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## **Talking with TV shows: Simultaneous conversations between users and producers in the second-screen television production *Voice***

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### **Abstract**

*User interaction with radio and television programmes is not a new thing. However, with new cross-media production concepts such as X Factor and Voice, this is changing dramatically. The second-screen logic of these productions encourages viewers, along with TV's traditional one-way communication mode, to communicate on interactive (dialogue-enabling) devices such as laptops, smartphones and tablets. Using the TV show Voice as our example, this article shows how the technological and situational set-up of the production invites viewers to engage in new ways of interaction and communication. More specifically, the article demonstrates how online comments posted on the day of Voice's 2012 season finale can be grouped into four basic action types: (1) Invitation to consume content, (2) Request for participation, (3) Request for collaboration and (4) Online commenting. These action types express on the one hand the way in which Voice addresses its audience (i.e. through traditional one-way, one-to-many communication) and on the other hand the ways in which viewers respond by participating and collaborating (i.e. through two-way, one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communication).*

### **Keywords**

second-screen, cross-media communication, social TV, participation, collaboration, Facebook, social media

## Introduction

The possibility for users to have conversations with radio and television shows is not a new thing. Call-in shows have existed for years. The interplay between mobile phones, text messaging and TV shows dates back to MTV's video battles in the early 1990s. Also, the opportunity to engage with TV shows when they are not airing by engaging in activities on associated websites was developed to a large extent with the *Big Brother* concept (created by Johan de Mol 1999), including the possibility to monitor online the residents in the *Big Brother* house 24/7. However, apart from the call-in programme format, this interplay between a TV show and its users' activities has always been somewhat asynchronous, thus rendering the dialogue not more than a quasi-conversation. Lately, though, with audiences' growing tendency to use a second screen while watching television (nielsenwire 2011, 2012), more and more content providers in the broadcasting industry have adapted the cross-media formula into productions with a live interplay between web and television *in synchronous time*. Here the aim is to increase attention and involvement and to enable a communication flow between the production and its audience characterized by the *simultaneity* found in interpersonal communication.

Second screen refers to an additional medium (e.g. tablet or smartphone) that allows a television audience to *interact* with the content they are consuming, such as TV shows. The second screen is not just another screen (as the first screen: the TV screen): it is a digital communication device that can be interacted with. The two signifying features that characterize the communicational structure in a second-screen production – the way we define it in this article – are *synchronicity* (co-presence of media facilitating the communication) and *simultaneity* (co-presence of parties participating in the communication): the user engages in watching live TV shows and takes part in live chats, in posting Facebook updates, tweeting and so on, thus in talking both with the TV show (including its participants) as it airs and with other users that watch the same show at the same time. Both the producers and the users are thus engaging in simultaneous acts of communication.

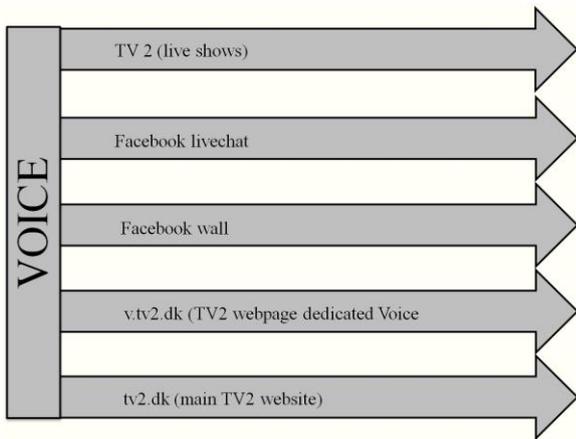
Based on an analysis of the second-screen production of *Voice* (2012), we will show that the new media talk found here represents a blend of the para-social (Horton and Wohl 1956), interactions of *broadcast talk* (Scannell 1991) and interpersonal communication (cf. Jensen 2010). By using an analytical framework based on mediated one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communication flows in general and how these occur in cross-media and second-screen settings in particular combined with elements of conversational analysis, we try to outline in a detailed way

what is happening during 24 hours on the second screen (*Voice's* Facebook page). We do not perform a separate analysis of the TV show, but relate the Facebook activities to what is about to happen, is happening or has happened on the TV show. Thus, the purpose of this article is to demonstrate how the second-screen set-up with its different synchronously cross-connected media platforms facilitates a shared communication space in which the TV show addresses its users and the users address the TV show, the show's participants (the hosts, the coaches, the contestants) and each other in a multiplicity of simultaneous flows. We will also show how the set-up of such a production yields the environment in which new interaction sequences come to play a role. Finally, the impact and implications of this simultaneity in our case will be discussed, and we pose the question whether a production like *Voice* uses the full potential of second-screen set-ups for creating conversations between production and users.

