



University
of Glasgow

Light, Julie J. (2004) *Television channel identity: the role of channels in the delivery of public service television in Britain, 1996-2002.*

PhD thesis

<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/3939/>

Copyright and moral rights for this thesis are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

University of Glasgow
Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies

**Television Channel Identity: the Role of
Channels in the Delivery of Public Service
Television in Britain, 1996 - 2002**

Julie J Light
PhD Thesis
August 2004

© Julie Light 2004

Abstract

This thesis examines the developing role of television channels in the delivery of public service broadcasting in Britain, 1996 - 2002. Starting from a hypothesis that channels are distinct television products in their own right and increasingly important in organising how broadcasters think about their audiences, it argues that channels have identities expressed through their schedules and determined by their relationship to genre and target audience.

Based on research at the BBC (from 1998 – 2002), involving interviews with key staff and the analysis of BBC documents, this study examines the television broadcasting functions of commissioning, scheduling, marketing and audience research. It illustrates how these activities created specific identities for television channels and how these identities shaped the programming that reached television screens. It reveals how channels became increasingly important in the television landscape as buyers in a more demand-led commissioning economy and acted as a focus for the creation of media brands. It then discusses how the evolution of a channel portfolio enabled each channel to play a specific role in fulfilling public service obligations and looks at how different models of audience emerged in relation to the different public service television channels, charting the decline of the mass audience and the emergence of the visualisation of audiences in a more individualised way.

The thesis concludes by addressing some implications of these developments. It looks at how the different models of audience in circulation affect debates about quality television, and how changing ideas about the construction of public service channels may impact on the regulation of broadcasting. Finally, it explores the effect of multiple channels, each targeted at specific audiences, on the concept of a unitary public sphere and speculates that channels have the potential to underpin the creation of multiple imagined communities.

**Television Channel Identity: the Role of Channels in the Delivery of Public Service
Television in Britain, 1996 - 2002 1**

Abstract	2
Chapter 1: Introduction	6
1.1 The hypothesis of this thesis.....	6
1.2 The theoretical approach and context of this thesis.....	7
1.3 The research questions.....	8
1.4 The television industry context	9
1.5 The structure of the thesis	10
Chapter 2: Literature Review	13
2.1 Overview	13
2.2 The study of cultural production	13
2.3 Television channels and television as a medium	14
2.4 The characteristics of public service broadcasting	18
2.5 The role of the BBC	24
2.6 Thinking about audiences	27
2.7 Conclusions	34
Chapter 3: Methodology	37
3.1 Scope	37
3.2 Methods	39
3.3 The overall critical approach	48
Chapter 4: A brief history of channel-based broadcasting	52
4.1 Overview	52
4.2 The early development of terrestrial channels in the UK	53
4.2 Parallels with BBC Radio	59
4.3 Changes in the UK media industry and the development of multichannel television ..	62
4.4 Background to the BBC	65
4.5 Conclusions	70
Chapter 5: Television commissioning at the BBC	72
5.1 Overview	72
5.2 The development of the BBC commissioning process 1996 –2001	73
5.3 Commissioning for channels	80
5.4 Commissioning public service television	90
5.5 Commissioning for BBC1 and BBC2	99
5.6 Conclusions	106
Chapter 6: Scheduling public service television	109

Contents

6.1 Overview	109
6.2 The established scheduling process	110
6.3 The new art of scheduling	116
6.4 Scheduling and the everyday	125
6.5 Conclusions.....	131
Chapter 7: Branding, marketing and on air identity	134
7.1 Overview	134
7.2 Television and the development of media branding	135
7.3 The development of marketing at the BBC	137
7.4 Defining channels as brands	141
7.5 The mechanics of metonymic promotion	145
7.6 On-air promotion: trails and media planning	150
7.7 On-air promotion: the channel identities	155
7.8 Conclusions	162
7.9 Examples of BBC on-air identities	164
Chapter 8: Understanding audiences	170
8.1 Overview	170
8.2 The industry, the organisation, the staff and ideas of audience	171
8.3 Conceptual models of the audience	176
8.4 Audiences as numbers	184
8.5 Visualising a segmented audience	188
8.6 Audiences for channels	196
8.7 Some implications of a new approach to audiences	209
8.8 Conclusions	211
Chapter 9:Developing identities for BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge	213
9.1 Overview	213
9.2 BBC Choice to BBC3	214
9.3 BBC Knowledge to BBC4.....	227
9.4 Conclusions.....	236
Chapter 10: Conclusions	239
10.1 Overview	239
10.2 Reviewing the arguments of the thesis	240
10.3 A coming of age, or the death of the channel?	244
10.4 Some implications for public service broadcasting	246
10.5 Some final thoughts.....	255
References	257
Appendices	267

