

Radio: the medium that best copes in crises. Listening habits, consumption, and perception of radio listeners during the lockdown by the Covid-19

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Abstract

Radio is the medium best adapted to crises. This has been demonstrated throughout the history of Spain, both in the 1981 coup d'état attempt and in the terrorist attacks of March 11, 2004. The question that arises then is if in the situation of lockdown suffered by the Spanish population due to the Covid-19 pandemic radio is also playing an important role. This study answers this question through a survey answered by 560 radio listeners during the lockdown. The research has focused on knowing the listening habits, radio consumption, and the perception that these listeners have of the medium in this crisis. The data indicate that the respondents have changed their listening habits and have increased their medium consumption. During the lockdown, they are listening to the radio mostly in the living room, bedroom, and kitchen while cleaning or cooking. They are also consuming more hours of radio, more stations (of different ideological positions), and more shows. For these listeners, radio is positioned as the medium that is best covering information about the coronavirus and the one that they consider most credible, the closest, that most stimulates the imagination, that reduces loneliness, and is the most distracting. Overall, the results of this study allow us to conclude that the radio is once again playing a leading role in the coronavirus crisis, as it has occurred throughout the history of Spain.

Keywords

Radio; Crisis situations; Health crisis; Covid-19; Coronavirus; Pandemics; Listening habits; Media consumption; Audiences; Credibility; Fairness; Unbiased; Closeness; Companionship; Spain.

1. Introduction

Radio has always played a leading role in crises (Carey, 2003; Spence *et al.*, 2009; Rodero; Pérez-Maíllo; Tamarit, 2009). On the *World Radio Day 2016*, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said,

"In times of crisis and emergency, radio can be a lifeline. For people in shattered societies, or caught in catastrophe, or desperately seeking news, radio brings lifesaving information."

This has been true in many global disasters. Radio's technical simplicity allows immediate response to events and disasters, but also the trust that citizens have in the medium, as the most credible, and the fact that it is the medium that

accompanies them, makes it an ideal source to deal with a crisis. For this reason, radio has played a critical role in the main crises that Spain has experienced: the floods in Seville in 1961 or in Vallès in 1962; the coup d'état attempt in 1981; and the Madrid terrorist attacks of March 11, 2004.

During March and April 2020, Spain experienced a lockdown caused by the global Covid-19 pandemic, a crisis like never before on most people's lifetimes. Since the Spanish Government declared a state of alarm on March 14, 2020, many citizens have spent weeks without being able to leave their homes. It is, therefore, again, a great moment to examine what role radio is playing in this coronavirus crisis. This is the aim of this study. To this end, a survey has been carried out on 560 radio listeners on their listening habits, consumption, and the perception they have of the medium during their lockdown by Covid-19. Before presenting the results of the survey, we analyze the role of radio in crises.

2. Radio in crises

During emergencies, there is a general increase in the media audience that in Spain can be verified by consulting the *EGM (Estudio General de Medios)* data. Citizens have an immediate need to receive information and find out what is happening and how it may affect them. This demand for information generates a higher consumption of news and, therefore, an increase in audience. For example, in the March 11, 2004, terrorist attacks, radio registered one of its historical maximums, exceeding 60% of the audience *EGM*. Similarly, during the coronavirus crisis, several studies have shown an increase in the consumption of various media, especially television, but also radio. *Havas Media Group (2020)* has researched this aspect and confirmed that television is the medium where most people get information, followed by the Internet and radio (in the case of listeners older than 40). The *Reuters Institute study (Nielsen et al., 2020)* found that, in Spain, the Internet is in the top position for collecting information on the pandemic, followed by television. Radio appears in the last place behind social networks and the newspapers. Another study, by the media agency *Glocally (2020)*, has shown an increase in television consumption of 26% during March. This same study points to a rise in online radio of 23%, although this percentage includes audio formats such as podcasts and audiobooks. *EGM* has also verified an increase in the number of weekly radio listeners, by about 3%, especially in news radio, for the three first months of 2020. Therefore, as always in crises, people increase their consumption of information to keep up to date on what is happening. In this case, television is the medium that has benefited the most, for unlike other crises, citizens were not able to go out to the streets, and that is a factor that plays in favor of this medium. Moreover, television is the people's reference for both information and entertainment, so this source adds up. On the other hand, radio tends to be consumed on the move, mostly at home, but also at work and while driving to and from work and is especially limited to getting the news. So, in this case, radio has had a strong competitor, television, a circumstance that has not occurred to such an extent in other conflictive situations. When the crisis does not prevent mobility or work, radio takes advantage over television or the newspapers, as some studies have shown (**Carey, 2003**). In any case, during crises, audiences tend to focus mainly on traditional media –newspapers, radio, and television (**Hornmoen; Backholm, 2018**) and, among them, especially on the latter two (**Spence et al., 2009**). But in adverse contexts, radio can offer several advantages over television (**Rodero; Pérez-Maíllo; Tamarit, 2009; Rodero, 2011**). Some of the most studied are that radio is the most universal medium with high penetration in all countries, that radio is a technically very simple medium (**Spence et al., 2009**), and that radio is a medium that can be consumed at any time of the day or night and listened to anywhere, even on the move (**Savage; Spence, 2014**). For these reasons, radio has played a leading role in disasters where no other medium has been able to cover what was happening. However, in addition to these advantages that help to understand the vital role of radio in crises, there are two more that are particularly important in difficult times –the credibility of the medium and the psychological influence it exerts on listeners. We dedicate the following sections to these aspects.

During the lockdown, people listened to the radio mostly in the living room, bedroom, and kitchen while cleaning or cooking

3. The credibility of radio

Credibility can be defined as the trust that a person or source garners. It represents one of the essential features in the audience's perception of a medium. If people consider a medium to be credible, they are more likely to be exposed to its contents, and these contents will have more significant influence (**Meyer, 2004; Ojedeji, 2010; Calvo-Porrá; Martínez-Fernández; Juanatey-Boga, 2014**). Therefore, the public tends to regard the media they consume most as the most credible (**Shaw, 1973; El-Nawawy, 2006; Roses; Farias-Batlle, 2012**). Despite this central idea that links exposure to the medium with credibility, some authors have shown that this sometimes does not happen and that the audience also gets information from media that they do not consider reliable, such as television (**Tsfati; Capella, 2010**). Other studies have also found that credibility is related to the affective dimension when choosing a medium (**Rimmer; Weaver, 1987**) and is conditioned by the level of education or socioeconomic status of the audience (**Westley; Severin, 1964; Roses; Farias-Batlle, 2012**). There is also evidence that the economic context can affect media credibility. According to the study by **Köhler and Otto (2018)**, the last economic crisis (2009-2015) produced a significant drop in media confidence in countries that were most affected, such as Spain.

