

During the past three years, I often wondered which topic should my thesis centre upon. I was looking for something that suited my personality, the things I like, but that could meanwhile give a tangible proof of how these three years changed my view of the world. The Political Science faculty allows to give an informed opinion on any topic: politics, economics, sociology, law. I also wanted to prove to myself and others that I fully understood what studying Political Science meant, and therefore not focus on a single point of view. I immediately thought about football, since sport, more than many other topics, can be viewed from a variety of angles. Football, in fact, has its own political connotation. It has a federation with an elected president which manages and controls all football activities in the country, the Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio. Because of its political connotation, football also has a juridical branch with various degrees of appeal and its own code that covers rules of conduct and sanctions applicable to all those involved with the FIGC. Nowadays, the Italian sport justice has been criticised for the iron fist it has been using with supporters for using language and behaviour inappropriate for sporting events. This brings us to the sociological side to football, one which I believe to be central.

Football is a powerful social glue, as are sports in general. Football fans are in fact brought together by a tribal sentiment rooted in human nature. Premodern tribalism is evoked in basic relationships such as family ones, which in Italy falls into the 'amoral familism' discussed by Banfield in his essay, i.e. the strong sense of belonging to a family nucleus which has not allowed some communities (such as southern Italy, studied by Banfield) to grow neither culturally nor as a commonly managed good. Postmodern tribalism, on the other hand, is made of common passion such as sports fanhood, food, fashion, the internet. This is because of a change from a solid state society to a liquid state one (a dear one to Zygmunt Bauman), in which consumerism and new technologies have helped break down personal self-assurance which is now to be found in the sense of belonging in a group.

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which consumism and new technologies have helped break down personal self-assurance which is now to be found in the sense of belonging in a group.

I am not sure if the reader has ever been in a football changing room. You will never find such an intense and selfless collaboration as the one within a team, nor will you find social or racist insults, since team members are all equal and share a common goal, and I believe society can learn from such behaviour.

However, the social power of football has another side to it, one which can be dangerous. As Rudi Garcia pointed out in his visit at our university, our young citizens take on football players as role models, both from a fashion and a life style point of view, and therefore important football figures have great responsibilities, since everything they say or do is inevitably far-reaching. The old generations of football also have great responsibilities. They were less influenced by their football heroes, but nowadays, with television and social media, young people feel closer to them. And so we come to the core theme of my thesis, the one which I will analyse in greater detail and I care for the most, since I see my future within it: the media aspect of football, which is inevitably intertwined with the economic one.

Over the past decade, the world of football has been changed, mainly because of better coverage on national television, making Italian people even more passion about football. Lately, both television and cinema are suffering a reduction in profits, while football keeps increasing its media profits. The reason behind this is obviously the strong hold that this sport has on the population, especially when compared to other current topics. It should suffice to point out the endless amount of advertisements, for any kind of product, that involve football players or important football figures, and even more so during that past summer which bore witness to the largest football event possible: the world cup. These are obviously well thought marketing campaigns, with tangible results. I would like to point out that by now, in our society, there are more people who can name a foreign team's trainer, their age and nationality, than those who can name the Prime Minister. Football isn't only a sport: to some it's payback, to some an opportunity, for most a way to vent stress; but I believe the role of sport has often been underestimated. When I talked about my idea of focusing this thesis on football, many people rolled their eyes, some laughed, judging me and my topic as childish and superficial. These are the kind of barriers I want to bring down, if not in this thesis, in life. God knows how many people have a better life thank to sport. I'm thinking of all those players who were taken off of a street and made famous, or even just those who by practicing every day learn discipline, respect and good manners. But my main goal is going to be to bring television to people's attention. I was stupefied and curious during Professor Balassone's (my supervisor) lectures, and became convinced that the world of media is this grossly underestimated in our country. Television has been and will continue being the simplest and most effective way to speak to the masses, to increase their knowledge or spread awareness on certain topics. I believe that to be in television one should first of all focus on those objectives and try to improve the media's quality, both for profits, obviously, and for the benefit of our cultural heritage.