Contents

Appendix I: Glossary of terms and abbreviations	267
Appendix II: Chronology	269
Appendix III: Themes for semi-structured interviews	271
Appendix IV: Coding framework used with NVivo.....	273
Appendix V: BBC organisational structures 1990 – 2003	278
Appendix VI: Expenditure, share and reach for BBC Channels in 2003.....	280

List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Interviewees according to channel focus.....	41
Figure 3.2: Interviewees according to primary role	41
Figure 3.3: Table showing purpose of documentary data.....	45
Figure 3.4: Table showing documentary data by type	45
Figure 5.1: The BBC public service and UKTV channels mapped against intended generic and audience profile.....	91
Figure 7.1: Historic BBC1 globe and BBC2 clock.....	165
Figure 7.2: BBC1 and BBC2 idents from the late 1980s.....	165
Figure 7.3: BBC1 ident from the early 1990s.....	165
Figure 7.4: BBC2 idents from the early to late 1990s	166
Figure 7.5: BBC2 idents from the mid to late 1990s	166
Figure 7.6: BBC1 idents from the late 1990s	167
Figure 7.7: BBC1 idents from the late 1990s	167
Figure 7.8: BBC1 ident from the late	167
Figure 7.9: BBC2 idents from 2002.....	168
Figure 7.10: BBC1 idents from 2002	168
Figure 7.11: News bulletin idents from the late 1980s	169
Figure 7.12: News bulletin idents from the early 2000s.....	169
Figure 8.1: Four clusters of 'Tribes'.....	194
Figure 9.1: BBC Choice ident, 1999	226
Figure 9.2: The BBC3 'Blobs', 2003	227
Figure 9.3: BBC3 logo, 2003.....	227
Figure 9.4: BBC Knowledge ident, 1999.....	230

Chapter 1: Introduction

In all the writing, thinking and debate about television, there has been little attention paid to the phenomenon of the television channel. Channels are integral to the way that television is structured and organised, and yet it seems that we take them almost entirely for granted, if not as viewers, then certainly as objects of study. This thesis examines the significance of channels as part of the television medium, uncovering their increasing importance in the UK over recent years as a means of shaping televisual content. In doing so, it exposes how channels contribute to the organisation of the delivery of public service broadcasting, discovering at the same time new ways of looking at the relationship between broadcaster and audience.

1.1 The hypothesis of this thesis

Channels exist alongside programmes and genres as a way that television organises its content and its relationship with its audiences. Whilst this has not always been the case – channels were initially primarily wavelengths for the distribution of programming – over recent years channels have emerged as a significant means through which content is defined and targeted at viewers. This change reflects developments in the media industry in the way that broadcasters visualise their audiences and develop programming for those audiences.

Channels organise broadcast content in this respect in two ways. Firstly, channels are created with meaning and identity formed through new commissioning, scheduling and marketing practices. These practices have brought a coherence and consistency to channel schedules, making channels products of the broadcasting process in their own right. Secondly, channels are now deliberately targeted at specific audiences; as part of their creation they are imbued with a consistent tone and style deemed appropriate by the broadcaster for that audience, as well as being infused with assumptions about what those audiences require from broadcasting and how they live their lives.

The consistency and meaning accumulated by channels during their creation makes it possible now to see channels as having a textual existence at the level of the schedule, a macro text encompassing many programmes and interstitial

materials¹. Through the same acquisition of identity and meaning, channels have also taken a role in addressing and constructing audiences. Channels have therefore become cultural products in their own right.

In a public service context, channels feature as an important part of the strategy for defining and organising the delivery of public service broadcasting. In addition, the identities of the public service channels and the way in which these represent particular visualisations of target audiences have a significant impact on what kind of public service television reaches audiences and on the representations of audience in circulation in discussions of television and the media. The study of channels therefore provides a different way to examine the fulfilment of traditional public service obligations as well as helping to define new ways of thinking about public service television in the future.

1.2 The theoretical approach and context of this thesis

Based on the hypothesis that channels now form part of the structure of television, this is essentially a study of the form of television. Channels are the basis of television's 'flow', and an element of its architecture (see Williams, 1974; Jensen, 1996, Ellis, 1982 and 2000), and, possibly, they are as critical to the television experience as serial forms of programming (see Browne, 1987; Ellis, 1982 or Scannell, 1996). It would be possible to approach a study of channels from three main perspectives: the production of channels, the channel text or from the point of view of audiences' experience of channel, and I had to accept that it was not possible to address all three in any detail within the bounds of a single thesis. Of the three, I chose to look at how channels were produced. Building on a renewed interest and call for understanding of television production (see Frith, 2000), a study addressing a completely new area of television production should be a welcome addition to the field. As a production study, it can nonetheless contribute to the formulation of intellectual questions in other areas of television and cultural studies, raising issues that could later be picked up in studies from the perspective of text or audience. Moores, for instance, suggests that we need to understand better 'the efforts of those working within the TV industry to overcome the physical and social distances that separate them from their audiences' (2001:103). This study specifically examines broadcasters' efforts to understand, reflect and reach their audiences through targeted television channels. Finally, as someone working within the television industry, issues of production are of particular personal interest to me

and I have been in a position to get an unusual level of access to information about the production process and associated practices.