### **Framing second-screen-based TV productions**

*Voice – Danmarks største stemme/Denmark's Greatest Voice* is the Danish production of the *Voice of...* concept (created by Johan de Mol 2010),<sup>1</sup> produced by the second-largest broadcast company in Denmark, TV2. The programme is a talent show for singers who are voted in or out by four coaches (well-known performing artists within popular music in Denmark) and the ones who get voted in get to choose one of the coaches as their personal trainer. From there on the shows consist of the contestants battling against each other until a winner is found. These shows are transmitted live.

The second-screen logic of productions like *Voice* implies that the shows are to be experienced simultaneously on two or more platforms (e.g. TV, tablet, smartphone) and through two or more services (e.g. live broadcast, website, social network site, microblogging). The complex media experience that *Voice* constructs as a second-screen production builds on the augmentation of a specific medium (the television set, the tablet, the smartphone) by implementing other media platforms and media services into the communication structure. Hereby a *synchronous* interplay is created between these media that allows different modes of user engagement and modes of interplay between users and media, e.g. to influence the content of television, such as communicating through Facebook directly with the live TV show's hosts and participants (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** The second-screen set-up in *Voice*.

There exists a considerable amount of academic work on the interplay between TV and other – typically new, digital – media, from writings on media convergence and user participation and co-creation (Jenkins 2003, 2006; Bruns 2008) to more recent writings on TV in the digital age (Bennett and Strange 2011; Holt and Samson 2014; Evans 2011). Moreover several scholars have addressed the second-screen interplay between social TV and social media such as Twitter (boyd et al. 2010; Bruns et al. 2013; Cesar and Geerts 2011; Rossi and Magnani 2012). However, we find that not much has been said about the central characteristics of second-screen communication and especially its ways of facilitating an interpersonal interaction format in the conversational relations between the producer, the produced content and the users. Our imperative is thus to investigate the modes of communication taking place across media in a popular format such as the TV talent show.

### *Conversation across media: Synchronicity*

Figure 1 displays the synchronicity of different media in *Voice*. By *synchronicity* we mean the characteristic of the second-screen cross-media set-up in which several media are co-present. In *Voice* – and we are here only dealing with the finale shows, which are the only ones broadcasted live – this set-up consists of: the broadcasted shows on TV2; the show’s website (v.tv2.dk) and TV2’s general website (tv2.dk); the show’s Facebook page; and the live chat functionalities embedded in this Facebook page. This set-up enables the users to influence the live shows, i.e. by asking questions that are posed to the participants by the show’s hosts. Furthermore, the synchronicity of the set-up also allows users to see the reactions of the show’s participants when winning or losing covered by both the live show and the constantly updated website with background information.

There is no single definition of cross-media communication, but cross-media is commonly referred to as ‘an intellectual property, service, story or experience [e.g. an entertainment production like *Voice*] that is distributed across multiple media platforms using a variety of media forms’ (Ibrus and Scolari 2012: 7) and where content is coordinated and interconnected across these media (Thomasen 2007). Cross-media TV productions such as *Voice* transgress their boundaries as stand-alone TV shows. They invite the user not just to a TV experience but to participate in a collective course of events using complex websites and social media services such as blogs, network sites, file-sharing sites and so on. And different media play specific – and coordinated – roles according to their strengths in creating this cross-media experience (Petersen 2007; Sandvik 2010).

In cross-media productions, the user can get involved, participate and have influence on several levels. The user is invited to engage and immerse herself in the production and in communities with other users, engaging in features like background materials, bonus materials, quizzes and previews. Cross-media productions enable the user to engage with various synchronously present media through ways of *composition* (e.g. selecting and consuming extra content), *participation* (e.g. discussing various content on the various media involved, such as websites, Facebook pages and so on) and *collaboration* (e.g. influencing the show through voting, etc.) (Sandvik 2011). Most frequently these modes of communication are blended together so that users make use of the different and interrelated media platforms implemented in the production design to compose, participate and collaborate while communicating with other users and with the production in question. We know this from various forms of media strategies concerning, e.g. fan communities within popular culture in which media producers create ‘opportunities for fan elaboration and collaboration’ (Jenkins 2003: 291).

However, this way of expanding and enriching the media experience by including a participation- and collaboration-oriented dimension is not just aimed at devoted fans but a strategy for engaging broader media audiences. In particular, digital media technology contributes new opportunities for the users to engage in media content and even to contribute their own content. Popular TV shows like *Voice* are cross-media programme formats that engage users by providing an experience of being part of a media event that transgresses the actual TV show and makes use of a coordinated collaboration between different media by having each media perform a specific role according to its specific affordances.