For the past several years, radio has been considered the most credible medium, although we should not forget that this was not always the case. Newspapers occupied that position for a while, and then it was television (**Powell; Ibelema,**

2000). In Spain, **Diezhandino** (2007) surveyed at a Spanish university and found that 60% thought that the newspapers was the most credible medium, followed by radio (26%), television (11%), and the Internet (8%). In contrast, studies by **Farias-Batlle** and **Roses** (2008) placed TV as the most credible medium. In any case, in recent years, radio has remained the medium that citizens trust the most. The latest data from *Eurobarometer 2018* (2017) in Europe confirms this trend. The level of confidence in radio reaches almost 60% in Europe compared to 51% for television and 47% for the newspapers. This is the highest percentage recorded since 2009. The Eurobarometer also provides data for Spain, where the radio is the most credible medium for 52% of citizens, followed by the newspapers (40%), television (36%), and the Internet (24%). The latest study by the *European Broadcasting Union* (2019) confirms that radio is the medium most trusted by European citizens (59%), followed by television, the Internet, and social networks. In Spain, the most recent *Havas Media Group* survey (2020), conducted during the coronavirus crisis, once again confirms this fact. On a scale of 1 to 7, citizens trust mostly on the radio (5.3), followed by television (5.2), newspapers (5.1), Internet (4.1), and social networks (3.5).

Despite this data, the credibility of media has declined over the years. In the United States, this downward trend in media confidence began to be noticed as early as the 1980s (**Jones**, 2004). This can be seen in the fact that the most trusted medium, radio, has only a maximum of 60% in Europe, 50% in Spain and is closely followed by television. In the *Havas Media Group* study (2020), there is practically no difference between radio, television, and the newspapers. The three remain at levels of five on a scale of seven. This means that radio should not lower its guard for maintaining this position.

4. The psychological impact of radio

One of the most important qualities of radio companion is its ability to accompany people, and the feeling of closeness listeners feel toward the medium. It is the “radio company,” a characteristic that many listeners highlight as one of the main ones when they answer why they like the medium (**Rodero**, 2011). Both aspects are part of its attraction (**Rubin; Step**, 2000). Listening to the voice on the radio generates the sensation of being accompanied, of not being alone (**Rodero**, 2018). As the Spanish journalist **Gabilondo** (2020) states, radio is “like a second voice in life.” This phenomenon is known as the perception of social presence (**Koh et al.**, 2007). The audience has the feeling of being with other people, in the presence of others, even if they are only represented by the voices heard on the radio. Therefore, the medium has an enormous potential to reduce loneliness. Lonely people find company and distraction on the radio. In fact, listeners can develop a powerful sense of bonding with the radio speaker they usually listen to (**Perse; Courtright**, 1993). Radio is therefore conceived as a very personal medium, which speaks to you directly. This phenomenon is known as the illusion of intimacy (**Horton; Wohl**, 1956). The audience experiences a feeling of closeness to the presenters or broadcasters that causes an illusion of intimacy, a sense of being present, and being able to establish a conversation with them.

The other great quality of radio is the ability to stimulate the listeners’ imagination. As some studies have shown (**Rodero**, 2012), radio is the medium that creates more mental images in the audience’s mind. In the absence of an image, listeners must imagine in their minds what they are listening. They imagine both the speaker’s image and the content of the message (**Rodero**, 2020). Consequently, the mental process generated by listening is very rich.

In short, the psychological closeness that radio achieves with listeners and its power to create mental images provides many benefits, including a significant therapeutic advantage (**Cortés-Fuentes; Correyero-Ruiz**, 2017) and a more intense and profound listeners’ cognitive processing (**Rodero**, 2012).

Having characterized radio in crises and its primary qualities, we now focus on the survey conducted for this study.

5. Goals and Methodology

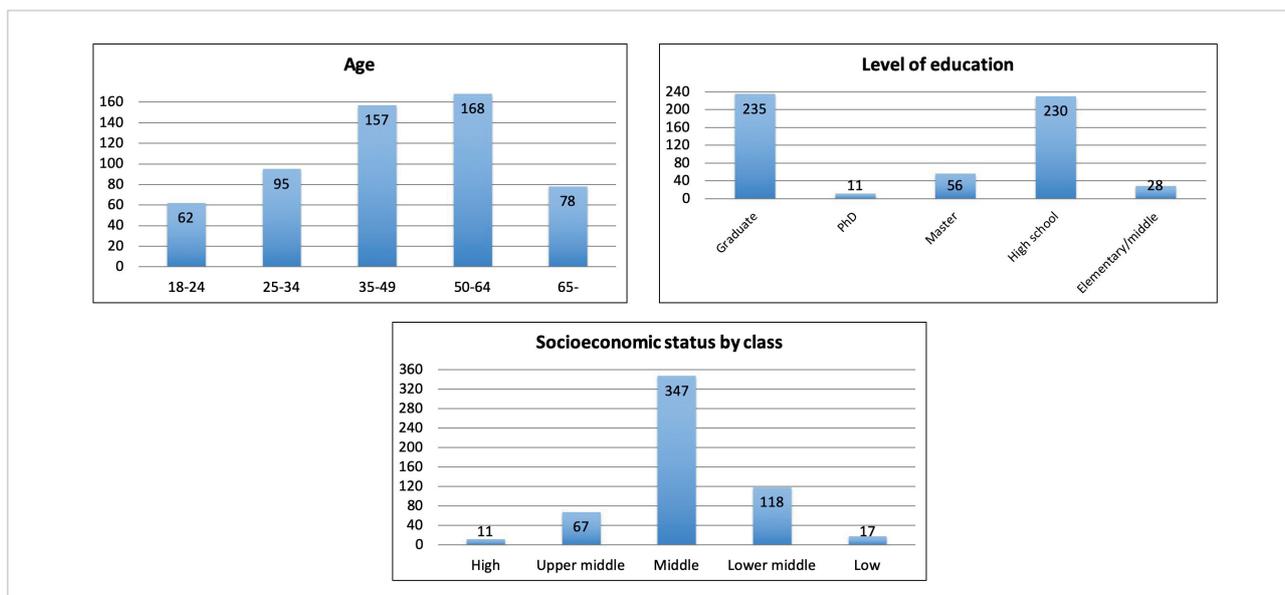
5.1. Goals

The main objective of this research is to analyze listening habits, radio consumption, and the perception that listeners have of the medium during the lockdown by the Covid-19 crisis. The following are the specific objectives:

- To know the role that the radio is playing during the Covid-19 crisis
- To describe listening habits during the lockdown
- To establish whether there is a difference in radio consumption before and during the crisis
- To determine the credibility of radio compared to other media
- To characterize the psychological impact of radio during the pandemic

5.2. Radio listeners survey

The survey applied for this study consists of a set of questions divided into five different blocks of information. The first block focuses on knowing the consumption habits of radio listeners before and during the lockdown; the second block is dedicated to the consumption of the radio in the two periods; the third block to the role of radio in information, entertainment and advertising; the fourth block to the credibility of radio, and the fifth block to the perception of the medium. The survey was conducted over two weeks (April 13-19 and April 20-26, 2020) through a panel of *Qualtrics*.