As a production study of channels, this thesis takes on two specific tasks. Most importantly, it examines the implications of channel-based broadcasting in public service context in the UK. In the absence of any studies focusing specifically on the role of channels as part of the television form (as opposed to case studies of channels) there are findings that may be applicable to other types of broadcaster and to public service broadcasters experiencing similar conditions elsewhere in the world (see, for example, Ytreberg, 2000a, on Scandinavian parallels). The second task of the thesis, in the absence of other sources of such information, is to document some of the processes underpinning the production of channels, providing an analysis of commissioning, scheduling, audience research and branding practices that are less well understood than programme production techniques. As this is a production study, it is also worth stressing that the research only deals with audiences from the perspective of broadcasters and not with 'the social world of actual audiences' (Ang, 1991:13) and that what might be considered as the channel text also only appears from the broadcasters' point of view.

The research for this study was based within a single organisation, the BBC, which, as the biggest public service broadcaster in the world and a dominant player in UK television, makes an excellent site from within which to examine channel-based broadcasting in relation to the delivery of public service television. It should be noted, however, that the primary focus of the study is not the organisation itself but the importance of channels to a public service broadcaster and the resulting television offering. The study does not focus on the influence of specific individuals or personalities, nor analyse different interpretations of the production process; in short, it is not an ethnography of the BBC. Ultimately, what this thesis can offer is a new perspective on the study of television form and production, examining a developing phenomenon which previously has not been accorded much attention.

1.3 The research questions

The main strands of the hypothesis led to a number of specific research questions which underpinned the research activities and subsequent writing of this thesis. The two major research questions, with some of their subsidiary questions, were these:

- **How far can channels be understood as cultural products of television in the late 1990s and early 2000s and how is this manifested?**
 - Are public service television channels at the BBC produced to have meanings and identities in themselves, over and above those of the programmes shown on the channels?
 - What evidence is there that new channel commissioning, scheduling and branding practices are encouraging the development of meanings and identities across programmes and other on-air materials?
 - Which ideas about and models of the audience circulate and have currency in the broadcasting process. In particular which models have most impact on the development and expression of channel propositions?
- **How far do broadcasters' perceptions of the relationships between channels and audiences define the framework for public service television during this period?**
 - How far and in what ways are audiences 'constructed' by public service television channels?
 - How have the 'traditional' public service values relating to particular models of audience been affected by the development of channel identity?
 - How has the development of multiple public service channels affected the constitution of the 'public sphere'?

1.4 The television industry context

This research took place at a time when multichannel broadcasting had become an everyday reality for broadcasters in the UK. By the early 2000s there were several hundred channels accessible to television viewers and the competitive environment within which broadcasters were operating had dramatically changed from the situation twenty years before when only three terrestrial channels were available. One BBC Executive Committee member characterised this by repeatedly referring to the media industry as having reached 'conditions of near perfect competition'².

This transition from an analogue 'age of scarcity' to a digital 'age of plenty' (Ellis, 2000) in terms of television channels is one which people in the industry and

as viewers have, perhaps, experienced differently. Someone with access only to the current five terrestrial channels may feel that some elements of this thesis are less relevant than someone who has subscribed to satellite or digital television for some time. I personally only felt the 'reality' of multiple channels when I started to receive DTT (digital terrestrial transmission) part-way through my research. However, for those working in television broadcasting, the multichannel world was a fact of life from the start of my research and television output has been shaped by that perception. By 2002, 41.2% of homes in the UK received more than the basic five channels, making this study of undoubted relevance to the overall broadcasting picture³.

Predictions about the convergence of the major communications technologies and its effects were prevalent during the period of this research (see, for example, Chalaby and Segell, 1999:355 or Meier, 2003). However, this study recognises that for many, including those involved in the creation of much television content, the experience of convergence is still some time away. This thesis deals with television as a distinct medium, as it was generally produced and expected to be viewed during the research period. It touches on some of the new technologies that arrived during that time, including electronic programme guides (EPGs) and personal video recorders (PVRs) and it acknowledges the existence and growth of the internet, but it is not at all a study focusing on these developments. It is instead uncompromisingly and fundamentally a study of a longer extant form of television.

