

The Business of Children's Television

Third edition



screen Digest

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Children watch the same popular programmes as the rest of the audience at most times of day: reality TV shows, music programmes, soaps and sports. Already, private broadcasters without any regulatory obligation to serve the audience have pulled out – such as RTL and Pro Sieben, the largest commercial networks in Germany, and RTL4 in the Netherlands. Advertising restrictions make it even harder to make a profit from serving the children’s audience. Even relatively low adult audiences in daytime are likely to generate more advertising sales than children’s programming.

However, the rise of thematic channels has not significantly reduced the amount of children’s television on generalist channels. Indeed, the overall number of hours has increased in the countries surveyed in this report over the last five years.

A number of broadcasters – including many public service organisations – have increased output. Belgian public broadcasters RTBF and VRT both showed more children’s programming in 2006 than in 2001. The same is true of YLE in Finland, Rai in Italy, NRK in Norway and TVE in Spain. Overall terrestrial output also increased in the Netherlands, UK and Australia.

There are three main reasons:

- It is implicit to the mission of public broadcasters to serve all age groups, including children. Commercial broadcasters also have a long-term incentive to serve the children’s audience by recruiting them as customers early on.
- Returns from advertising and sponsorship aimed at children may be unreliable, but licensing offers a potential upside. Germany’s Super RTL is one of the leading children’s broadcasters in Germany and is very active in licensing and merchandising.
- Some broadcasters have adopted a “half-way house” approach, launching branded children’s blocks rather than full-scale channels. Main examples include the public broadcasters in the Netherlands, who air the Z@pp (preschool) and Z@ppelin (older children) blocks on the Nederland 3 channel, and VRT’s Ketnet in the Flemish region on Belgium.

Belgium: Annual output of children’s programmes in hours

generalist channels	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
RTBF (1&2)							
Hours of children’s output	na	878	203	1,736	1,959	1,900	1,900
Children’s as % of total output	na	6.5%	2.0%	15.0%	15.5%	na	na
Ketnet							
Hours of children’s output	na	1,521	1,750	1,849	2,116	2,116	2,116
Children’s as % of total output	na		42.5%	45.9%	50.5%		
Club RTL							
Hours of children’s output	1,599	1,599	1,599	1,599	1,599	1,599	1,599
Children’s as % of total output			24.3%	21.5%	19.6%	21.9%	
VTM							
Hours of children’s output	936	936	936	936	936	936	936
Children’s as % of total output	12.8%	12.8%	12.8%	12.8%	12.8%	12.8%	12.8%
VT4							
Hours of children’s output	1,388	1,388	1,388	1,388	1,388	1,388	1,388
Children’s as % of total output	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%

Source: Screen Digest

Spending on originated programmes: terrestrial TV (€ millions)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Belgium	10.3	12.4	13.5	15.9	15.5
Denmark	13.1	16.7	13.3	13.3	13.4
Finland	7.5	8.5	9.0	8.7	8.5
France	40.0	37.4	41.7	45.8	51.7
Germany	83.7	74.4	81.0	71.1	75.6
Italy	16.6	18.2	18.2	19.2	19.2
Netherlands	23.0	25.1	24.0	22.7	22.0
Norway	2.6	2.7	3.4	3.7	3.7
Spain	16.2	16.2	16.2	16.2	16.2
Sweden	11.3	13.4	12.6	12.5	12.3
UK	122.0	97.0	99.7	101.2	75.3
Canada	43.3	21.1	21.0	37.0	22.6
USA	83.8	84.0	76.3	71.6	89.2
Australia	29.9	25.8	24.1	24.3	23.9
New Zealand	3.2	2.7	2.4	2.6	2.5

Source: Screen Digest

Spending on originated programmes: cable and satellite TV (€ millions)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Belgium					
Denmark	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Finland					
France	4.3	6.2	6.7	6.8	6.4
Germany					
Italy	0.5	0.8	1.4	1.6	1.6
Netherlands					
Norway	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Spain	0.6	0.7	0.7	2.4	2.4
Sweden	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
UK	22.0	33.1	42.3	46.0	67.8
Canada	68.0	29.5	27.3	44.9	25.7
USA	114.6	145.2	130.5	148.8	123.7
Australia	0.9	1.2	1.9	2.5	2.6
New Zealand					

Source: Screen Digest

Regulations relating to children's television continued

Italy	
Contract of Service 2007-2009	<p>Under a contract of service agreed with the Ministry of Communications, public broadcaster Rai is required to provide programmes aimed at children with an educational and cultural aim. During the 7am – 10.30pm time slot, devoted to family viewing, the programme schedule will take into account the needs and sensibilities of children and adolescents, avoiding the broadcast of programmes containing scenes of gratuitous violence or episodes that can produce anxiety, terror or distress in children.</p> <p>In the same time slot, on generalist terrestrial television channels, children's programmes will be assigned a quota of no less than 10% of the annual programming schedule. Children's programmes lasting less than 30 minutes and cartoons shall not include commercial breaks. Commercial breaks before and after cartoons shall not include characters from those cartoons.</p> <p>Article 10 of the service contract also includes a specific provision for investment in animation: Rai has to invest 15 per cent of its turnover on various kinds of Italian and European content and 5% of this sum must be spent on "cartoons and/or animation films produced specifically for children".</p>
Norway	
Broadcasting Act 2005	Section 3-1: Advertisements may not be broadcast in connection with children's programmes, nor may advertisements be specifically directed at children.
Spain	
Code of television content and children 2004	Self-regulation code governing suitable content for children signed by all major broadcasters
Sweden	
Radio and TV Law 1996	Advertising during a TV broadcast may not have as its objective capturing the attention of children under 12 years of age; Advertisements may not come immediately before or after a program or a portion of a program which is oriented primarily to children under 12 years of age
Digital Terrestrial TV Act 1999	DTT broadcasters must not show sponsorship aimed at children under 12
UK	
Communications Act 2003	<p>The Communications Act 2003 established a new regulatory body called the Office of Communications (Ofcom) responsible for broadcasting and telecommunications services. The duties of Ofcom include agreeing with the UK's public service broadcasters (the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Five) minimum levels of original programming, independent productions and public services genres, including childrens' programming.</p> <p>Original programming quotas</p> <p>Quotas are applies to all day transmissions and to primetime (6pm to 10.30pm). These range from 70 per cent for the BBC channels to 65 per cent for ITV1 and 53 per cent for the newest channel, Five. The BBC's digital channels Cbeebies and CBBC have original content quotas of 80 per cent and 70 per cent respectively. In 2005, all Five was the only channel to miss its target. Original programmes are defined as commissions from broadcasters either to in-house production resources or from independents.</p> <p>Independent programme quotas</p> <p>The Communications Act set a level of 25 per cent of output that broadcasters must commission from independent producers. The BBC commissioned 28 per cent of its childrens' programmes from independents in 2005 across all of its channels. For ITV1, it was 77 per cent, Channel 4 commissioned no childrens' programmes, and Five's figure was 81 per cent.</p>
Communications Act	ITV1 is required by agreement to transmit a minimum of five hours a week of childrens' programmes. Five has to show at least ten hours.

Source: Screen Digest