Graphic 1. Sample demographics

5.3. Sample

The selection of the sample was made using a stratified panel following the data of the audience profile offered by the *EGM (Estudio General de Medios)* in Spain. The total sample was 560 people, all radio listeners, with a gender balance of 278 (49.6%) men and 282 (50.4%) women. The majority of participants were between 50 and 64 years of age (30%) followed by those between 35 and 49 (28%), 25-34 (17%), over 65 (14%), and between 18 and 24 (11%). All participants live in Spain, and Spanish is their native language. The majority, 96%, have Spanish nationality. Only 4% have another one, in this order: Venezuelan, German, Brazilian, French, Italian, Colombian, Portuguese, Philippine, Romanian, Dutch, and Polish. All the Spanish regions were represented in the sample.

Most of the respondents are graduates (42%), followed by High School (41%), master studies (10%), elementary/middle education (5%), and Ph.D. (2%). Following the socioeconomic distribution of the Spanish population and the radio audience, most of the participants belong to the middle class (62%), lower-middle-class (21%) and upper-middle-class (12%), while there are only 2% of the upper class and 3% of the lower class. Most of the respondents are working or retired, and only 1% are unemployed.

Of the total sample, 53% usually listen to both traditional and online radio, while 37% listen to only conventional and 10% only to online radio. This data confirms that the consumption of online radio is also frequent in Spain (**Martínez-Costa; Moreno; Amoedo, 2018**). The majority of respondents listen to Spanish online radio (92%) and only 8% to stations of other countries, especially the United States and the *BBC* in Spanish, followed to the same extent by stations from places such as Venezuela, Italy, France, Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Canada, and Germany.

5.4. Data analysis

The survey data have been analyzed using the *SPSS* statistical package to calculate percentages, analysis of variance, and reliability tests.

Next, we explain the results obtained in the survey according to the different parts into which it is divided..

6. Results

6.1. Current situation about coronavirus

In the survey's first part, respondents answered questions about how they are handling the current pandemic crisis. Most are spending the lockdown at home with family (83%), followed by at home alone (13%), and working outside home (4%).

Subjects also responded to a scale about the emotional situation they were facing in the lockdown. This data is important for further analysis of the psychological impact that radio can have on this situation. We used the Differential Emotions Scale, a five-point multidimensional measure of self-perception used to assess emotions (**Izard, 1991**). The scale achieved a high coefficient in the reliability tests. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was 0.78. The results indicated that the majority feels interest in this crisis ($M = 3.71$; $SD = 1.03$), but the majority emotion is sadness ($M = 3.67$; $SD = 1.17$), followed by fear ($M = 3.30$; $SD = 1.15$), anguish ($M = 3$; $SD = 1.29$), surprise ($M = 2.89$; $SD = 1.11$), anger ($M = 2.75$; $SD = 1.20$), illusion ($M = 2.42$; $SD = 0.97$), contempt ($M = 2.24$; $SD = 1.29$), shame ($M = 2.10$; $SD = 1.23$) and, to a lesser extent, guilt ($M = 1.68$; $SD = 0.97$) and disgust ($M = 1.30$; $SD = 1.04$).

Regarding their degree of knowledge about the pandemic, most subjects claimed to have a level of knowledge of the coronavirus between high (44.8%) and moderate (39.7%), followed by very high (10.4%), low (3.6%) and very low (1.2%).

About the treatment of crises and specifically of coronavirus, radio is the medium that, for these participants, is best at dealing with the crisis (42%), followed by television (35%), the Internet (12%), newspapers (8%), social networks (2%) and magazines (1%). In general, the average mark out of ten that these radio listeners give to radio is quite high, almost eight (M = 7.77; SD = 1.51).

This good impression is reinforced by the image they have of radio. In general, this impression has not changed during the lockdown (58%), although 40% say it has changed positively, and only 2% negatively. Concerning the amount of information listened to on the radio about the crisis, respondents say reducing a little the time dedicated to the pandemic to introduce entertainment topics and so relax the tension would be desirable (71%). A full 16% of the subjects say that the more time they spend listening about the coronavirus, the better, while 13% say that radio should reduce the treatment of this information as much as possible. Only 1% believe eliminating information on the coronavirus would be beneficial. But, in general, they are satisfied with the radio's treatment of the coronavirus (89% versus 11%).

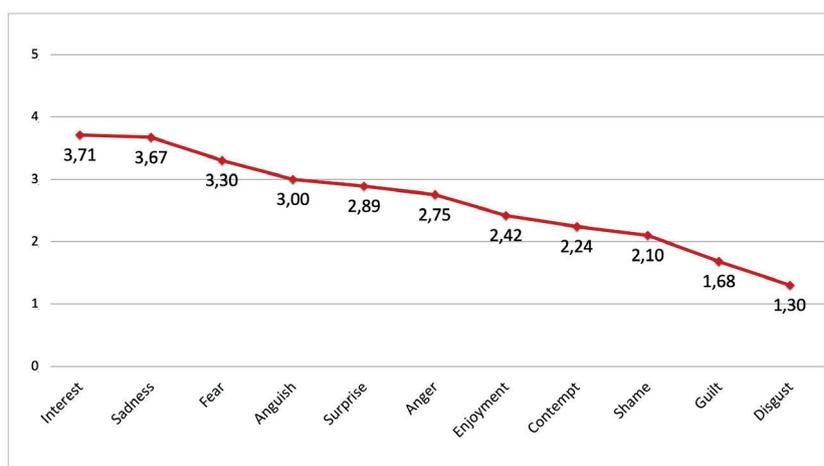
Among the aspects to be improved, most of them complain about the excess of information about Covid-19. Therefore, they repeatedly point out: to talk a little less about coronavirus, to give brief information and not to lengthen or repeat it all day, to deal with other topics (such as how to distract in lockdown), not to talk so much about the negative part and more about the positive part, to inform more clearly, to vary the information sources, to be less alarmist and to do more research about coronavirus (more medical and psychological aspects).

6.2. Radio listening habits before and with the coronavirus

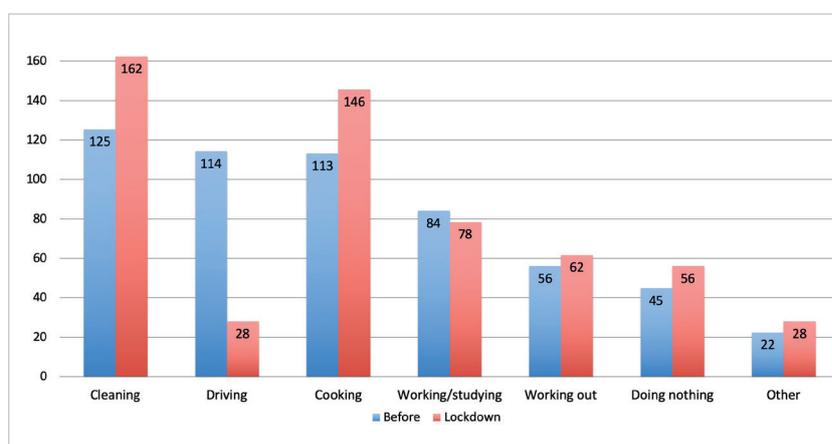
The respondents then had to answer a block of questions related to their listening habits to the radio before and during the coronavirus crisis.