1.5 The structure of the thesis

The thesis falls into two main parts. The first sets out the theoretical context, reviews the literature, explains the methodology for the research and deals with some of the history and organisational context which underpin the analysis later in the thesis. *Chapter 2*, the literature review, situates the idea of channels within and against theories of the development of television in Britain. It examines shifts in the understanding of what it means to be a public service broadcaster in the UK, and how thinking about audiences for television has evolved, specifically from the point of view of the producer. It also introduces key concepts relating to the nature of the television medium and examines the interplay between these and ideas about public service broadcasting. *Chapter 3* deals with methodological issues relating to the research. As well as discussing selection of the channels in the study, it argues for the use of qualitative research methodology and gives the theoretical background

supporting this choice. It explains the rationale behind the selection of data sources and outlines the specific approach to the analysis of documents, interviews and on-screen materials. *Chapter 4* provides the industry and institutional context of the study of channels and includes an analysis of the development of channel identity in relation to the growth in the number and availability of channels. In particular, this chapter traces the relationship between shifts in the media environment, the BBC organisation and key ideas of public service broadcasting.

The second part of the thesis introduces the body of the research findings and is organised to follow elements of the broadcasting process. *Chapter 5* deals with the business of commissioning programmes for public service channels. It analyses changes in the process from the mid 1990s to the early 2000s and examines their implications. By exploring how ideas about audience and channel identity inform commissioning strategy and practices, it draws out how channels are constituted through programmes and programmes are defined by channel. It also introduces a discussion of the relationship between channel and genre. Scheduling is the main theme of *Chapter 6*, which traces the new scheduling practices that developed alongside commissioning, and in particular examines the tactics used to create meaning across the schedule, thereby contributing to the creation of channel identity. It then reflects on the relationship between scheduling, audience and the everyday. *Chapter 7* focuses on branding, marketing and on-air presentation. It examines how branding strategies adopted from other sectors have been introduced both to the television industry and the public service context and looks at the implications of an emerging marketing discourse in a public service broadcasting environment. As well as dealing with on-air identity building for channels, it addresses how understanding channels as brands defines perceptions of audience. *Chapter 8* is devoted to an analysis of models of audience. It looks at BBC audience research initiatives and analyses the models and perceptions of audience evident within these and the BBC's decision-making and communication practices. This leads to a more specific discussion of the models of audience involved in the expression of the relationship between channels and audiences, asking whether there is a consistent view of audiences underlying the practical provision of public service television. Finally, this chapter looks at how the organisation of broadcasting by channel works to 'construct' audiences. *Chapter 9* examines how an understanding of channel identity can reveal how broadcaster's perception of its audiences have developed in an era of digital broadcasting and sheds light on options for public service broadcasting provision. It does this through case studies

tracing the evolution of BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge from their inception to their reincarnations as BBC3 and BBC4.

Chapter 10 brings the thesis to a close by taking stock of the implications of channel-based broadcasting for public service television. It looks at how the different models of audience in circulation affect debates about quality television, and how changing ideas about the construction of public service channels may impact on the regulation of broadcasting. It explores the effect of multiple channels, each targeted at specific audiences, on the concept of a unitary public sphere and speculates on the potential for channels to underpin the creation of multiple imagined communities.

Notes

¹ See glossary.

² At BBC internal communications events, 2000 - 2001

³ BBC Audience Research, January 2002.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

The work discussed in this chapter is drawn from a variety of disciplines within the broad literature of media and cultural studies. This is in part because aspects of the field of this research, such as the study of television broadcasting rather than production, are only recently attracting a significant level of interest from researchers and theorists and also because this study touches on a variety of more established areas of research, such as the role of the BBC, of public service broadcasting and the study of audiences. With the dearth of literature specifically about channels and their role in the organisation of broadcasting, it has been necessary to select carefully those established areas of research that are relevant to this study. The literature on audiences cited here is therefore that which theorises models of audience from the producer perspective but it is not concerned with reception studies. Similarly, the work on the BBC and public service broadcasting is not an extensive trawl of political or regulatory histories but that relevant to channels, and the discussion of public service broadcasting deals in detail with only some of a number of established principles.

Because of the range of the literature, this chapter is broken into five principal sections on cultural production, television as a medium, public service broadcasting, the role of the BBC and on audiences. As a rule of thumb, work that is relevant to a number of chapters or that is crucial to conclusions about the fundamental research questions tend to appear here in this chapter whereas theory that relates specifically to one area of concern, such as work on branding or scheduling, is discussed as part of the chapter to which it is primarily relevant.

2.2 The study of cultural production

The research questions set out in chapter 1 clearly indicate that this study is concerned with issues of cultural production. A useful context for situating the study is in terms of the 'circuit of culture' described by Du Gay et al (1997:3-4). This identifies five major cultural processes, all of which are illustrated as linked to each other and interrelated in the creation of culture. To undertake a comprehensive

cultural study means to take all these processes into account. Although this research into channel identity looks at the creation of cultural products by interrogating in particular the intentions and processes related to the *production* of channels, discovering the ways in which channels are encoded with meaning, it is important to note that all the other elements of the 'circuit of culture' are examined or reflected upon, and that issues of representation, identity, regulation and consumption are all integrated into the research and form part of its conclusions. Essentially, the study of production is used in this case as the access point to the circuit rather than as an isolated activity.