**Illustration 1:** The synchronous communication of *Voice*: TV, websites, Facebook

The cross-media production of this type of TV shows may produce an interest in participation and collaboration in the users by using the TV medium's ability to create emotional intensification: a communicative mode based on a strong sense of intimacy and immediacy (Short et.al. 1976). Accordingly, the TV show is remediating the communicational matrix of interpersonal communication through what Meyrowitz has called para-proxemic relationships,<sup>2</sup> in which the close-up (close-ups of the emotional faces of the contestants and the coaches are extensively used in the *Voice* live shows) 'corresponds to an intimate/personal [...] relationship' (1986: 253).

The way in which these TV productions create intensified moments and a sense of intimacy proves broadcast talk to be something more 'than the mere carrier of media "messages"' (Hutchby 2006: 11) – it demonstrates how TV productions seek to install a sense of familiarity and, hence, inclusiveness and sociability in the audience (Scannell 1991). As stated by Scannell,

certain aspects of everyday casual conversation are imported into the broadcaster's discourse and modified according to the distinctive institutional contexts of broadcasting – primarily [...] the fact that the main recipients of a broadcaster's talk, the audience, are not present at the time that talk is being produced. (1991: 12)

or – we may add – when it comes to live TV shows they may be present at the same time, but they are not present in the same space.

In cross-media productions like *Voice* the sense of inclusiveness and sociability is potentially increased by the inclusion of websites that extends the possibility for engagement and

interaction and introduces a possibility for participation (by implementing features like guest books, chats, blogs) and for providing a surplus of background materials about the contestants, their reactions to the coaches' comments and decisions and so on. Moreover, to this cross-media structure is added the affordance of social media for users to for example comment, discuss and so on with the production and with each other. Thus the full cross-media design of productions like *Voice* and similar concepts like *X Factor*<sup>3</sup> include streaming services (e.g. Spotify), apps for smart phones, Facebook profiles, Twitter accounts, YouTube channels, Pinterest galleries and so on, all of which create not just a shared conversational time (as with the live TV show itself) but also a shared conversational space.

### *Putting the social into social TV: Simultaneity*

Television has always been the centrepiece for a variety of social activities and the fact that TV viewers tend to occupy themselves with other things while watching TV has spawned genres such as the *soap opera* and shaped its format (narrative structure, length of episodes, transmission frequency and so on) to the needs of the target audience: the house wife busy ironing while watching. And when TV audiences in the last decade or so have been occupying themselves with various digital devices (laptops, tablets, smart phones), checking their e-mails, text messaging, updating their Facebook profile, checking out videos on YouTube and so on while watching TV, it is only a logical consequence that TV producers try to adapt to this new situation, creating applications and programme formats to benefit from this multi-tasking audience (cf. Mediatvcom.com 2012).

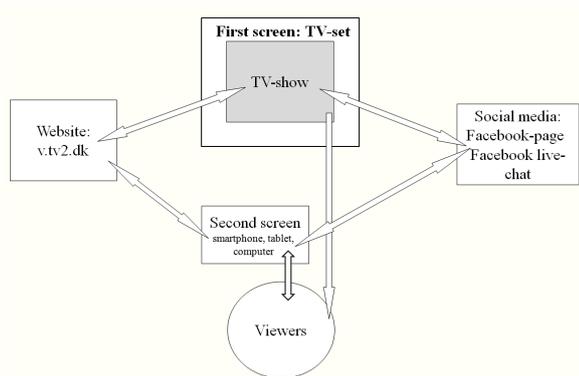
The appeal structure of second-screen productions can be explained by two main characteristics, the first being the way in which the TV becomes social in a more radical sense than just being the centrepiece for various social activities. TV is not just a setting for audiences talking about and talking to each other about what they are watching – either while watching or later (at school, at work, in the bus, etc.). The second characteristic is the way in which the second-screen set-up not only allows audiences to use the media for these kinds of communicational activities but extends the range of conversations to users all over the country or – potentially (when it comes to international broadcast events like the *Eurovision Song Contest*) – to people across nations by the use of various social media such as Facebook and Twitter. By implementing social media into the second-screen production itself, users can also communicate with hosts, judges and participants in TV shows like *X Factor* and *Voice*. As Rossi and Magnani put it in their analysis of the use of

Twitter in the Italian version of *X Factor* (2012), ‘a peculiar inter-media conversation [emerges] where people at home react to what is happening on TV and have a chance not only to comment on it publicly but also to address their comments directly to the performers’ (Rossi and Magnani 2012: 565).