Most respondents usually listen to the radio on the radio set (45%), followed by mobile phones or tablets (30%), computers (16%), and smart speakers (9%). During the lockdown, most respondents listen to the radio mainly in the living room (25%), followed by bedroom (24%), kitchen (23%), study or office (15%), balcony or terrace (7%) and bathroom (6%). A mere 1% have mentioned in the gallery or the car if they go out to buy or work. Before the coronavirus crisis, listeners listened to the radio primarily while cleaning (22.4%), followed by driving (20.4%), cooking (20.2%), working or studying (15%), working out (10%) and not doing any activity (8%). About 4% mentioned eating, relaxing, in the bathroom, in bed to sleep, doing crafts, getting dressed, surfing the Internet, or traveling. With the coronavirus crisis, the majority activity is still cleaning, but with a rise (29%), the same as cooking (26%), working out (11%), or no activity at all (10%). Working or studying (14%) has fallen slightly and driving, of course, has fallen to 5%. They also mentioned other activities (5%) such as, in this order of importance, surfing the Internet, eating (especially breakfast), in bed to sleep, in the bathroom, ironing, gardening, or in the background playing with children.

In the months before the crisis, most participants listened to the radio alone (80%) as opposed to accompanied (20%). But with lockdown, listening when accompanied has increased considerably (44%) and alone has decreased (56%). Most prefer to listen to live programs (89%) rather than recorded ones (11%), although the composition of the sample, with a less youthful audience, condition this data.



Graphic 2. Differential Emotions Scale



Graphic 3. Activities while listening before and during lockdown

6.3. Radio consumption before and with the coronavirus

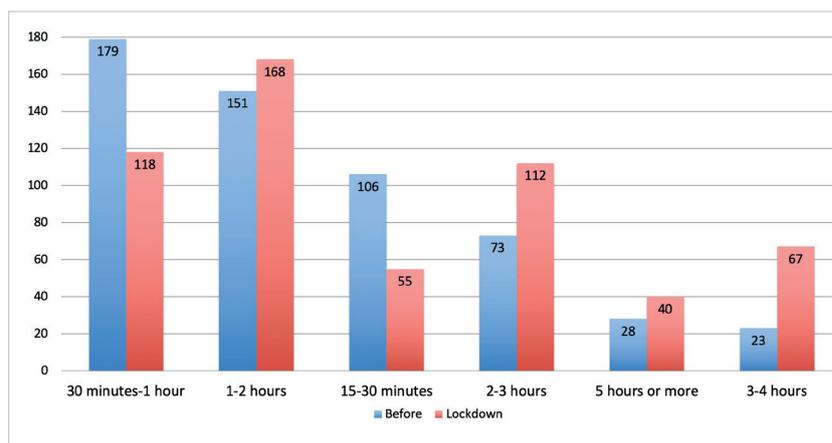
Radio consumption has grown with the lockdown. Before the coronavirus crisis, respondents used to listen to the radio for an average of 30 minutes to one hour (32%), followed by one to two hours (27%), 15 to 30 minutes (19%), two to three hours (13%), five hours or more (5%) and three to four hours (4%). The total average is (M = 2.67; SD = 1.32). During the lockdown, radio consumption has increased. Most people now listen to the radio for one to two hours (30%), 30 minutes to one hour (21%), two to three hours (20%), three to four hours (12%), 15 to 30 minutes (10%) and more than five hours (7%). Therefore, consumption is now higher, with an average of almost one point higher (M = 3.27; SD = 1.03).

Before the crisis, most respondents listened to the radio in the morning (48%), followed by in the afternoon (18%), night (16%), noon (13%), and early morning (5%). In the confined situation, slots are similar but slightly more spread out. Radio is mainly listened to in the morning (37%), but there is an increase in the rest of the times, in this order: noon to 18%; afternoon to 21%; early morning to 7%; and night to 17%.

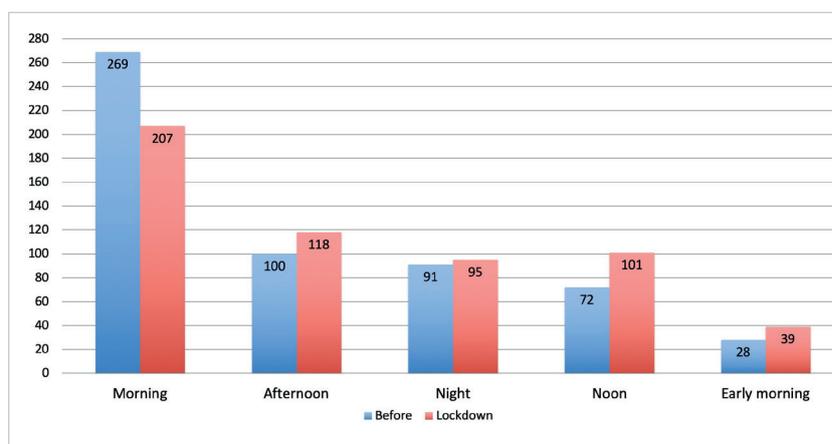
In terms of content, before the crisis, most subjects listened mainly to news (29.5%), followed by music (23%), talk shows or debates (16%), sports (13%), cultural shows (8%), magazines (7%), fiction (2%) and religious programs (1%). About 0.5% also mentioned humor and mystery. During the lockdown, the trend continues, but there is an increase in the news (34%), talk shows or debates (18%), magazines (8%), fiction (3%), and slightly more religious programs (1%). On the other hand, musicals (20%) and sports (7%) have decreased. Cultural shows remain at similar levels (8%). One percent said they were now also listening to programs on the coronavirus, economics, mystery, and humor.

The most frequently listened stations have slightly varied before and during the lockdown. As is logical in crises, those surveyed seek information, and, for that reason, traditional stations go up –*Cadena SER*, *Cope*, *Onda Cero*, *RNE*, and *esRadio*, while musical stations such as *Top 40*, *Cadena 100*, or *Europa FM* go down.