Other perspectives on the study of cultural production which have proved useful in situating this study include Peterson's reflections on the role of production studies in highlighting intellectual questions that can illuminate cultural studies more broadly (1994:182) and Golding and Murdock's observation that to be of real value a production study needs to draw relationships at two levels: the situational and the normative. The former requires there to be a consideration of the market in which the study takes place, the latter an analysis of the general set of values and frame in which production is set (1991:35). Frith, whilst noting that television production is a relatively neglected area in comparison with regulation and reception studies, comments that the study of television production is not linear and therefore cannot be separated from the study of its context (2000: 38). All these theorists take the position that to be of optimal value, a production study should be linked into broader relationships and contexts if it is to shed light on broader cultural issues, trends and developments impacting the field of study. That is what this research aims to do, and so at various points in this thesis, ideas on representation and identity are foregrounded, consumption becomes a crucial consideration in the discussion of audiences and matters of regulation arise with frequency throughout the debates about production.

2.3 Television channels and television as a medium

There is scant literature that discusses how television channels organise television content and audiences. The work dealing with the impact of channels structurally tends to view them in terms of their impact on audience reception (see Leshner et al, 1998 or Perse, 1998). Equally there are a small number of case studies relating to specific channels or groups of channels (see, for example, Collins, 1998; Chris, 2002; Fanthome, 2003) which deal with market conditions relating to the

channels in question and address aspects of the relationship between channel and genre (see chapter 5) but do not further examine the role that channels play in relation to the creation of broadcast product. Some of the work on Channel 4, whilst much is 'personal memoir' in style (see Lambert, 1982; Kustow, 1987; Dell, 1999), is useful in describing the practice of translating the purposes of a new channel into the practice of commissioning, as are other sources with a more analytical approach (such as Docherty et al, 1988; Harvey 1996). Channel 4 was set up with a specific mission to be 'different' to the existing channels and to cater for audiences not catered for by the existing channels. Docherty et al give an account of how commissioning editors at the nascent Channel 4 had lengthy and heated debates about how this brief might be achieved through programme commissions, suggesting that the ways in which these requirements might be fulfilled would affect the future identity of the channel. They suggest that the brief and identity Channel 4 was working towards drove the programme commissioning, rather than the other way around (1988:5; 38)¹. Much of this research on channel identity is based on testing that presumption.

Perhaps surprisingly, since little has been written specifically about channels, another source of information is from general histories of broadcasting in the UK, such as Crisell (2001) and Mullan (1997). Whilst these do not address the role of television channels in great detail, as part of a chronology or survey of British television they do consider elements of the conception and development of the main UK channels. Crisell, for example, examines the genesis of BBC2 and its early commissioning style (2001: 119-122). Mullan addresses questions of channel loyalty amongst audiences and looks at the development of scheduling and other broadcasting practice relating to channels (1997: 66). Because of this, these histories have proved more useful at various points of this thesis than might otherwise have been expected.

A third and most useful strand of work is that which analyses the causes and implications of the proliferation of channels for television broadcasting. The period when the number of channels was very limited and spectrum availability was scarce has been characterised by Ellis (2000) as the 'age of scarcity' and by Todreas (1999) as the 'age of broadcast'. At this time, television was strongly defined by strictly controlled means of distribution. Those who owned the means of transmission could determine which products could be broadcast, making distributors the gatekeepers, or, as Todreas says, the 'bottleneck' of the broadcasting system. At this time in the UK much of the content or programme production was integrated with the

broadcasting and transmission business and there was, therefore, a reasonable balance between the volume of production and the availability of distribution, with content needs tailored to distribution opportunities.

As the number of channels increased, in the USA with the development of cable television and in the UK with the take up of satellite and cable, a second stage in television's development was identified. Todreas labels this the 'age of cable' in the USA. In the UK, Ellis calls this period the 'age of availability'. By this time, vertical disintegration of the media industries meant that the means of distribution were in many cases owned by companies separate to the broadcasters. By the time this phase could be said to have taken hold in the UK in the mid 1990s, both the BBC and ITV, for example, had sold their transmission businesses. With far greater numbers of distribution channels, owners of distribution technology were no longer the gatekeepers or the bottleneck. Instead, those managing the broadcasting process – the cable companies or broadcasters – were in the position to define what was broadcast and they took over the gatekeeping role. Van Cuilenberg and McQuail observe that much of these first two periods were characterised by a media policy framework in the UK that focused on public interest objectives solely in terms of the needs of democracy (2003:181).