So what second-screen productions imply is mediated (close) relations between users, hosts, coaches and contestants who no longer need to be situated in the same space, due to the affordances embedded in social media applications such as Facebook and Twitter to make and spread updates, postings and comments and to group them thematically by use of, e.g. *hashtags*. The introduction of affordances such as hashtags allows conversation rather than being constrained ‘within bounded spaces or groups’ to create shared spaces in which ‘many people may talk about a particular topic at once, such that others have a sense of being surrounded by a conversation, despite perhaps not being an active contributor’ (boyd et al. 2010, n.p.).

So even if TV audiences have been talking about what they have watched on TV since the emergence of this particular medium, the invention of social TV and the second-screen implementation of digital networked media constitute a fundamental shift in how people interact and socialize around television content (cf. also Cesar and Geerts 2011).

We suggest that the crucial difference is the *simultaneity* connected to the ways in which the communication between the production and its users takes place. While the communication across media in a production like the Danish version of *X Factor* typically takes place in sequences – background material is displayed and comments are made after the show has aired, user-generated content is displayed on the web or Facebook prior to the show’s airing – the acts of communication in *Voice* during the live finale show happen during broadcasting. The show thus creates a communicational structure of real-time conversations between the show, its participants and its audience – the users. Figure 2 displays the second-screen set-up: the users are watching the live shows on their TV sets (hence the single arrow) and simultaneously they are accessing the show’s website and social media (primarily Facebook) through which they interact (hence the double arrows) with the TV show, with the show’s participants (contestants, coaches, hosts) and other users.



**Figure 2:** Second-screen/cross-media communication structure in *Voice*.

## Data and method

To map and analyse the simultaneous conversational flows between parties present in the same mediated space–time continuum in the second-screen production of *Voice* as it appeared in the finale show 24 November 2012 required synchronous monitoring of: the live TV show showing the competing participants onstage, the coaches watching and commenting and the back stage area with the participants before and after their performance; the communication on the website(s) with postings of who is winning and who is losing, together with comments from the participants and the coaches; the postings and ‘likes’ on the Facebook wall; and the activity on the live-chat. Collecting data from websites and Facebook, with their constant live feeds, updates and comments being posted, is in this context the most challenging (Laursen et al. 2013). To meet this challenge we collected the same web material in three different ways: via filming, data extraction from API and web harvesting. Moreover, we supplemented this material with still images of the Facebook page.<sup>4</sup>

The analysis takes its point of departure in methods used in conversation analysis (CA), which means an examination in detail of how participants in sequentially unfolding interactions, moment by moment, produce and display their understandings of each other’s actions and other events in the situation (Sacks 1992; Sidnell and Stivers 2012). Harvey Sacks defines CA’s characteristics in his *Lectures on Conversation* (delivered in the 1970s and published in two volumes in 1992) focusing on the structures of conversation as a joint communicational effort based on *turn-taking* (cf. Sacks et al. 1974) organizing the conversational elements in sequences consisting of, e.g. *adjacency pairs* (cf. Schegloff and Sacks 1973) in which the conversational action of the first participant (interactant) determines the action of the next (typical examples of adjacency pairs are question–answer, request–grant/refusal, invitation–acceptance/declination).

CA has been applied to the analysis of some forms of online talk, especially chats and blogs (for an overview see Steensen 2013). These studies argue that online communication is inherently interactive and that different technologies and interfaces afford different kinds of interaction. For instance, technology shapes online chat in a different way from spoken communication by allowing participants to only take a turn by entering text in a box and pressing ‘send’, and the ‘turn’ reaches others only when the sent message is accepted and distributed by the remote server (Hutchby 2001). We have come across only two CA studies specifically concerning Facebook communication: Meredith and Potter (2014) use screen filming of Facebook users’ computers and demonstrate that chat messages are edited before they are sent and equally that new messages come in while initial messages are still being typed. A study by Frobenius and Harper (forthcoming) demonstrates how the communication on the Facebook wall is organized through the sequential unfolding of turns not unlike what we – taking the role of the media into consideration – find in spoken conversation. Inspired by this type of work, we will analyse how communication on *Voice*’s Facebook wall interacts with the live TV show simultaneously, involving not only ordinary users but also the TV show’s host, coaches and contestants.

In analysing the communication, we also draw on Jensen and Helles’ terms for prototypical communicative practices, one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many, which are instantiated both in face-to-face interaction and in digital as well as analogue media technologies (2011). In our analysis, we refer to these modes of interaction that, as we will demonstrate, all occur in our data material. We limit ourselves to analyse the interplay between Facebook and the TV show during a 24 hours timespan, specifically the conversational threads initiated by *Voice* on their Facebook wall before, during and after the TV show.

