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Specialized Radio Broadcasting in Algeria:Assessing Performance and Technological Challenges through the Holy Quran and Cultural Radios

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Abstract:

This research paper is concerned the experience of specialized radio stations in Algeria through selected models, namely the Algerian Cultural Radio, the Holy Qur'an Radio. It seeks to shed light on the circumstances surrounding the emergence and development of these stations, as well as the major challenges they have faced and the prospects that lie ahead in light of modern technological transformations in the fields of communication and media. Moreover, the study aims to reveal the pivotal roles these stations play in enriching the national media landscape and their ability to keep pace with the diverse expectations of the Algerian audience. Through their distinctive and purposeful content, these stations contribute to strengthening cultural identity and promoting social values within a rapidly evolving media environment.

Keywords: Specialazed radio; Specialized media; Technology; Communication.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Radio is considered one of the oldest media outlets known in Algeria. It has long expressed the identity, existence, and culture of the Algerian nation, maintaining its position in the media landscape by overcoming various social, political, and even technological challenges, all in pursuit of providing purposeful and distinctive media content. Radio institutions, in their different forms and orientations, represent the medium closest to individuals, having become an integral part of their daily lives. Consequently, a strong relationship has developed between radio and its audience through its diverse functions informing, entertaining, and educating. This diversity has strengthened individuals' right to access information.

In this context, Algerian radio has built a broad popular base by authentically reflecting the aspirations and realities of its listeners. All its practices aim to achieve a set of well-defined objectives, similar to those pursued by specialized radio stations. Specialized or thematic radio broadcasting in Algeria emerged during the exceptional and difficult circumstances of the 1990s—a period marked by security and political instability and significant social change. During this time, a religious radio channel dedicated to Islamic affairs and doctrine was launched: Radio Quran Karim in 1991, recognized as Algeria's first specialized radio station. Another station, the Cultural Radio, was established in 1995, focusing on cultural matters and related themes.

Both stations contributed to promoting and reinforcing moral and behavioral principles at that time, each with its own programming structure and tailored content. With the advent of technological progress and the rise of new media, it became essential for both Radio Quran Karim and the Cultural Radio to adapt in order to develop and produce creative, specialized content, while preserving their identity and ensuring their future. This evolution requires media professionals—journalists and broadcasters alike—to understand the ongoing transformations in the media landscape, particularly with the emergence of artificial intelligence and its applications, which many media institutions now rely upon for news production and data analysis.

As a result, both stations face new technological challenges amid rapid developments in technology and communication. Therefore, this study seeks to understand the nature of these challenges and to explore the prospects and future of Radio Quran Karim and the Cultural Radio in light of technological and media advancement, through the following research problem:

What are the main obstacles that thematic radio stations (Radio Quran Karim and the Cultural Radio) faced during their early establishment?

And what technological challenges do they currently encounter as specialized media outlets amid rapid developments?

2. Research Objectives

1-To define and introduce specialized radio stations in Algeria (Radio Quran Karim and the Cultural Radio) as pioneering experiences in thematic media.

2-To identify the circumstances and challenges surrounding the establishment of these specialized radio stations (Radio Quran Karim and the Cultural Radio).

3-To explore the main future prospects of specialized radio stations (Radio Quran Karim and the Cultural Radio) in Algeria in light of technological challenges.

4-To examine the ability of specialized radio stations (Radio Quran Karim and the Cultural Radio) to adapt to modern technologies in the production of their media content.

3. Significance of the Study

1-This study seeks to link specialized radio broadcasting with modern communication technologies, as the latter have become an integral part of journalistic performance. Mastery of these technologies has become a key skill that specialized media professionals must possess. Moreover, Radio Quran Karim and the Cultural Radio are among the specialized stations that attract considerable attention from the intellectual elite, due to the nature of their content specialized, in-depth programming aimed at a discerning audience.

2-The study also highlights how both stations (Radio Quran Karim and the Cultural Radio) have responded to the requirements of specialized radio work, particularly in adapting to technological and professional transformations in the field of media and communication

4. Definition of Concepts

4.1 Specialized Radio Stations

4.1.1 Terminological Definition

Specialized radio stations are those that rely on the continuous and periodic broadcasting of audio information in order to achieve the fundamental objectives of society. They focus on various fields such as the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah, sports, economy, culture, art, and others.(Al-dab,a, A,2011)

4.1.2 Operational Definition

This type of radio station is characterized by its focus on delivering specialized media content within a specific field. In the context of this study, the term refers to radio stations that specialize in addressing and presenting religious content related to the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet,

jurisprudence, and similar topics, as broadcast by Radio Quran Karim. It also includes the Cultural Radio, which focuses on cultural aspects such as art, theater, and music.