There is a strong argument in the UK that the third phase, the 'digital age' or 'age of plenty' (Todreas, 1999; Ellis 2000), partially elided with the previous stage of development. The extraordinary growth in the number of channels in the 1990s coincided with the introduction of digital technologies, such as interactive television and the world wide web, creating even more outlets for media content. With a plethora of content, both producers and broadcasters identified a need to differentiate their product within the crowded marketplace. This meant that the power in the system shifted once more, towards packagers of content with established reputations who were able to bundle their content together to 'recommend' it to audiences (Todreas, 1999). Television channels, as content packagers, were positioned with the power to define broadcast product and to brand it. At the same time, the media policy framework was beginning to shift towards public interest objectives that were now focused on economic welfare as well as social and political welfare (Van Cuilenberg and McQuail, 2003: 201).

This analysis of the phases of development within the television industry fits comfortably alongside work by Lash and Urry (1994) and Wernick (1991), which identifies how vertical disintegration in media industries favoured activities that

highlighted television broadcasting functions as opposed to programme production (see chapter 4) and facilitated the development of branded media products (see chapter 7). The focus on broadcasting functions is also reflected in recent literature, with both Ellis (2000) and Ytreberg (2002a) having looked systemically at how broadcasting (rather than production) systems have developed with multichannel broadcasting, assessing how broadcasting practices such as commissioning, scheduling and marketing have impacted on the cultural role of broadcasting. Born, too, has noted the increased prominence of the broadcast functions of strategy and marketing within the television environment during the 1990s, particularly at the BBC (2003b: 775). Her analysis of the BBC's and Channel 4's digital offerings are recent and unusual examples of work acknowledging channels as an important element in broadcasters' strategies (2003a; 2003b). Many individual points relating to all these pieces of work are picked up in the relevant chapters of this thesis.

Further relevant literature about the television medium characterises television as a sequence of segments which together create a continuum; without Williams' identification of 'a significant shift from the concept of sequence as programme to the concept of sequence as flow', channels would be difficult to conceptualise (1974: 89). The development of the basic idea of television (and, therefore, channels) as flow appears a number of times in this thesis, in particular in chapter 6 on scheduling, and takes into account not only Williams' work but also those that follow such as Ellis (1982) on the segmental nature of TV and Jensen's discussion (1996) of multiple flows within the television form, describing individual 'channel flows' as part of the 'superflow' that encompasses all available programming within a system. The flow of television across time, along with the domesticity of the medium, underpins its capacity to regulate the everyday. Scannell (1988; 1996) and Silverstone (1996) have both written about television's relationship with daily life and the relevance of this to channels' role in public service broadcasting, especially in relation to scheduling, is discussed in chapter 6.

Finally in this section, a body of literature exists that situates television in relation to its viewers. Ellis' explanation of television's mode of address is at the root of a number of the ways that channels relate to audiences: 'TV assumes that it has certain kinds of viewers and that it speaks for them and looks for them....The TV viewer is placed by TV's system of direct address complicity as a particular kind of being, even if TV's assumptions about the nature of its audience do not strictly accord with how particular viewers live their lives.' (1982: 165). Television's assumptions about what viewers want to see and hear become inscribed

programmes through any number of production decisions which presuppose certain audience interests, attitudes and capabilities and lead to the final communicative content and style of a programme. Direct address is the basis for the creation of subject positions constructed in relation to these assumptions (see, for example, Gledhill, 1997 for further discussion). As a result, programmes are said to have an 'implied reader' (Brunsdon, 1982), one constructed to fit the subject position and therefore consistent with the assumptions about the audience that were originally in mind when the programme was commissioned and produced. Chapter 8 of this thesis examines the potential for channels, rather than programmes, to be involved in the construction of audiences.

Together this literature about the medium of television forms a backdrop to the discussion of the detail of how channels are produced. Through focused empirical research and examination of the cultural context, this study builds on the work outlined above by demonstrating how channels, as part of the television medium, are created as specific cultural products that organise television output and programming, formalising some aspects of 'flow' and attempting to regulate relationships with domestic audiences.

2.4 The characteristics of public service broadcasting

At the heart of this research are a number of questions about how the organisation of television into channels influences the role and delivery of public service broadcasting. Rather than reviewing all work on public service broadcasting, I will focus on that which identifies public service broadcasting's core principles; in later chapters it will become clear how these principles are affected by the changing role of television channels during the research period. This work tends to fall into two types (Collins, 1998: 54). First there is analysis drawn from the empirical study of public service broadcasting (for example, Tracey 1998; Docherty et al, 1988; Blumler, 1991) much of which is based on research carried out by the Broadcasting Research Unit (BRU) in the 1980s. Secondly, there are principles drawn from social theory (such as Garnham, 1990; Keane, 1991). As this study is itself based in empirical research about a public service broadcaster, I will focus primarily on the former.