### **Conversational threads initiated by *Voice***

In this section, we will take a closer look at the conversations on the Facebook page initiated by *Voice*. During the 24-hour period around the show, *Voice* writes eighteen posts. These eighteen posts can be grouped into four basic action types: (1) Invitations to consume content, (2) Requests for participation, (3) Requests for collaboration and (4) Online commenting, e.g. commenting on what happens on the TV screen in real time. These four action types are timed in relation to the TV show’s airtime: (1) Invitations to consume content are present before, during and after the TV show, (2) requests for participation are made during the TV show, (3) requests for collaboration are made

before and after the show and (4) online commenting happens only during the show. An overview can be found in Table 1.

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Example</b>
Pre-show activities	Invitation to consume content	Will Lene keep her promise? [link to v.tv2.dk] Watch the show tonight, it is the final of <i>Voice</i> !
	Requests for collaboration	Last chance: What would you like to ask Andreas, Emilie, Christian or Dianna? Pose your question here or below the article. The best ones get to be on TV...
Show activities	Real-time commenting on the TV show	Here we go again! Christian, Emilie and Andreas – good luck to you all!!
	Invitation to consume content	Who was Xanders' mystery girl... [link to v.tv2.dk] Are you ready out there??? <i>Voice</i> finale is on air NOW!!!! Also take a look live at the backstage room: <a href="http://apps.facebook.com/voice_alive">http://apps.facebook.com/voice_alive</a>
	Requests for participation	<i>She said'</i> with Emilie in suit and gangster hat... Was that the right outfit for the song??
Post-show activities	Invitation to consume content	A happy finalist who has said, 'We are all winners'. v.tv2.dk has much more about Andreas and the other finalists, so take a look.
	Requests for collaboration	When the participants have left the stage, we will open the live chat, and you can chat with them all in Voice-alive – REMEMBER headset or ear phones if you want to talk!!!

**Table 1:** Activities on the Facebook page before, during and after the television show. The table is based on *Voice*'s own posts (our translation) from 12:00, 24 November to 12:00, 25 November.

### *Invitations to consume content*

Invitations to consume more content are produced and responded to in the same way before, during and after the TV show. This is an example of an invitation to consume content on v.tv2.dk and to watch the TV show before the TV show starts. The different users are marked as A, B, C, etc.:

*Voice*: Will Lene keep her promise? [link to v.tv2.dk] Watch the show tonight, it is the final of 'Voice'!

A. She is too much... Attention seeking

B. she cannot reach him :)

C. fucking crazy about her :-)

D. Too bad. Poor felix

E. Hopefully Felix is man enough to keep her at distance

F. Please leave us out of that, it will fucking ruin a nice evening Lene give your husband a kiss when you get home.

G. I hope she has forgotten that promise, am sick of her attention seeking behaviour. Thought it was about the participants??

H. She is likely to do it...

I. Yes Lene kiss your husband! Think about Felix' wife!!

J. Exactly Anja! It's too much too much! Did say to my husband that if it is like that next year I can't be bothered to watch it! Those judges should be replaced except loc and sharin! They are the only ones who behave rather normally

K. how nice this is the last evening, because the judges have been disgusting in their words and actions

L. can't wait to see Lene!!!

M. I would like to fuck Lene.

[continues. . . 23 comments in total]

**Extract 1:** *Voice* post, 24 November 2012,15:19:13 and user comments (our translation).

In interpersonal communication, invitations normatively require an acceptance or non-acceptance (Schegloff 2007). However, in this case, the invitation is not treated this way by the users. None of the users respond with 'okay I will do that' or 'no thank you I'm busy'. Overwhelmingly, the users instead use the post as an opportunity to make assessments about the show and the behaviour of the participants, in particular about Lene (one of the coaches) and Felix (the main host), mentioned in *Voice*'s postings. Thus, the users do not functionally constrain their comment to the invitation in the initiating post.

The users may understand the design of *Voice*'s postings as one-way one-to-many communication, similar to more traditional broadcast communication, with no normatively expected verbal response. *Voice* does not engage further in this conversational thread and in that way, *Voice* affirms the launched communication design as one-way one-to-many and actively disengages in taking a stance in relation to the assessments.