4.2 Specialized Media

4.2.1 Terminological Definition

Specialized media is defined as a type of media disseminated through various channels print, audio, or visual that focuses on specific aspects of human knowledge. It is presented by specialized journalists who share common professional characteristics, with the aim of reaching a defined and specialized audience.(Hamdan,2020)

It is also defined as the process of addressing events and phenomena within a specific field of daily life such as health, military affairs, politics, culture, or religion—conducted by professionally trained and academically qualified media personnel.(Dahmar,2015)

4.2.2 Operational Definition

In this study, specialized media refers to a form of media that focuses on specific topics and content directed toward a particular audience, and managed by professionally qualified journalists within the same area of specialization. More specifically, in the context of this research, specialized media denotes thematic radio broadcasting concerned with religion and Islamic creed, as represented by Radio Quran Karim, while the Cultural Radio specializes in all matters related to cultural activities and expression.

4.3 Communication Technology

4.3.1 Terminological Definition

Communication technology refers to a set of technological tools and materials, including computers and the Internet, which encompass websites, blogs, and email, as well as live broadcasting devices (radio, television, and online streaming). It also includes audio and video recording media and satellite systems.(Technologies de l’information et de la communication,2024)

It can also be defined as the range of capabilities, techniques, and tools employed to produce specific content and convey it through the communication process—after being collected, formulated, and presented—via various audio, written, or visual media channels.(Al-far.j,2014)

4.3.2 Operational Definition

In this study, communication technology refers to all the available tools, techniques, and media used in carrying out different radio operations such as production and broadcasting, with the aim of delivering media content. This involves the processes of gathering, filtering, and formulating information, followed by its retransmission to a defined audience through the use of computers and the Internet.

5. The Importance of Specialized Media

The role of the media is one of the most significant in the lives of all nations, and specialized media, in particular, has a strong impact on the progress of any society, as well as on shaping the culture, thought, and awareness of its individuals in a precise and accurate manner. For this reason, countries around the world are increasingly moving toward specialized media, driven by the evolution of modern life and the accompanying technological, scientific, and cognitive developments.

Consequently, various media institutions have intensified their efforts, mobilized their capacities, and employed modern communication technologies to produce specialized media content aimed at specific segments of the audience who share similar interests, ages, specializations, and educational or cultural levels.

The importance of specialized media can be summarized as follows:

1-It provides specialized and accurate knowledge, thereby contributing to the enhancement of individuals' critical thinking and intellectual development.

2-It fosters an interactive relationship between the medium and its audience.

3-Its significance lies in engaging specialists and professionals from various fields and disciplines to deliver public service to society.

4-It contributes to meeting the diverse tastes and interests of the audience, striving to reach them through the production of content that stimulates their curiosity.

5-It employs specialized media professionals who are skilled in using clear dialogue and adapting their communication style according to the characteristics of each medium.(al dab,a,2011.p15)

6. The Algerian Radio – From Establishing Its Existence to the Path of Specialization

Radio broadcasting in Algeria emerged at the same time as in France, due to the colonial factor. Initially, it was intended solely to serve the European population residing in Algeria and

had no connection to the realities or events occurring on Algerian soil. Subsequently, the French administration established a council composed of six members, equally divided between Europeans and Algerians.(Madi,2021-2022)

After, Algeria gained its independence and full sovereignty in July 1962, Algerian workers decided to lower the French flag from the headquarters of radio and television and raise the Algerian flag in its place. The technicians and journalists of the institution took up the challenge, facing numerous difficulties to ensure the continuity of broadcasting, marking the first stage in the history of Algerian radio.

The second stage consisted of the establishment of radio broadcasting before 1986. At that time, radio was merely a branch of television and was known as the Algerian Radio and Television Corporation, without full authority or broad coverage. Later, the foundation of the National Radio Institution was laid through the restructuring of the media sector into four independent entities:

-The National Radio Broadcasting Corporation.

-The National Television Corporation.

-The National Radio and Television Transmission Corporation.

-The National Audiovisual Production Corporation.

The third and final stage was the creation of the Public Establishment of National Radio Broadcasting, which became an autonomous institution with administrative and financial independence, operating as an industrial and commercial entity dedicated to serving the public interest. This transformation was made official under Executive Decree (No. 91-108).(Khiri,2019)

Since then, Algerian Radio has continuously worked to diversify its programming and expand its broadcasting network, resulting in 48 regional radio stations and four specialized radio channels.