The work of the BRU, quoted in and built upon by Docherty et al (1988) and Tracey (1998), and referred to as part of the Peacock Committee (1986), identified eight principles that underpinned the delivery of public service broadcasting. These are (in brief) ²:

1. Universality of availability
2. Universality of appeal
3. Provision for minorities, especially those disadvantaged by physical or social circumstance
4. Serving the public sphere
5. A commitment to the education of the public
6. Distance from vested interest
7. Structured to encourage competition in good programming rather than numbers
8. The rules of broadcasting should liberate rather than restrict the programme-maker

Although there are differences in expression and emphasis, these principles have a considerable congruence with those agreed by the pan-European broadcasters gathered in Liege in 1990, whose discussion is reported by Blumler (1991: 7-14). In this section I want to focus on just three of these principles: universality of availability, universality of appeal, and serving the public sphere. These three principles are particularly affected by developments in the media industry associated with the development and proliferation of channels. In this section, I examine these fundamental principles as they have been formulated and also the pressures coming to bear though the development of channels.

2.4.1 Universality of availability

The principle of universality of availability is that which assures that the broadcast signal is available to all within the public service broadcaster's domain. It demands that no one should be 'disenfranchised through distance or by accident of geography' (Tracey, 1998: 26) and has traditionally required that every effort is made to ensure that audiences across the UK had access to all public service broadcasters' programmes, channels and services. However, with the advent of new technologies, this principle has already been somewhat undermined. When Channel 5 was set up (albeit not specifically as a public service broadcaster), it was clear that its signal would not be available to all audiences across the UK. Perhaps more significantly, with the development of digital, satellite and cable platforms came channels that would only be available to those prepared to pay over and above the licence fee to receive them, whether as an ongoing subscription or a one-off payment. During the period under discussion, although BBC1 and BBC2 were

available to all according to the principle of universality of access, BBC Choice/3, BBC Knowledge/4 and BBC News 24 were only available to those who paid some kind of a premium to receive them. Even with moves to encourage the take-up of digital reception equipment, this meant some erosion of this principle of universality of availability. Despite the BBC's partnership to distribute DTT³, through which a public service broadcaster potentially gained leverage to extend digital reception technology, it can nonetheless be argued that universal access is increasingly under threat from conditional access television (see Chalaby & Segell, 1999: 360-1). Gitlin points out that the divide between those who can receive television channels on the newer platforms and those who cannot tends to aggravate certain class divisions (1998: 172) and any reduction in the access or availability of public service television has implications for the maintenance of the public sphere (see later in this section).

2.4.2 *Universality of appeal*

The principle of universality of appeal deals with the duty of a public service broadcaster to provide programming which caters for the varying tastes and interests within society. Tracey identifies a number of strands of thinking within this principle (1998:26-27). Firstly, there is an inherent idea that although you cannot please all the people all of the time, good programming can please many people a lot of the time and everybody some of the time. Changes in the way that the BBC began to interpret this are discussed in chapter 8. Secondly, it encompasses a position that the good can be made popular and the popular can be made good in television terms. Interpretations of what is meant by 'good' (often within the audience-as-public mode – see section 2.4) and what is meant by 'popular' (often in terms of the audience-as-market) have implications for the BBC and this theme recurs during this thesis. Tracey's third strand of thinking is the implication that this principle means not only serving those tastes and interests that are readily identifiable but also those which are dormant, something that has informed the BBC's commissioning and scheduling practices, particularly in relation to having a range of genres in channel schedules. This has been identified as a mark of truly public service broadcasting system by a number of theorists (see Born and Prosser, 2002: 676-7; Hellman, 2001; Steemers, 1998:102) and this principle is at the heart of the traditional regulatory insistence that public service channels should be mixed genre (Born and Prosser, 2001: 662). The development of single or genre-limited channels within a public service system therefore struck a blow to the core of this principle. The effects of this

are discussed in chapters 5 and 6 and again in the conclusions of this thesis. Like the developments affecting the principle of universal availability, these developments also have implications for the way in which public service television might fulfil its obligations in serving the public sphere.

2.4.3 *Serving the public sphere*

This principle holds variously that a public service broadcaster has a role in allowing the nation to speak to itself, to provide a space where national debates can occur and where audiences constituted as citizens can be represented and interact. 'Through mass television, society communes with itself, forms and revises collective opinion and influences the public direction of society' (Curran, 1998:191). There has been significant debate about how or whether television can really constitute part of the public sphere in its Habermasian sense (see, for example Dahlgren, 1995; Price, 1995; Curran, 1991; Gripsrud, 1999; Murdock, 1999) but rather than further rehearse these debates, I will instead focus specifically on how developments relating to the proliferation of channels affect the potential for television to serve the public sphere.