While *Voice* in these invitations confine their communication to one-way one-to-many, it is important to bear in mind that the second-screen combination of broadcast, web and social media create a communication platform on which not just TV's one-to-many way of communicating is remediated. *Voice* is not just posting to a faceless crowd but to a group of users defined by their Facebook profile names and pictures and existing within the same shared time and space; hence, the whole production facilitates a space in which the users can engage in dialogic one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communication. First of all, the users' assessments of Lene and her provoking behaviour towards Felix, which do not refer to *Voice*'s invitation to watch the show, but rather to the question 'Will Lene keep her promise?' (which refers to the coach promising to kiss the host if winning), demonstrate that the users are engaging in dialogic one-to-one communication

with *Voice*. But the users also address the group of users present in this thread in what could be regarded as one-to-many communication: As earlier mentioned, the assessments do not respond specifically to *Voice*'s post. Instead, they refer to the earlier post with general statements like 'She is too much... Attention seeking' (A).

Second, several users also engage in dialogic one-to-one communication with each other: for instance, user E's comment 'Hopefully Felix is man enough to keep her at distance' can be seen as a direct response to the preceding user's comment: 'Too bad. Poor felix' (D). In turn, J responds to E in the same way as G responds to A: 'I hope she has forgotten that promise, am sick of her attention seeking behaviour. Thought it was about the participants??'. Finally, since many users are responding not only to *Voice* but to each other, their communication can also be characterized as many-to-many communication.

### *Requests for participation*

Requests for participation are different from invitations to consume content in that users are encouraged to voice their opinion and discuss the content. Requests for participation happen during the TV show. This can be done by asking a question related to what is going on in the show:

Voice: 'She said' with Emilie in suit and gangster hat... Was that the right outfit to the song??

A: ABSOLUTELY

B: Totally cool outfit yes :)

C: yes very good

D: Cool <3

E: Yes mega<33

F: No...she seems to have a problem in finding herself...

G: Winner of the evening :)

H: Mega awesome!!!

I: Amazing <3

J: Emilie YOU have received my vote

[14 similar comments left out of presentation]

K: OUT with him the RIDICULOUS Zander!!!!!!

L: She looked super cool and hot. YUMMY!! And she also sings fucking damn well – they all 4 do. Unfortunately my favourite is Christian, because he sings just that bit better than the others. :)

[continues ... 130 comments in total]

**Extract 3:** *Voice* post, 24 November 2012, 21:45:15 and user comments (our translation).

*Voice*'s question is a straightforward and rather harmless yes/no question regarding the choice of outfit for participant Emilie. Thus, *Voice* initiates a rather tame dialogue, which can be characterized as two-way one-to-many communication.

Many users respond with an answer in line with the sequential question–answer format initiated by *Voice*: ‘ABSOLUTELY’ (A), ‘Totally cool outfit yes :)’ (B), ‘yes very good’ (C). Again, some users do not only respond to *Voice*, but also to each other: E’s answer ‘Yes mega<33’ (E) is in its design also a response to the previous user comment: ‘Cool <3’ (D). Still, some users do not constrain themselves to the format laid out by *Voice*: one user addresses the participant in the show directly: ‘Emilie YOU have received my vote’ (J). And two users make a broader evaluation not attached to *Voice*'s question: ‘OUT with him the RIDICULOUS Zander!!!!!!’ (K), ‘[...] And she also sings fucking damn well – they all 4 do. Unfortunately my favourite is Christian, because he sings just that bit better than the others. :)’ (L). In no cases, does *Voice* respond to the user comments.

### *Requests for collaboration*

While requests for participation encourage users to voice their opinion about the show, requests for collaboration encourage users to influence the show. This happens before and after the TV show.

In cases of requests for collaboration, *Voice* uses the Facebook wall like a mediator. In the following example, *Voice* elicits questions from the participants in the TV show:

*Voice*: Last chance: What would you like to ask Andreas, Emilie, Christian or Dianna? Pose your question here or below the article. The best ones get to be on TV...

A: What has been the biggest challenge during the season?

B: Just want to know if Adreas is in the show just to promote his own band Best Mark

C: ^^ to them all.

D: How would they react if they won?

E: I WANT TO BE EMILIE!

F: Andreas: What have you liked the most in working with Xander?

G: Emilie: what's it like to be in voice? My vote definitely goes to you

H: to all: what's your dream after voice?

I: Andreas: do you have kind of a 'ritual' before you enter the stage? :-)

[18 comments left out for this presentation]

J: Christian: if you win, will you come and sing at my mum's 50 years anniversary? :D

[continues ... 129 comments in total]

**Extract 2:** *Voice* post, 24 November 2012, 17:24:15 and user comments (our translation).



**Illustration 2:** Host reads out a question to participant from the Facebook page, 24 November 2012, 22:15:15

In cases like this, *Voice*'s communication is one-way only. Despite the request–response format, no real dialogue is displayed here. Instead, a direct interaction between the users and the show is established (Illustration 2).