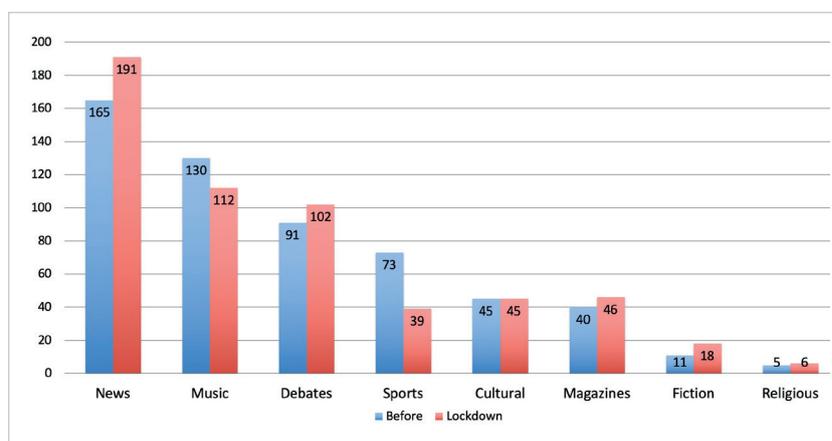
Most of the subjects who participated in the survey claimed to listen to more than two radio stations. When respondents have reported more than one station, those radio stations interestingly are sometimes of a different ideological position; for example, some of them listen to *SER* (left wing) and *COPE* (right wing). They also tend to combine one or two traditional stations with one or two music stations. Along with the conventional and musical stations, it is also noteworthy that regional and local stations have been mentioned in various geographical locations: Catalonia; Cantabria; the Basque Country; the Canary Islands; Andalu-



Graphic 4. Radio consumption before and during lockdown



Graphic 5. Times listening to radio before and during lockdown



Graphic 6. Preferred shows before and during lockdown

sia; Galicia; and Madrid. During the lockdown, although in a very reduced way, *Radio Maria* also appears, and the *BBC* in Spanish also rises in listenership.

Before the arrival of the pandemic, most respondents listened to other sound formats besides radio, especially music on platforms such as *Spotify* (67%), podcasts (21%), and audiobooks (8%). Four percent mentioned other formats, such as listening on *YouTube*. During this coronavirus crisis, the consumption of podcasts (23%) and audiobooks (10%) has grown slightly. Music consumption has dropped a little (61%). About 6% commented that they now listen more frequently to other formats such as music or news on *YouTube*.

6.4. The role of radio in information, entertainment, and advertising

During the next block of the survey, respondents compared the radio with other media about information, entertainment, and advertising.

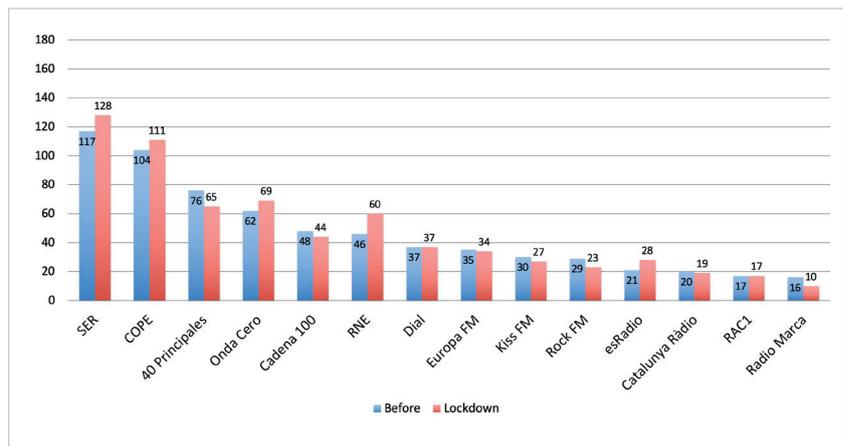
As far as information is concerned, the majority of respondents are informed through television (23.5%), followed by radio (20.2%), the Internet (18%), newspapers (9.3%), *Facebook* (8.8%), and *WhatsApp* (8.3%). The rest of the media, especially social networks, was in the minority: *Twitter* (4.2%); *Instagram* (4%); Magazines (1.8%); *LinkedIn* (1%); *Snapchat* (0.3); *TikTok* (0.3); and others (0.3). In the “others” category, respondents mentioned Telegram, friends, and word of mouth. Now with the coronavirus crisis, most continue to be informed mainly through television (25.2%) and radio (21%), which have grown slightly. Other media fall a little, such as the Internet (17.6%), newspapers (8.5%), *Facebook* (8.3%), or *WhatsApp* (7%). The rest of the media remain in the minority: *Twitter* (4.5%); *Instagram* (4.3%); Magazines (1.6%); *LinkedIn* (0.9%); *Snapchat* (0.4%); *TikTok* (0.3%) and others (0.4%). In “others,” *Telegram*, medical websites, friends, and family are mentioned again.

Regarding entertainment, the majority of listeners surveyed consider that the best medium for entertainment is television (47%) followed by the Internet (28%), radio (16%), social networks (5%), newspapers (3%), and magazines (1%).

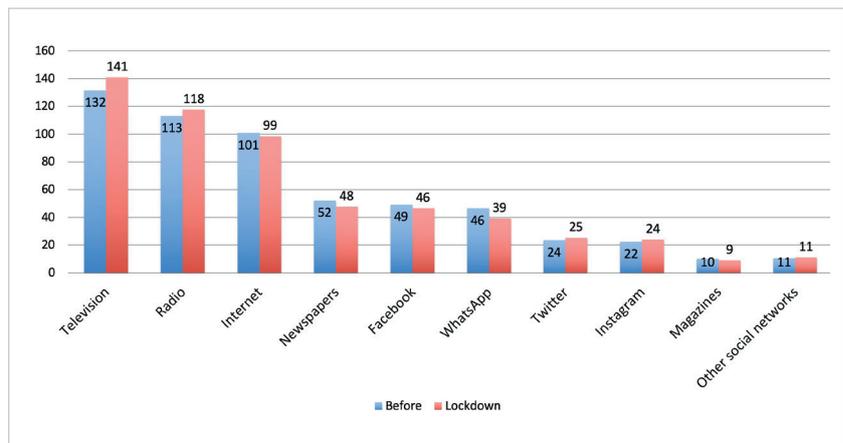
As for advertising, the medium where they find to be of the best quality is the television (54%), followed by radio (23%), the Internet (12%), newspapers (6%), magazines (2%) and social networks (3%). The majority of participants believe that advertising should be adapted to the current crisis and commercials have to take into account the social or economic context in the country (74%). About 14% consider that advertising should remain the same as always, and 12% is indifferent.

6.5. The credibility of radio

In the next section of the survey, respondents had to assess the credibility of radio compared to other media. To measure credibility, **Gaziano** and **McGrath** (1986) developed a twelve-factor scale that has been widely used in communication studies. **Meyer** (1988) reduced this scale to five elements, of which the trust in the medium is the most important, followed by whether it is fair, unbiased, accurate, and tells the whole story. These measurements were developed to apply to news (**Müller**, 2013). For this study, we applied a scale formed by the three factors with which the medium can be qualified in general: trust, unbiased, and fair. The other two factors are more typical of news analysis – “tells the whole story” and “it is accurate.” In these two cases, respondents could not fully understand what was being asked. The scale achieved a high-reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha = 0.79).



