification with the values and mission of the medium. This leads to a fluidity of roles in which everyone contributes, more or less actively, to the development of the radio stations. At the same time, motivations also show to be fluid and unevenly distributed among the different members of the analysed stations. Nevertheless, certain motivations emerge more frequently among specific roles, allowing some trends to be identified within the two stations. For example, Local Interest is mainly related to managing teams and listeners, while Professional Development appears to be particularly relevant for collaborators. Image 2 aims to present such correspondences between roles and motivations.

Table 2. Matching Roles and Motivations within online independent radio.

	Managing Team	Collaborators	Engaged Audience
Connection	x	x	
Cultural Knowledge	x		x
Entertainment	x		x
Local Interest	x	x	x
Professional Development	x	x	

As it can be noted from the image, the main differences are to be identified between collaborators and the engaged audience. In fact, connection seems to represent a significant factor of engagement for collaborators, mainly due to the possibility of professional networking. For the audience, it does not appear as relevant. This can be due to the fact that listeners do not engage with stations as creators and thus are not as interested in the opportunities of networking. For the same reason, professional development is mostly mentioned among collaborators. The audience shows to be more concerned with the prospect of discovering new music and acquiring knowledge through the radio. This finding is coherent with the underground and experimental nature of online independent radio, whose mission is to promote emerging artists and genres. Notably, the closeness to the local community is a strong common engagement factor across the three categories of roles. The local orientation of online independent radio resembles early models of community and pirate radio, and translator in various practices such as partnerships with local institutions, promotion of local artists, support to local minorities and disadvantaged categories, acquisition of public funding directed to the promotion of local art, and more.

5. Conclusion & discussion

In this section, the most relevant conclusions of the study are discussed to answer the overall question: *How can we understand roles and motivations within online independent radio stations?*

Online independent radio can be considered as an evolution of the old community radio model, deeply influenced by contemporary media trends such as platformisation and convergence. In particular, the study of roles sheds light on participative practices within online independent stations, linking the medium to the broader participatory mediascape where it is developing. Motivations, on the other hand, are important indicators of the medium's appeal, and direct us towards understanding online independent radio by identifying factors of engagement among radio actors. Motivations have been analysed through a Uses & Gratifications perspective in an attempt to identify why people actively participate in radio. In the following paragraphs, the most relevant findings will be summarised and discussed.

First, the results highlight that roles, defined as functions, contributions and practices that specific actors manifest within independent online radio stations, are fluid concepts within online independent radio stations. In fact, the operating structure of these organisations present very high levels of engagement among all roles, along with a strong identification with the values and mission of the medium. This leads all actors to contribute, more or less actively, to the development of the radio stations. This result confirms the converged and participative nature of online independent radio (Starkey, 2017), and is linked to previous research on convergence and participatory culture (Bruns, 2006; Deuze, 2007; Jenkins, 2006). As the boundaries between media producers and media consumers progressively fade, functions are no longer exclusive to single individuals, as might be the case in more traditional broadcasting settings.

Partially thanks to platformisation (Nieborg, Poell, & Deuze, 2019), which allows radio content to be present on a wide range of channels and increases significantly the interactivity of the medium, online independent stations can be considered as user-generated content (UGC) by contextualizing its production, distribution and consumption practices in

the broader emerging participatory culture and convergent mediascape. In fact, the emergence of platforms has allowed the stations to benefit from these infrastructures to deliver content of various types and formats: for example, they take advantage of music streaming platforms to store on demand-shows or they implement video content in the programming by making use of video streaming services. Moreover, social media have allowed users to actively engage with the medium by *liking, sharing, saving* and *commenting* the stations' content. As a consequence, the audience progressively assumes the role of producers (Deuze, 2007), further blurring the boundaries between production and consumption.

In spite of this convergence, roles within online independent radio can be distinguished into functions more closely related to the production side, and roles closer to the consumption side, although not intended as traditional audience roles. In particular, three main categories of roles have been identified: The Managing Team, The Collaborators and The Engaged Audience. Within the managing team, three roles have been discerned, namely the Founding Director, The Creative Manager and The Business Manager. It is important to note that these names have the only purpose to identify specific sets of functions, and do not imply that the such functions are covered by single individuals. In fact, the fluidity of roles manifests also in the fact that, especially among managerial functions, various actors may play different roles at the same time, and the same functions may be performed by more than one person. The managing team is mainly formed by individuals who participated in the initial founding process of the station, thus denoting a high level of attachment to the organisation. Creative roles mainly concern the programming and partnership management, while business roles regard finance management and trend analysis.