A great many users respond to *Voice*'s post by accepting the request and formulating a question to one or more participants in the TV show, i.e. 'Christian: if you win, will you come and sing at my mum's 50 years anniversary?:D' (J). Notably, the questions are formulated in such a way that they can be quoted directly – and they are (see Illustration 2). In this way, the users sanction *Voice*'s role as a mediator between the Facebook page and the TV screen and between the users and the participants in the show. Interestingly, some users also use the commenting section as a more open opportunity for general statements, which are not functionally constrained to *Voice*'s initiating post: 'I WANT TO BE EMILIE!' (E). In neither case does *Voice* engage in further dialogue.

### *Real-time commenting on the TV show*

During the TV show *Voice* posts comments, which describe what is going on in the show in real time. For instance, when the TV show continues after the break, the post goes 'Here we go again! Christian, Emilie and Andreas – good luck to you all!!'. Similarly, when a participant is voted out, the post says 'Yet another talented and wonderful singer must leave the finale. We have enjoyed your company every single time. Let's applaud' [picture of participant]. And, within seconds of the winner announcement, the post proclaims: 'May we present THE LARGEST VOICE OF DANMARK' [picture of participant]. In this way, *Voice* creates a here-and-now connection between the Facebook page and the TV show and between the users and the participants.

Some of *Voice*'s real-time posts are literally addressed to the participants in the TV show, for example: 'Christian, Emilie and Andreas – good luck to you all!!' or 'CONGRATULATIONS FROM ALL OF VOICE'. However, the participants in the show have no opportunity to see or respond to these posts, at least not in real time when they are onstage in the TV show. Thus, these posts may rather be directed at the users and display the voice of the users. These posts correspond with the posts addressed directly to the users, encouraging them to 'give an applaud'. In both cases, the posts are formatted as one-way one-to-many communication, but yield responses that also create one-to-one and many-to-many flows.

The users respond by matching *Voice*'s posts: when *Voice* posts 'best wishes' and 'good luck', the users overwhelmingly also do so:

*Voice*: Here we go again! Christian, Emilie and Andreas – good luck to you all!!

A: ANDERS! you got to win

B: Come on Emilie ;)

C: CHRISTIAN !!!! <3 :D

D: *VOTE for EMILIE* ;-)

E: uh it is exciting...come on Emilie...

F: Christian ;O)))

G: Loc!!!

H: ANDREAS!!!! Crossing my fingers;D

I: *Orh it is exciting, Man!!!!*

[8 similar comments left out of this presentation]

J: liam is the only one running this program

K: Team Liam!

L: It is not about Liam as a person but as coach – learn how to distinguish

[continues ... 137 comments in total]

**Extract 4:** *Voice* post, 24 November 2012, 22:47:01 and user comments (our translation).

While most users match *Voice*'s post on good luck, some users seem to expand the format laid out by *Voice*: 'VOTE for EMILIE ;-)' (D). This user post is not only wishing good luck, it is also calling for action, i.e. to vote by mobile phone. In addition, some users make use of the commenting section for more general assessments, which deviate from *Voice*'s initiating post: 'Orh it is exciting, Man!!!!' (I), 'liam is the only one running this program' (J).

In matching *Voice*'s post on good luck and making more general assessments about the TV show, the users mirror *Voice*'s one-way one-to-many communication. However, a few users also respond to each other: As a response to 'liam is the only one running this program' (J), a user writes: 'It is not about Liam as a person but as coach – learn how to distinguish' (L). In this way,

some users engage in sequences of many-to-many communication and display the mutual awareness and interrelatedness of interpersonal communication, although it never develops into a longer dialogue.

## **Discussion**

This study has shown how the *Voice* production facilitates a shared time and space in which the users can engage in dialogic one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communication. In this way the production generates communication that transgresses the para-social characteristics of broadcast talk and presents itself as interpersonal conversations. Specifically, we have demonstrated how *Voice*'s initiating posts during 24 hours around and during the finale show can be grouped into four basic action types: (1) Invitations to extra content, (2) Requests for participation, (3) Requests for collaboration and (4) Online commenting, e.g. commenting on what happens on the TV screen in real time. These action types are timed differently in relation to the TV show's airtime.

Notably, these four action types make up a general address to *Voice*'s audience as traditional one-to-many communication. Moreover, except for Requests for participation and the question-answer format, they are all formatted as one-way communication. This means that despite the fact that the whole production facilitates a time and space in which the users and the production can engage in dialogic one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communication, *Voice* makes use of a rather traditional form of broadcast communication in its own posts. In spite of this, users respond with both one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communication: they may respond to *Voice*'s initiating post or to an individual user (one-to-one), or they may use the commenting section to make more general assessments and thereby deviate from the sequential structure encouraged by *Voice*'s initiating post (one-to-many, many-to-many). In no cases does *Voice* engage in the interaction sequence after a user's response.