Graphic 7. Top radio stations before and during lockdown



Graphic 8. News sources before and during lockdown

“During the lockdown, the people surveyed listened to the radio for longer periods throughout the day, more programs, and a greater variety of stations, mainly news”

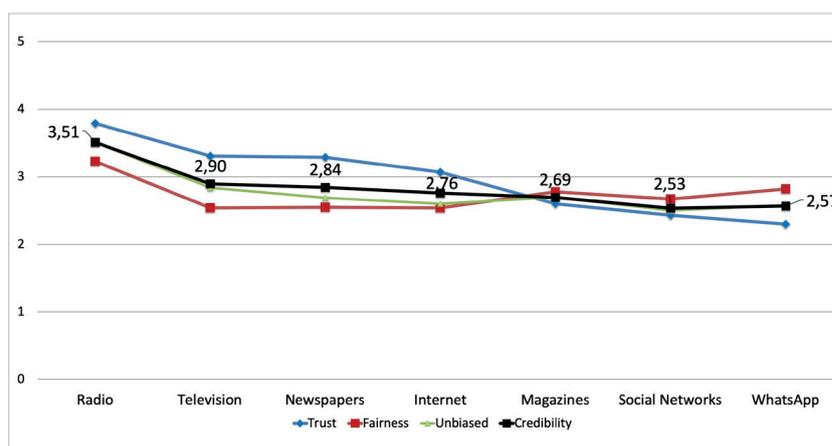
As for the first factor, the medium they trust the most is the radio, followed by television, newspapers, the Internet, magazines, social networks, and *WhatsApp*. For fairness, the order varies slightly. Radio is the most highly rated medium but is followed by newspapers, TV, magazines, the Internet, *WhatsApp*, and social networks. Concerning unbiased, there are also changes. Radio is the medium that is considered most unbiased, followed by the Internet, television, magazines, newspapers, *WhatsApp*, and social networks. Finally, credibility was the result of adding the three scales. In this case, radio is the most credible medium, followed by television, newspapers, the Internet, magazines, social networks, and *WhatsApp*. All data are available in Table 1.

There have been no significant differences in the level of credibility either by the participants' level of education or by the socioeconomic level.

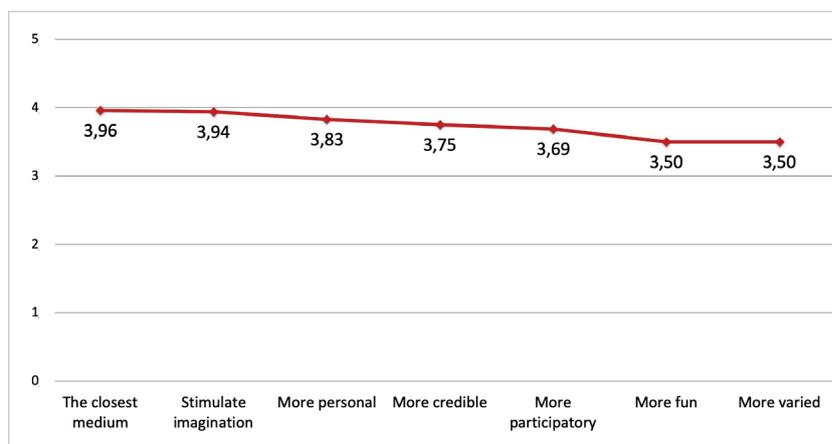
6.6. The perception of radio

Finally, the subjects answered some questions related to their perception of the radio. Most of the respondents said that they like radio because of the information (25%), which they consume most, followed by programs (18%), music (22%), humor (13.4%), the broadcasters' voices (13%), sports (7%), advertising (1%) and others (0.6%). In the "others" section, they explicitly mentioned talk shows.

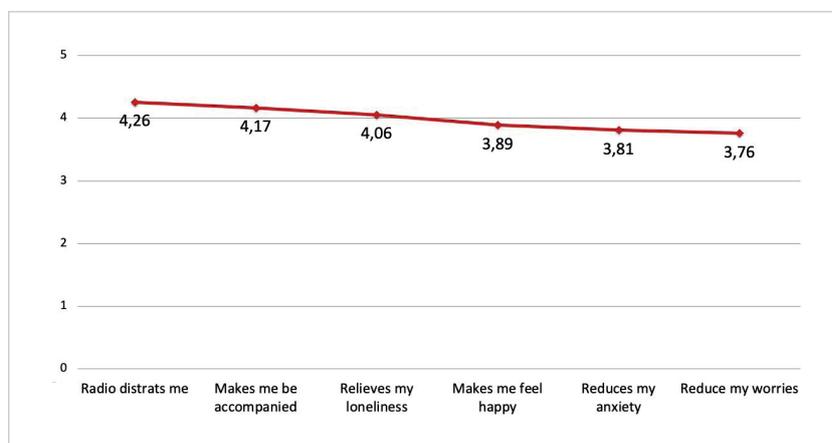
Regarding what radio means to the respondents, which explains why they listen to it, most of them consider that it is the closest medium ($M = 3.96$; $SD = 1.02$), the medium that



Graphic 9. Media credibility: trust + fairness + unbiased



Graphic 10. What is radio for you?



Graphic 11. How does radio help you in this situation?

Table 1. Credibility of media

	Trust		Fairness		Unbiased		Credibility	
	Average	DS	Average	SD	Average	SD	Average	SD
Radio	3.80	0.87	3.23	0.97	3.51	0.91	3.51	0.61
Television	3.32	1.06	2.54	1.0	2.84	1.11	2.89	0.76
Newspapers	3.29	1.0	2.55	0.92	2.69	1.11	2.84	0.66
Internet	3.07	1.0	2.90	0.95	2.96	0.99	2.76	0.66
Magazines	2.60	1.0	2.78	0.91	2.70	0.96	2.69	0.65
<i>WhatsApp</i>	2.39	1.14	2.82	1.03	2.58	1.11	2.59	0.76
Social networks	2.43	1.16	2.67	1.0	2.50	1.06	2.53	0.76

most stimulates the imagination ($M = 3.94$; $SD = 0.94$), the most personal ($M = 3.83$; $SD = 0.90$), most credible ($M = 3.75$; $SD = 0.91$), most participatory ($M = 3.69$; $SD = 0.96$), most fun ($M = 3.50$; $SD = 0.93$), and with the greatest variety of content ($M = 3.50$; $SD = 1.02$).

Another important aspect is to know how the radio medium makes them feel in this situation where we have seen that sadness is the majority feeling. In this case, most of them say that listening to the radio distracts them ($M = 4.26$; $SD = 0.87$), makes them feel accompanied ($M = 4.17$; $SD = 0.91$), reduces their loneliness ($M = 4.06$; $SD = 0.93$), makes them feel happy ($M = 3.89$; $SD = 0.87$), reduces their anxiety levels ($M = 3.81$; $SD = 0.97$) and their worries ($M = 3.76$; $SD = 0.96$). Therefore, we can conclude that the radio has a significant psychological impact during crises.