The Collaborators are in turn subdivided into Content Producers, Brands and Cultural Institutions. Collaborations with brands appear to be essential for the sustainability of the station, but not the priority, as they can compromise the production of original content and the credibility of the station. Collaborations with Cultural Institutions concern curatorial and programming services for cultural partners such as museums. Content Producers represent the most consistent body of collaborators within independent online radio, and it includes the so-called Residents (DJs hosting a show periodically at the station) and occasional contributors (DJs participating as guests in shows aimed at promoting emerging

artists, DJs invited by station's residents to take part in their shows, visual artists exposing temporarily their works at the stations studios, and so forth).

The Engaged Audience is constituted by The Music Lovers and Professionals and The Station's Networks. The first subgroup proves to be interested and involved in the radio stations due to their engagement in the music industry as professionals or amateurs. The second subgroup consists of people connected to the stations through various means: as friends of the creators, as friends of the collaborators, or even as indirect networks.

As regards the Motivations, defined as the underlying factors guiding one's usage of and participation in the radio stations, the findings illustrate a strong connection between community radio and online independent radio. In fact, actors are mainly intrinsically motivated by the desire to connect with local communities and to engage with content that diverges from that of traditional broadcasters, showing a correspondence with the characteristics of community and pirate models.

Five main categories of motivations were identified, namely: Connection, Cultural Knowledge, Entertainment, Local Interest and Professional Development. Most of the motivations appear to be intrinsic, meaning they are associated with one person's ethics and inner beliefs, as opposed to extrinsic motivations, which are described as external stimuli such as money compensation (Frey, 1997). This finding is coherent with the non-commercial nature of online independent radio. As a result, the economic motive has not been identified as a determining factor of engagement with the stations. In fact, producers and collaborators work at a zero-wage, showing not to be interested in financial gain. On a limited number of occasions, the economic aspect is mentioned by the Founding Directors, in relation to the sustainability of the stations. The participants express the need and desire to receive private and public funding in the form of donations, investments from sponsors and government subsidiaries. However, this aspiration is only driven by the necessity to provide some sort of income for the stations in order to grant their economic sustainability. In fact, as these are non-profit organisations, all revenues are reinvested in the stations, in line with their objectives.

Despite their overall intrinsic nature, some motivations are related to professional actualisation and self-promotion. Thus, they can be considered closer to the realm of extrinsic motives - even though they are not directly connected to financial gain. This is especially the case of Professional Development, which appears frequently among content

producers. Respondents mention using their shows at the stations as a possibility to improve their selection and delivery skills. Moreover, the credibility of the stations' name, along with their networks, has granted producers several professional opportunities.

In relation to this, it is relevant to note that within online independent radio we do not find a clear correspondence between specific set of roles (or levels of engagement), and determined sets of motivations, contrary to what suggested in Shao (2009). In fact, motivations show to be fluidly distributed among radio actors, although some might appear more frequently among particular roles. For example, as noted before, Professional Development is mainly mentioned among content producers. On the other hand, Cultural Knowledge is often quoted by listeners, especially with regard to the discovery of alternative music genres and emerging artists.

Notably, motivations such as discovery and diversity of content are also connected to previous research on U&G of music streaming platform (Krause & Brown, 2019), although not all participants agree on the comparability of the two media, defining such platforms as "echo-chambers".

Drawing from these conclusions, this thesis contributes to existing literature in three ways. First, it advances radio research. In fact, as previously noted, there is a shortage of literature about radio and, in particular, about online independent radio. This thesis explores an emerging model of radio by contextualising it in the current mediascape. Second, this thesis contributes to the theories about convergence, participatory culture and user-generated content. In this context, online independent radio is analysed as a form of user-generated content due to its highly participatory traits and the progressive convergence between users and producers. Thus, the study contributes to the body of research about new participatory practices. Moreover, it analyses the effects of platformisation on the medium, connecting it to increased levels of engagement among audiences. Lastly, this study contributes to Uses & Gratifications research by adopting a U&G approach to analyse motivations to engage with the medium. Findings about motivations provide additional insights into the converged nature of online independent radio, by linking the medium to older models of radio and emerging music formats.