7. Radio Quran Karim as the First Specialized Radio Station in Algeria

Radio Quran Karim is considered the first thematic radio channel in Algeria and a true platform for specialized media in the country. Its first broadcast was launched in July 1991, a decision that came amid the unstable security conditions that characterized Algeria during the 1990s.

At the beginning, its programs mainly consisted of Qur'anic recitations, introductions to notable religious figures, and discussions of certain jurisprudential rulings, among other limited topics—reflecting the scarcity of available content at that time. All of these programs were pre-recorded.

Initially, the station's broadcasting schedule was irregular in terms of timing. From its establishment until it achieved stability, it eventually adopted a fixed schedule of 10 hours of daily broadcasting, divided into two main periods:

-From **00:00** to **02:00** a.m., considered the early morning period.

-From **05:00** a.m. to **01:00** p.m., representing the main daytime period.

Additionally, two hours of broadcasting were allocated to the Sahel African countries, from 05:00 to 07:00 a.m., with a rebroadcast of the same content during the night.(Ramdan,2020)

A series of adjustments to the broadcasting duration took place from 1962 to 2014, eventually extending the total airtime to 13 hours per day.

7.1 Programming Structure of Radio Quran Karim

The station's programming network varies throughout the year—between the regular, summer, and Ramadan schedules—in alignment with its media policy and strategic objectives. The programming is organized around several main thematic pillars:

-The Qur'anic Segment:

This includes all content related to the Holy Qur'an—its recitation, interpretation, and rulings. Examples include programs such as "The Sequential Recitation" (Al-Khatmah Al-Muratabah), which features daily Qur'anic readings; "The Qur'an and Life", which discusses the practical application of Qur'anic teachings in daily life; and "Religion Between the Questioner and the Scholar", which addresses citizens' legal and religious inquiries.

-The Sunnah and Jurisprudence Segment:

This focuses on the life and noble biography of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as well as various forms of worship. These programs are generally directed at a broad audience. Examples include "As Though We Were with Him" (Ka'annana Ma'ah).

-The Social Programs Segment:

This includes programs dealing with family, historical, cultural, and youth-related issues, such as "Voice of Youth", "Civilizational Landmarks", and "Family and Education".

-The Guidance and Awareness Segment:



These are programs designed to guide individuals and direct them toward a balanced and righteous path in their daily lives according to sound Islamic principles. Examples include "Councils of Light" and "Man Is but His Legacy".

-The News Segment:

This covers recent events and news, both local and international, keeping the audience informed of current developments.

Radio Quran Karim employs clear and accessible Arabic in all its programs, complemented by specialized media language used by its professional staff, consistent with its identity as a thematic and specialized radio station.

8. The Cultural Radio as the Second Type of Specialized Media in Algeria

The Cultural Radio was established in late 1994, but its official broadcast began on February 1, 1995. It is considered the second specialized radio station in Algeria, following Radio Quran Karim, and emerged under similar circumstances during the "Black Decade," a period marked by political and security instability.

At its inception, the station's broadcasting time was limited to four hours per day, and its journalistic staff was extremely modest—barely countable on the fingers of one hand.(Ben sghir,2015-2016)

According to researchers, the Cultural Radio often sought assistance from external contributors such as writers, intellectuals, and poets to help produce its programs, which focused on literature, art, history, and other culturally related subjects.

The station made continuous efforts to highlight Algerian culture, showcasing its diversity and richness across the national territory, at a time when cultural life was nearly absent due to the long-lasting effects of colonialism and the turmoil of the 1990s.

Regarding its broadcast duration, it initially aired four hours per day, later increasing to six hours. Its transmission originally covered Algiers and its surrounding areas, eventually extending to the southern provinces. The Cultural Radio also collaborated with local radio stations, broadcasting its programs on the same frequencies after those local stations concluded their daily programming—specifically after 5:00 p.m.(Foughali,2006-2007)

8.1 The Programming Structure of the Cultural Radio

The Cultural Radio is committed to carefully and precisely selecting its programs in alignment with its core objectives. It focuses on providing meaningful, intellectually rich, and culturally

refined content. Its programs vary between talk shows, reports, and documentaries. Below is an overview of some of its key programs:

-"Interrogating a Document" and "Documents" – Programs primarily concerned with historical records and archival documents that chronicle various events in Algeria's history across different periods. These documents are analyzed and interpreted by researchers and academics specializing in the field.

-"Sites" and "Our Heritage, Our Identity" – Programs that explore Algeria's numerous archaeological landmarks and sites, many of which date back to prehistoric times. These programs adopt a touristic and field-based approach, featuring interviews with researchers and archaeologists to shed light on the Algerian cultural legacy.