In order to understand how football became Italian television's main product, we need to understand the history of Italian television: how it was born, it matured, changed and how it's slowly dying. In particular, Sky has definitely broken the balance of the Rai-Mediaset duopoly, waking them up from their lethargy and static behaviour, and giving new life (we hope) also to popular television. I will therefore analyse the history of popular tv in Italy until the rise of pay-per-view television. Lastly, I will suggest some examples and ideas

to follow to revamp popular channels, based on what I studied but also on my tastes as an end user. I conclude this introduction with two quotes which caught my attention and I believe to be pertinent to the topic at hand:

“those who only know football, don’t know football” (José Mourinho, trainer)

“football is the last pure form of art left: it’s the only thing that puts a spectator at ease while keeping him on the edge of his seat for the duration of the show, for he doesn’t know how it will end and that each show is different” (Carmelo Bene, director, actor, playwright and poet)

The central point to my findings is to try and improve the quality of Italian television. To this end, I believe that the duopoly between Sky and Mediaset to be greatly beneficial, since both platforms are competing and trying new formats to offer to their consumers. New series and shows produced by the broadcaster themselves, or teaming up with investors, are a good starting point. The important thing is that this will to come out on top doesn’t result in a pointless confrontation which could damage the end user. In fact, in a perfect competition, the consumer is the one who benefits the most, being there the widest range of products at the lowest possible price. On the other hand, producers would rather be in a monopolistic position to enjoy abnormal returns. But our broadcasters have to keep in mind that the viewer is always right and that he or she would rather be in a perfect competition where he or she can spend less than he would be willing to for a product.

Through technology and great impact on the masses, Mediaset and Sky can increase the general cultural level of the country. As highlighted in this document, Sky has promoted cultural programmes with football backgrounds in order to improve their chances of success, skilfully putting the sport’s mediatic power to use. But that isn’t all: through On Demand products, the two platforms are promoting classic movies, documentaries, current news, culture and art, thus stimulating the public to gather knowledge. Logically, sport is a good tool to capture young people’s attention, but also of those who’ve received a lower education than they aspired for. As a matter of fact, it is easier and less stressful to watch a documentary than to pour oneself on books. I know many people that have taken university tests answering general knowledge questions thanks to programs they watched on television at some point in the past, showing how, when used smartly, television can be a tool to come over important obstacles in one’s life. With many cultural programs linked to football, I was able to touch topics which I never thought I would discuss, with people who weren’t as lucky as I was to receive a full education. However, through TV programs, their curiosity was instigated and thank to the internet they filled gaps in their knowledge.

But even more so that quality of the information given is the way the two platforms create jobs. In times of recession, when companies cut jobs, the two platforms boast important figures. In a recent study by the Rosselli foundation, Sky has been declared “the greatest foreign investment in Italy in the past ten years”. Since its birth, the platform has invested more than 16 billion euros into Italy’s economy, with 6,000 employees and an estimated 13,000 jobs linked to the company. All of this with a strong presence of young people and women within the workforce, which gives Murdoch’s company a different look from that of most multination companies. Thus, I suggest to both companies’ top management teams to keep investing

in football and TV in general, and to keep on the path started ten years ago, as well as to join forces with the major Italian universities, so as to create a new generation of communication professionals.

To this end, eCampus and Mediaset's new Master in Journalism are a good start, as well as other joint ventures which both platforms have started, mainly with private schools of journalism.

Popular TV on the other hand has to deal with greater issues, rooted in the past. Now is the time to find new solutions and fix those issues. First of all, there needs to be awareness that the whole television industry has become multimedia and multiplatform, and that new formats need to be invented in order to capture the public's attention. For instance, I would like to mention the web series *The Pills* created and directed by three Roman students. After ample success on Youtube, the series was offered in the late evening on Italia Uno, with some new sketches, and was then included in *Stracult* shown on Rai2. This shows how, through the web, it is now easier to be known to the wider public and to capture TV producers' attention, who can find new material that already been "tested" before it is aired.

As far as structural problems are concerned, a solutions need to be find to the excessive number of popular channels. For instance, one of the channels could become multimedia, using it a trampoline for new formats and characters, such as Rai3 was used in the '70, which was the prelude to Rai's golden years. Also, the two large popular companies, Rai and Mediaset, should find new income sources other than TV licences and advertising (Rai should also be more proactive in fighting evasion of its own TV license tax). Even so, it should be pointed out that Mediaset, having stepped into the pay-per-view world, in in less of a desperate situation.

Thirdly and lastly, the barriers created by the lack of interest on the part of Italian entrepreneurs should be taken down, since this is an industry which could generate great profits, while trying to lift the countries fortunes up as was the case during the '50 and '60 economic boom, when the television was a sign of prosperity in a country leaving behind years of unemployment and hunger.

So the role of Italian television should be the same as the 60's, when television created through investments a great number of jobs, as well as marked the change of an entire population.

Sky has begun this process of transformation of Italian society, by raising the level of culture of schedules and offering regular jobs, even the youngest. But this is not enough, RAI, as a company of state, and Italian entrepreneurs should have raise their commitment to ensure a bright future in this field. The numbers and the success of *Gomorra* are there to witness how the Italian television can still create programs that attract an international audience, and we to continue through this way.

I hope that my thesis was interesting and original, but mostly I've opened my eyes on the subject.

*Vincenzo Ricciardi*