Finally, the majority of respondents say they are satisfied with the radio as they currently listen to it (91%), and only 9% consider that some aspect needs to be improved. Among the elements that radio needs to improve, they mentioned: not being biased; reducing commercials; more entertainment; contests and exciting night shows; being more professional; less football and, in general, more varied shows.

7. Discussion and conclusions

7.1. More radio, variety of stations, and listening in the living room accompanied and cleaning

First, this study allows us to draw a clear picture of the listening habits and consumption of these radio listeners before and during the lockdown. Regarding habits, the majority of the participants usually listen to the radio on the radio set, followed by the mobile phone or tablet, the computer, and the smart speaker. Although in the minority, we observe that there are already listeners who use smart speakers at home to listen to the radio. But a curious aspect is where they listen to the radio, especially the living room. This is followed by the bedroom, kitchen, study or office, balcony or terrace, and bathroom. The living room is not a common place to listen to the radio. The confinement wrought by the pandemic has led to a return to fixed consumption environments. Also, before the crisis, almost all those surveyed listened to the radio alone. But now, in lockdown, listening while accompanied has increased by 24%. This overall profile is therefore very reminiscent of radio listening years ago when the family gathered in front of the radio in the living room. Now they do not sit around the radio, but the device is playing while they do other activities, such as, for example, they told us, playing with the children. This means that the radio is once again collective and shared. Despite this, cleaning continues to be the most popular activity for listening to the radio. The second one previously was driving, which has now been relegated to the last positions for obvious reasons. The next activities have been cooking, working, studying, working out, or doing nothing. They have also mentioned other activities such as surfing the Internet, eating (breakfast), in bed to sleep, or in the bathroom.

In terms of consumption, radio listening has grown during lockdown by almost a full point, and now most listen to it for between one and two hours, between 30 minutes and one hour and between two and three hours. Consumption of other sound formats is also growing, especially podcasts and audiobooks, which are rising slightly. This data reinforces the results from recent surveys that we have reviewed at the beginning of this paper.

In line with the radio audience studies (*EGM*), the morning continues to be the most listened time slot, but in the lockdown, listening is more spread out throughout the day. All the slots have increased, but especially at noon and afternoon. The most frequently listened to stations have also suffered a slight variation before and during the lockdown. As is logical in crises, the respondents seek information, and, for that reason, traditional news stations go up while musical radios go down. An important fact related to the stations is that most of the subjects claim to listen to more than two: one or two traditional with one or two musical stations, and not all of them are of the same ideological line. This is an aspect to take into account as traditionally, the radio listener has been very loyal to a particular station. In the sample selected for this study, this is not the trend at all, and most listen to several stations and very varied.

7.2. Radio is the medium that best copes with crises

The second important idea that we can draw from the results of the survey is that radio remains a medium dealing satisfactorily with crises. In fact, for these listeners, it is the best medium treating with information about the Covid-19 pandemic. With almost an eight out of ten rating, the radio receives approval with a very good score for its treatment of the situation. Moreover, radio produces a very positive impression among the respondents, a perception that, in general, has not changed during the lockdown. However, almost half of the respondents claim that it is now even more positive. This level of satisfaction is also demonstrated by the fact that most respondents say they are satisfied with the radio, as they currently listen to it. Only a small percentage consider that some aspect needs to be improved. The only problem they express clearly is related to the amount of information they receive about the coronavirus. Not surprisingly, as the weeks go by, information fatigue becomes apparent, and these respondents feel that the time spent on the pandemic should be reduced a little to introduce entertainment topics and relax the accumulated tension. Along with this, other elements to improve have been to be less unbiased, reducing ads, more entertainment, contests, and interesting night shows, be more professional, less football, and, in general, more varied shows.

“ Radio is the medium that gets the best score and the most positive image in the treatment of the Covid-19 pandemic ”

7.3. Radio is a predominantly informative medium

Radio is especially prominent as a news medium rather than an entertainment one. Information is the aspect of the medium that respondents value the most, followed by programs, music, humor, the broadcasters' voices, sports, advertising, and talk shows.

As it is logical in this situation of news demand, most subjects continue to listen mainly to information. These programs are the ones that have grown the most during the lockdown. Listening to talk shows or debates, magazines, and fiction programs has also increased. Therefore, information and, in part, entertainment has augmented. On the other hand, musicals and sports programs have decreased, the latter, of course, due to the cessation of activities. Cultural and religious shows have remained at similar levels. Regarding the informative aspect, the majority of those surveyed have not changed the distribution of the media through which they get the news. With the coronavirus crisis, most continue to get information mainly through TV and radio, which are slightly increasing, followed by the Internet, the newspapers, *Facebook*, or *WhatsApp*, which decreased slightly. The rest of the media and social networks remain at low levels.

Radio stands as the closest medium, and the one that most stimulates the imagination

In contrast, the radio does not seem to stand out as a medium for entertainment. The majority of listeners surveyed think that the best medium for entertainment is television, followed by the Internet, radio, social networks, newspapers, and magazines. And as for advertising, the medium where they find the best quality in advertising is television, radio, the Internet, newspapers, magazines and social networks. The majority of participants think commercials should be adapted to the crisis and take into account the country's social or economic context. This is something that happened at the beginning of the crisis. Many listeners were surprised to still hear the same commercials on the radio prior to the crisis.

7.4. Radio is the most credible medium

The third conclusion of this study is that radio continues to be the most credible medium that respondents trust the most, and the one considered the most unbiased and fair. Radio consistently ranks first because it does so on all three scales applied, in line with some other surveys previously mentioned. On the other hand, some media's position varies depending on the variable. Regarding trust, radio is followed by television, newspapers, the Internet, magazines, social networks, and *WhatsApp*. In contrast, the second most unbiased medium after the radio are the newspapers, followed by television, magazines, the Internet, *WhatsApp*, and, finally, social networks. Concerning fairness, there are also variations. Interestingly, radio is followed by the Internet, television, magazines, newspapers, *WhatsApp*, and social networks. But, overall, adding the three options, the traditional media –radio, television, and newspapers– are placed in the first positions, according to some studies that indicate that, in crises, the audience is concentrated on them, especially on television and radio (Spence *et al.*, 2009; Hornmoen; Backholm, 2018). Traditional media is followed by the Internet, magazines, social networks, and *WhatsApp*. We also note that television is the most consumed medium and the one where most people get the news, despite being considered as an unfair and biased medium. This is in line with some studies that have shown that audiences also trust in media they do not consider reliable (Tsfati; Capella, 2010). Despite this, in this study, television ends up being the second most credible medium, which is consistent with research suggesting that citizens tend to consider the media they consume the most credible (Shaw, 1973; Roses; Farias-Batlle, 2012; El-Nawawy, 2006). However, in this study, we have not been able to confirm the research results that condition credibility on audiences' socioeconomic or education level (Westley; Severin, 1964; Roses; Farias-Batlle, 2012). In this case, there were no significant differences in either of these two variables.