For what concerns limitations, despite being conducted in a meticulous manner and offering new interesting insights, this study presents two main drawbacks. First, while the sample size is considered adequate, a more diverse coverage of online independent stations

with respect to geographical provenance could have allowed a broader comparison of roles and motivations across different cities and countries. Second, the digital nature of this research must be taken into consideration. In fact, at the time of this study, the Covid-19 pandemic is shaking the world at its core, critically hitting all sectors of the economy and society, including academic research. Key methods and techniques of qualitative research have been greatly impacted, as scholars are encountering major difficulties in gathering data from observations, interviews and focus groups due to the social distancing measures in place. The methodology of this study is no exception, as interviews have been conducted digitally through the platform Zoom. As noted in Saumure and Given (2008), virtual research holds many advantages such as enabling researchers to gather participants across the world; however, Internet-based interactions may limit the ability of the researcher to understand non-verbal communication, making data collection and interpretation more complicated (Saumure & Given, 2008). This is especially true in the case of semi-structured interviews, as this method is highly dependent on the collection of non-verbal cues.

Therefore, this thesis can be seen as a starting point for researchers to further investigate online independent radio in light of these findings and limitations. Future research should comprise deeper exploration of radio practices and processes through fieldwork (if allowed by Covid-19 measures), as well as the inclusion of international entities in the sample.

Moreover, this thesis is also a starting point for institutions in The Netherlands and all around the world to recognise the potential of online independent radio in promoting culture, local heritage and artists. Independent online stations have the power to form online and physical communities, to shape people's attitudes and beliefs towards various forms of art, to connect different social and cultural groups and to help local artists emerge and be recognised internationally. It is time to acknowledge the struggle for these stations to survive without a steady form of income, but also the utmost value of their non-commercial orientation and hence the need for policies to support their development.

Finally, the study may also provide actionable insights for online independent stations about innovative ways to sustain themselves. In fact, the identified fluidity of roles, a product of the new platformised, participatory media environment, can help broadcasters to exploit the new interactive possibilities offered by platforms, instead of seeing them as opposed to the medium, in order to increase audience engagement through various means.

In fact, since listeners are mostly music professionals or amateurs, their contribution could be further implemented in the programming of the stations, stimulating for example the production of user-generated content through new formats, or using social media features such as surveys to investigate audience tastes and expectations. In this regard, the motivations identified also provide insights on what people engaging in online independent radio are expecting from the medium, leading broadcasters to focus on determined aspects of the programming rather than others.

The most evident conclusion to this thesis is the enduring nature of radio, which proves to be a dynamic and adaptable medium in the age of convergence. Studying a medium with a rich and intriguing past, a dynamic present and a promising future allows to further explore and problematise its development, as well as provide a set of future possibilities (Starkey, 2017). This study offers insights into the nature of contemporary models of radio and aims to stimulate interest in the medium often defined as 'forgotten', 'secondary' and 'invisible'. While we declare it dead, radio is silently evolving, adapting, experimenting. It is time to acknowledge radio's rebirth, reconsidering its enviable potential in academia.

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Appendix A

A.1 Overview of interview participants

The following table illustrates the identifying characteristics of interview respondents.

Table A.1 Overview of Interview Participants

Participant ID	Station Name	Role	Gender	Nationality	Place of residence	Age
1	Radio Tempo Nao Para	Co-founder, Director	M	Dutch	The Netherlands	26
2	Operator Radio	Co-founder, Creative Director	M	Dutch	The Netherlands	34
3	Radio Tempo Nao Para	Resident DJ (monthly, 2 hours show)	M	German	The Netherlands	41
4	Operator Radio	Resident DJ (monthly, variable length)	M	Dutch	The Netherlands	34
5	Radio Tempo Nao Para	Listener, applicant collaborator	F	English	The Netherlands	28
6	Radio Tempo Nao Para	Resident DJ (monthly, 1 hour show)	F	Mexican	The Netherlands	30
7	Radio Tempo Nao Para	Listener, Crowdfunding supporter	M	Italian	The Netherlands	26
8	Radio Tempo Nao Para	Podcaster	F	Dutch	The Netherlands	24
9	Operator Radio	Listener	M	Italian	The Netherlands	23
10	Operator Radio	Listener, Guest Artist	F	Italian	The Netherlands	28

A.2 Interview topic list

The following interview design contains alternative sets of questions for each topic, to be used based on the role of the interviewee.

Intro

Components:

- Thank you
- My name
- Purpose
- Confidentiality
- Duration
- How interview will be conducted
- Opportunity for questions
- Consent

1) How it started

A)

- Thinking about your experience with the station, could you describe how it all started?
- To date the radio has grown a lot. Could you describe your radio in the frame of today?
Could you give me a general view of the content you produce and distribute?
- Tell me more about your previous experiences. Was that your first experience with online radio?