-"The Medal Bearer" and "Promising Pens" – Intellectual and cultural programs; the first honors distinguished Algerian scholars and figures in science and knowledge by awarding them the Algerian Scholar Medal, while the second highlights the creative experiences of young poets and writers, encouraging them to excel and contribute to literary and artistic innovation.

-"Guardians of Memory" and "The Intellectuals' Session" – Programs that host and honor figures who have contributed to preserving Algeria's popular cultural heritage, while also engaging in discussions on cultural issues and topics relevant to the Algerian context.

-"Clapboard" – A program devoted to the seventh art, covering film festivals, cinematic movements, and the work of filmmakers.

-"The Beautiful Ones" – A program dedicated to women who have succeeded in various fields and left a meaningful impact on society through their achievements.

-"My Stories with…" – A program that follows the creative journeys of artists and intellectuals influenced by major figures, exploring the dynamics of inspiration and mutual influence.

In addition to these, the station airs a variety of other programs such as "Lords of the Sea," "Talk of Ideas," "Lines in Culture," "An Impression After a Glance," "Up Close," and many others, including news programs addressing national and international affairs.

Based on the range of its content, the Cultural Radio's programming can be classified into historical, cultural, intellectual, women's, youth, and scientific programs. It is noteworthy that the station employs Modern Standard Arabic in all its broadcasts, as it targets a specialized and elite audience, aiming to ensure clear comprehension of its media message.

9. Challenges and Prospects of Specialized Algerian Radio Stations (Cultural Radio and Radio of the Holy Qur'an) in the Context of Modern Communication Technologies

Before addressing the technological challenges and future prospects of specialized radio stations in Algeria, it is necessary to first discuss modern communication technologies and their role in developing and facilitating various radio operations. These technologies have profoundly transformed journalistic and media practices, beginning with the shift from analog broadcasting systems to digital transmission, which greatly contributed to the expansion and renewal of radio services in ways that better align with audience expectations.

One of the most significant outcomes of communication technologies has been the emergence of the Internet, which has reshaped audience listening habits, extending both broadcasting hours and listening durations. Consequently, radio institutions have diversified their programming to keep pace with contemporary developments and to cater to the evolving interests of listeners.

Among the Algerian institutions that have embraced these technologies are the specialized radio stations, notably Radio of the Holy Qur'an. This station has implemented effective strategies for integrating communication technologies into the production of its content and into its overall broadcasting operations. These efforts include the enhancement of sound quality and performance both considered persuasive elements in radio communication. The station also employs streaming technologies via the Internet by maintaining an official website designed to fulfill the religious needs of its audience. Moreover, journalists utilize live visual broadcasting in programs, supplementing content with popular links, while the website offers an accessible audio archive. All these efforts are aimed at providing a public service that integrates modern communication technologies with the station's mission to instill Islamic values in a contemporary and specialized manner. This reflects the dedication of the station's management to portraying Islam and Algerian society according to their authentic principles.

Similarly, the Cultural Radio has adopted a parallel approach as another specialized station serving a distinct audience segment. Since its inception, it has focused on Algerian cultural affairs and played a pioneering role in promoting national culture and revitalizing cultural awareness among the public—bridging both traditional and modern aspects. It also opened interactive spaces for listeners to express their cultural interests and perspectives through talk shows and specialized programs, characterized by the careful selection of language and content appropriate to the cultural domain. The station remains committed to preserving and promoting Algeria's civilizational heritage and cultural legacy.

As for the aspirations of these specialized stations, an interview conducted by the International Radio with **Mohamed Boughali**, Director General of Algerian Radio, revealed that

their primary objectives are to expand broadcasting coverage and diversify programming networks. From this statement, it can be observed that specialized media in Algeria still exhibit limited ambition, focusing mainly on renewing program grids or extending broadcast reach. However, such goals appear modest in the context of globalization, given the emergence of specialized satellite channels and digital platforms that now attract vast and diverse audiences.(Ben sghir,2023)

10. An Evaluative Perspective on Specialized Radio Broadcasting (Cultural Radio and Radio of the Holy Qur'an) in Algeria

It is evident that the experience of specialized media in Algeria remains relatively recent when compared to several international radio institutions that have successfully established themselves in this field. The delayed development of thematic media in Algeria can be attributed to a number of factors, among which the following are most significant:

-Lack of specialized human resources: The absence of adequately trained professionals in the field of specialized media has limited the ability of Algerian radio institutions to develop distinctive and high-quality programming.