7.5. Radio is the closest, most distracting, and companionable medium

The fourth important idea from the study concerns the perception and psychological effect of radio during the lockdown. Radio is the medium respondents consider to be the closest, most distracting, and most companionable, according to their perception of social presence (Koh *et al.*, 2007; Rodero, 2018). In a situation of uncertainty such as that of the coronavirus, these values take on an important dimension. Most of those surveyed said they had a majority feeling of interest in this crisis but followed by sadness, fear, anguish, surprise, anger, illusion, contempt, and, to a lesser extent, shame, guilt, and disgust. In this context, radio stands for them as the closest medium, the one that most stimulates the imagination, the most personal, credible and participatory, data that reinforce some previous studies (Horton; Wohl, 1956; Rodero, 2012). The value of the radio in this context is that it distracts them, provides companionship, reduces their loneliness, makes them feel happy, and reduces their anxiety level and worries. Therefore, we can say that radio has a significant psychological impact during a crisis or time of uncertainty. These characteristics could also explain, in part, the trust they have on the radio. As we have mentioned, some studies have found that credibility may be related to the affective dimension (Rimmer; Weaver, 1987).

In short, the main conclusion of the study is that radio once again plays a leading role in this pandemic situation among those who faithfully follow it. The listeners surveyed now listen to the radio for long periods through

The radio continues to be the most credible medium that respondents trust the most, and the one considered the most unbiased and fair

ghout the day, more programs, and a greater variety of stations, mainly news, cleaning, or cooking. The most common place to listen is in the living room, followed by the bedroom and kitchen, and almost half of them are listening to the medium accompanied. Radio is the medium that gets the best score and the most positive image in the treatment of the Covid-19 pandemic. Radio also is considered the most credible source of information. Finally, radio is the medium they feel closest to them, the one that most distracts them, and provides companionship. But all these positive conclusions should not make the medium lose its guard. To improve the medium, respondents point out that broadcasts should offer less information about Covid-19, be less biased, reduce ads, offer more entertainment, contests and interesting night shows, be more professional, broadcast less football, and, in general, deliver a greater variety of content.

Radio distracts, provides companionship, reduces loneliness, makes feel happy, and reduces anxiety level

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Annex. Survey

Block 1. Current situation of coronavirus crisis	
What is your situation in the lockdown?	At home with family Alone at home Working outside home
To what extent have you felt the following emotions? Differential Emotions Scale	Interest Sadness Fear Anxiety Surprise Anger Illusion Contempt Shame Guilt Disgust 1 2 3 4 5
Knowledge about the Covid-19	Very high High Medium Low Very low 1 2 3 4 5
What medium best copes with information in crisis situations like Covid-19?	Radio Television Newspapers Internet Magazines Social networks 1 2 3 4 5
How do you rate the radio in this crisis?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Has your impression of the radio changed during confinement?	Not changed Changed to positive Changed to negative
What do you think the radio should do with the coronavirus information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the time dedicated to the pandemic and introduce entertainment topics for relaxing tension • Treat the coronavirus the longer the better • Minimize the information about Covid-19 • Remove the information about the coronavirus totally
How do you think the radio is treating the coronavirus information?	Good Bad It's indifferent
What aspects radio should improve in this crisis?	
Block 2. Listening habits	
On what device do you usually listen to the radio?	Mobile Radio set Smart speaker Computer
Where do you usually listen to the radio?	Kitchen Bedroom Living Room Bathroom Terrace/balcony Others:
What activity did you used to do while listening before the crisis?	None Sport Cooking Cleaning Driving Working/studying Others
And what activity do you do now during the crisis while listening to the radio?	None Sport Cooking Cleaning Driving Working/studying Others
Before the crisis, did you used to listen to the radio alone or with others?	Alone In companion
and now how do you hear it?	Alone In companion
How do you like to listen to the programs?	Live Recorded
Block 3. Radio consumption	
How long did you used to listen to the radio each day before the crisis?	15-30 minutes 30 minutes to 1 hour 1-2 hours 2-3 hours 3-4 hours 5 or more
How long do you listen to the radio in the lockdown each day?	15-30 minutes 30 minutes to 1 hour 1-2 hours 2-3 hours 3-4 hours 5 or more
What time did you listen to the radio before?	Morning Noon Late Night Early
Now with the coronavirus crisis, what time do you listen to the radio?	Morning Noon Late Night Early
What kind of content did you usually listen to before the crisis?	News Culture Fiction Music Sports Magazine Opinion
What kind of content do you hear now with the crisis?	News Culture Fiction Music Sports Magazine Opinion
What stations did you listen to before the crisis?	
And now in the confinement, what stations do you listen to?	
Apart from the radio, what sound formats did you listen to before the crisis?	Podcast Audiobooks Music Others:
What other audio formats do you listen to now with the crisis?	Podcast Audiobooks Music Others:

Block 4. The role of radio in information, entertainment and advertising	
What is the medium to get the news?	Radio Television Newspapers Magazines Internet Social networks: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, TikTok Others:
In this crisis, what is the medium to mainly get the news about the coronavirus?	Radio Television Newspapers Magazines Internet Social Networks: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, TikTok Others
What is the best medium for entertainment?	Radio Television Newspapers Internet Magazines Social Networks
What medium has better quality in commercials?	Radio Television Newspapers Magazines Internet Social networks
Do you think that advertising should adapt to crisis situations, like now with the coronavirus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, it should continue as usual • Yes, it must consider the social situation • It's indifferent
Block 5. The credibility of radio	
How much do you trust these media for getting information?	Radio Television Newspapers Magazines Internet Social networks 1 2 3 4 5
To what extent do you consider these medium as fair?	Radio Television Newspapers Magazines Internet Social networks 1 2 3 4 5
To what extent do you consider these medium as unbiased?	Radio Television Newspapers Magazines Internet Social networks 1 2 3 4 5
Block 6. The perception of radio	
What do you like best about radio?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The speakers/presenters voices • To be able to listen to it while I do other activities • The programs • The information • Advertising • Humor • Music • Others:
To what extent do you agree with these statements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio is the closest medium • Radio is the most credible medium • Radio is the most fun medium • Radio is the medium with the greatest variety of shows and content • Radio is the most personal medium • Radio is the most participatory medium • Radio is the medium that most stimulates the imagination
To what extent do you agree with these statements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to the radio makes me feel in companion • Listening to the radio reduces my loneliness • Listening to the radio distracts me • Listening to the radio reduces my anxiety • Listening to the radio makes me happy • Listening to the radio reduces my worries
Is there any aspect that you think radio should change coping with this crisis?	No. Yes, mention it:
Is there anything you think radio should change in general?	No. Yes, mention it:

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