B)

- Could you tell me a bit more about the type of content you produce?
- Thinking about your collaboration with (station name), how did it started?
- I am curious about your previous experiences and whether you have worked with other online stations before.

C)

- Tell me a bit about the content you listen to (music, podcasts, etc.)
- Could you tell me a bit about how you got to know (station name) and when you start connecting with it?

2) What do you enjoy about it?

A)

- Tell me a bit about what made you start with the station, what attracted you to making radio in the first place?
- What about the things you enjoy now, what makes you continue with this experience?

B)

- Tell me more about why you choose to collaborate with this station.
- (If regular contribution) What makes you continue working for the station, what do you enjoy about it?

C)

- Tell me a bit about what made you start listening to (station name), what did you enjoy at first about it?
- Tell me more about other channels you use to listen to your music or your podcasts. How is online radio different from these other platforms?
- Thinking about the music and content selection of (station name), what do you like the most about it?

3) Community

A)

- Working at the radio, you must meet a lot of people. Can you tell me a bit more about these encounters and relationships?
- (station name) has a large and active community. Can you tell me more about your role in this community?

B)

- Can you tell me a little bit more about the people you meet in (station name), and maybe the connection you have with them?
- (Station name) has a large and active community. Could you describe the ways you feel part of it?

C)

- (Station name) has a large and active community. How do you feel part of it?
- Tell me more about the people you connected with. What made you develop these connections?

4) Engagement

A)

- Could you give me a general view of your current responsibilities within the station?

- Thinking about the radio content, it's very rich and varied. Can you tell me more about the creation process? How do you make decisions, how do you develop ideas?
- Thinking about your content distribution, could you tell me a bit more about the platforms and channels you use?
- Listeners nowadays are not passive receivers, they interact with the radio in many ways. How do you value and encourage participation in the radio content, initiatives and events?
- Thinking about digital platforms, they also offer you the possibility to get to know about your audience. How do you use these and other tools to gain insights about your audience?

B)

- Can you give me a general view of the content you produce for (station name)?
- How would you describe your creative process when producing content?
- Thinking about your collaboration with (station name), could you describe your creative process on these occasions?

C)

- (station name) is all but a traditional radio station. On top of the programming, they offer live events/ workshops and other initiatives. Can you describe to me in which of these ways you interact with the station?
- What about social media, what are your thoughts about the radio content? How do you interact with the station's social pages?

5) Financial matters

A)

- Running a radio station can also be expensive. How do you acquire the resources to sustain the development of the station?
- Can you tell me a bit more about funding campaigns? Could you describe the way your listeners have helped financing the station?

B)

- Can you tell me a bit how you usually get compensated for your creative work?
- Thinking in the context of the radio, could you describe how the collaboration unfolds, in terms of compensation?
- On the other hand, can you tell me ways you contributed financially to the radio? Why did you choose to do that?

C)

- Independent radio stations often use listener fundings to finance the campaigns. If you ever participated in that, could you tell me a bit about your experience?

- What did you make donate to the station?

6) Knowledge

A)

- Could you tell me a bit more about the knowledge and skills you need to make radio and specifically to run an online station?
- Could you describe your learning process? How do you continue to learn? How do you ask for feedback?

B)

- Could you tell me a bit about the skills and knowledge you need to have as an artist/content producer?
- Thinking about the context of the radio, how do you exchange these skills and knowledge among artists?

C)

- If you listen to talk programming, what are your thoughts on the topics addressed in (stations name) podcasts and talk programming?
- What are your thoughts about workshops and similar initiatives? How was your experience with those if you ever participated?

7) Values

A)

- Could you describe to me (station name) values?
- How do you aim to make an impact with your radio?

B) / C)

- (Station name) are described as (.....). What are your thoughts on (stations name) values?
- Tell me a bit more about how these values resonate with you.

8) Towards the future

A)

- Tell me more about the plans for the radio future. What are the opportunities? What are the challenges?

B)

- What about your plans for the future, what is the direction you would like to take as an artist?
- And do you have some exciting content/work coming up?

C)

- Let's talk about the future. How would you like to see the station grow? Which content would you like to see on it?

9) Demographics

- age
- nationality
- education
- gender

Closing

Components:

- Additional comments
- Next steps
- Thank you

A.3 Axial Coding Tree

Image A.3: Axial Coding Tree of Roles and Motivations within Online Independent Radio.