On a grander scheme, the communication between *Voice* and its users can be put into perspective by relating the four basic action types in *Voice*'s initiating posts to user response forms in cross-media productions:

<i>Voice's</i> initiating posts	Users' response forms
Invitations to consume content	Composition, participation
Requests for participation	Participation
Requests for collaboration	Collaboration, participation
Online commenting	Participation

**Table 2:** The four basic action types in *Voice's* initiating posts related to user response forms in cross-media productions.

Again, it is obvious that users do not functionally constrain themselves to *Voice's* eliciting actions in their responses.

Regarded as interaction, the conversation between *Voice* and the users is fundamentally based on the norms of face-to-face conversation. Social actions such as invitations, requests, assessments and cheering, which are common in our material, are all well known from interpersonal face-to-face conversations. However, major differences are observable: by design, *Voice's* posts address more than one person and, if there is no response or if the user does not match the action in the initiating post, there is no follow-up. Thus, the normative expectations of a response seem weak. Moreover, in case of a user response or a user address, *Voice* does not return to respond. Similarly, while fundamentally based on the norms of face-to-face conversation, the users' posts are in many cases detached from the actions in *Voice's* initiating posts: the users may just use the commenting section to make general assessments about the show and the behaviour of the participants. In this way, *Voice's* communication can be regarded as one-to-many communication, and with many users commenting in that way, this form of communication can be compared to a choir of audience shouts at a football stadium.

Hence, while *Voice* may initiate conversation, the production does not really make use of the potential for participating in a dialogue. Therefore, *Voice* does not seem to take the role as a conversational partner on the Facebook page; rather the programme is a one-way channel of information and a mediator between users as well as between participants in the show and the users. Correspondingly, users may not be willing to participate in a dialogue with the *Voice* production, or with other users. Obviously, the technological and situational set-up is crucial for the communication and it plays as such a significant part in the shaping of communication. The set-up partly accounts for *Voice's* one-to-many traditional broadcasting and for the users' one-to-many cheering and assessing. However, as we have pointed out earlier, the second-screen interplay

between live TV, web and social media may allow for a more extended use of simultaneous conversations between production and its users than is the case in this particular production.

## **Conclusion**

In methodological terms, this research adds to the existing literature on cross-media communication by studying the synchronous interplay between two media (or media platforms) and the simultaneous communication flows this interplay enables in a cross-media second-screen production. In most works on cross-media communication, media have been studied separately or in sequence focusing on content being transported from one medium to the next. Or media have been studied as asynchronously linked, which is the case in studies of productions that include user-created content; studies that focus on ‘the very activity of the media user in contributing to, and being involved in, the construction of elaborate narratives – that provides users with the means to act in the field of consumption’ (Bolin 2012: 157–58).

In analytical terms, the study adds to cross-media research in studying how different media are organized and coordinated in a cross-media production in synchronous time. It shows that communication is organized both socially and sequentially across media. The study also adds to mediated communication research. It shows that while conversational structures and logics seem to be implemented into new media forms (TV, digital media), they do not simply appear as para-social interactions (Horton and Wohl 1956) or mere remediations of face-to-face talk; rather, these structures and logics appear as new versions of intimate, (inter)personal communication, augmented by various media technologies and services and performed in a shared mediated time–space continuum.

This study contributes to recent discussions about digital multitasking and second-screen applications. Frequently, such discussions are carried out without paying any detailed attention to the actual practices of the productions and the users involved. We provide qualitative evidence of the quantitative numbers on digital multitasking. Finally, our examination of an actual cross-media production with a second-screen application has shown how the technological and situational set-up of the production yields an environment in which new interactions and thus new communicational flows come into play.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Common to international TV entertainment formats like *X Factor* and *Voice* is that very few changes are made from one country's production to another: rules and production design (including visuals, graphics, etc.) are fixed.

<sup>2</sup> Proxemics understood in the line of E.T. Hall's distinction between four modes of proximity: intimate, personal, social and public (1969).

<sup>3</sup> *X Factor* is a talent show created by Simon Cowell (2004) and produced in countries all over the world. In Denmark, the show is produced by Blu for DR, the largest broadcasting company in Denmark (2008-2014).

<sup>4</sup> For a more elaborated account of the challenges connected with collecting data from Facebook, see Laursen et al. (2013).