-Instability in the audiovisual sector: Since the enactment of the 2014 law regulating audiovisual activity, the sector has experienced persistent uncertainty, leading to a noticeable decline in professionalism and performance standards.

-Restrictive licensing conditions: The licensing and accreditation procedures remain largely theoretical, as they have not been effectively implemented in practice. The authority to grant broadcasting licenses continues to rest with the Ministry of Communication rather than with the independent regulatory authority, which has hindered sectoral development.

-Limited resources and inadequate equipment: Both Cultural Radio and Radio of the Holy Qur'an have faced major challenges related to insufficient financial and technical means. Journalists often work with very basic tools, which has negatively affected the quality of technical operations such as production, directing, and editing. This lack of resources has also delayed the stations' broader recognition and audience engagement.

-Weak investment and infrastructure: The lack of investment in the media sector and the fragility of its infrastructure continue to pose serious obstacles to progress. Moreover, constraints on journalistic freedom and the persistence of restrictive policies have further impeded the growth of specialized broadcasting in Algeria.

In summary, while Algeria's specialized radio experience—represented by Cultural Radio and Radio of the Holy Qur'an—reflects a commendable effort toward thematic broadcasting, it remains constrained by structural, institutional, and professional limitations that must be addressed to ensure sustainable development in the modern media landscape.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research paper has demonstrated that specialized radio broadcasting in Algeria emerged as a response to the fluctuating socio-political circumstances of its time. The establishment of specialized radio stations became a necessity to create new communicative spaces within Algerian society, particularly as the world was experiencing a major media and technological revolution that redefined the global media landscape toward greater specialization. This evolution also reflected the need to meet audience interests and preferences more effectively.

The study concludes that both Radio of the Holy Qur'an and the Cultural Radio employ the Arabic language in producing their content while maintaining a commitment to specialized media language appropriate to their respective domains. These stations were born out of unstable security and social contexts that Algeria experienced during that period. The findings reveal that Radio of the Holy Qur'an has succeeded in preserving and promoting Islamic values and countering negative social phenomena through its religious programming, while Cultural Radio has played a crucial role in reviving cultural awareness and highlighting Algeria's cultural identity and heritage.

Moreover, both stations have shown consistency in integrating modern communication technologies while maintaining their specialized orientations. They have sought to provide a genuine public service characterized by precise, in-depth, and specialized information using various technological tools. However, within the rapidly evolving digital environment, it is essential to further develop and innovate specialized content in alignment with emerging media trends. This includes adopting artificial intelligence applications, which have proven effective in streamlining several journalistic processes—such as news preparation, periodic updates, and content formatting according to journalistic genres.

Therefore, it becomes imperative for both Radio of the Holy Qur'an and Cultural Radio to invest in training programs that empower their journalists to creatively employ these technologies as supportive tools in radio production. Such initiatives would enhance innovation, professionalism, and adaptability, enabling them to meet the growing challenges of the contemporary media landscape.

12. Findings

Based on the analysis presented in this research paper, the following key findings can be summarized:

*Both Radio of the Holy Qur'an and the Cultural Radio use Standard Arabic and adopt a specialized media language characterized by clarity and stylistic consistency that aligns with their respective audiences' interests.

*Specialized media in Algeria have contributed to reviving moral values and strengthening Algeria's cultural identity during a period marked by stagnation across several societal dimensions.

*Both stations — Radio of the Holy Qur'an and Cultural Radio — were established as a result of specific security and social circumstances that shaped Algeria's media landscape.

*Each station has successfully adapted to modern communication technologies while maintaining its specialized focus: the former on religious affairs, and the latter on cultural matters.

13.Recommendations

In light of these findings, the study proposes the following recommendations:

*Develop multilingual programming, including in foreign languages such as English, to enhance the international presence of both stations and foster partnerships with international broadcasters for program exchange and cross-cultural communication. Modern communication technologies have erased traditional barriers, allowing for greater cultural interaction and the dissemination of Islamic values in the face of opposing ideological currents.

*Provide continuous training and professional development for journalists and staff at both Radio of the Holy Qur'an and Cultural Radio to strengthen their competencies in utilizing modern communication technologies, thereby improving the technical and creative aspects of radio production.

*Diversify program grids by introducing more analytically and critically oriented content while maintaining each station's core identity and values — particularly for Radio of the Holy Qur'an, which should continue to reflect Islamic principles in a contemporary and engaging manner.

*Maximize the use of digital communication technologies, such as developing dedicated websites and interactive online platforms that complement and extend the content of each station.

This would create dynamic spaces for audience engagement and foster broader cultural and religious dialogue.

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