A sense of shared experience is an important element of an effective public sphere, suggesting both a shared 'space' (actual or virtual) accessible to all (universally available, as above). It also suggests simultaneity, something Tracey refers to as 'the power of the shared moment' (1997: 283). Thus, big national moments (and smaller ones) can be experienced by the nation as one. However, with a growing number of channels – the shift from Ellis' 'age of scarcity' through to the 'age of plenty' (2000) - the experience may well be of different programmes shown at different times. Mackay comments on 'a move away from the simultaneity of mass consumption which characterised earlier broadcasting and from broadcasting having to fit the temporal rhythms of the home' (1997:290-1). Chalaby and Segell note that one of the capabilities of digital television may be to restrict mass audiences to some specific occasions as individuals choose from a range of channels and supplementary services (1999: 365-6).

With a greater choice of channels, the likelihood is that audiences will fragment across them, reducing any sense of a shared space and a shared moment. Dahlgren discusses the role of television in purveying shared frames of reference and a common knowledge, and how these are undermined by the fragmentation of the audience across a number of channels, many of them specialised genre channels: 'in a situation where television is decentralising, the collective common

sense may be on its way to becoming plural and fragmented, rather than unitary.' (1995:40). Scannell, taking an even more pessimistic view asserts that 'the hard won "public sphere" created over the last thirty years on national television may shatter into splinters under the impact of deregulated multichannel video services' (1990:26). Having acknowledged this view, it is clear nonetheless that there are still many protective factors in British television that mitigate against the shattering of the public sphere in the immediate line of sight. As Curran notes, at the beginning of this study's research period the four main public service channels in the UK still dominated viewing⁴, and the content shown was largely made within Britain for a British audience. He refutes the position that there has been significant fragmentation of audiences (1998:177-9). At the time of writing, audience figures suggest that the fragmentation is growing but that the public service channels retain a genuinely significant share of viewing⁵; both points of view have validity and the power of channels both to fragment and to unite is a theme of the thesis.

Flowing from questions about the fragmentation of the audience and the continuing existence of a unitary public sphere is the issue of whether the 'public sphere' has instead become 'public sphericules'. Gitlin advances an argument that this is exactly what is taking place, asserting that 'the unitary public sphere is weak, riddled with anxiety and self doubt, but distinct communities of information and participation are multiplying, robust and brimming with self-confidence' (1998:170). Dahlgren also identifies the possibility for the development of micro public spheres (1995: 155-6) and various studies of particularistic media channels have argued this possibility (see Dayan, 1998, for an overview). Gross reports that channels play a distinct role in this development, in that various minorities increasingly talk to themselves, about themselves, on their own segmented channels (1998). That the growth of channels might contribute to the breakdown of the public sphere into smaller fragments has clearly been identified as a real possibility.

The public sphere is a concept strongly linked with the idea of nation, which is also recognised as a fundamental level at which community operates. Anderson (1991) introduced the concept of the nation as an 'imagined community' with respect to the nation-state. He argued, in relation to the growth of nationalism, that face-to-face contact was not necessary to create the nation as a community, but that it existed if each individual held the image of the community in their mind and considered themselves to be a nation. He describes the process of millions of people reading the newspaper as part of their daily ritual, aware that others were doing the same thing at the same time. He also stressed that the formation of the

national community was dependent on there being an 'other' which lay beyond the boundaries of that community. Moores suggests that the experience of simultaneous reception described by Anderson was heightened by the broadcast media, but goes on to say that the sense of the existence of shared community in terms of the nation is no longer so readily available from broadcasting: 'of course the BBC continues to provide its viewers and listeners with common access to a schedule of national programming, but by the 1990s several factors have contributed to a shift in the imaginative geography of community' (1997: 242). One of these factors is the growth in the number of channels and the targeting of channels towards specific audiences.

However, there is the possibility that channels have the potential to contribute to the creation of different kinds of community, creating a 'common knowledge' on a smaller scale than nation and relying on an 'other' based on factors other than nationality. Consistent with this view and picking up on the issue of common knowledge, Dahlgren suggests that there are many sets of common knowledge amongst communities which share interpretative frameworks, and that these overlap and form concentric circles of ever-larger common knowledge. He goes on to question which identity the universal common knowledge for society as a whole correlates with, and asks whether, if it is 'citizenship', this means that 'citizen' is then a form of identity (1995: 134). Interest in identity and identity politics within media and cultural studies has increased in importance in recent years (Alasuutari, 1999: 102). The issue of identity, whilst not being one of the primary concerns of this thesis, is notable as one of the connections between public service broadcasting, community and models of audience. Different conceptualisations of community are associated with the specific individualised identities that they invoke; the national community generates an identity such as 'citizen', for example, whereas the identity of 'consumer' is summoned in relation to a community centred on the marketplace. However, in a more fragmented media system with multiple channels, the 'public sphericules' discussed above may instead be concerned with ethnic or gender identities or other common interests or characteristics, such as age or occupation, that bind communities and form part of individualised identities. Moores notes, for example, that 'the old articulations of nation and family are now uncoupling, as new media technology makes it possible for quite different discursive connections to be formed' (2001: 98). Although this thesis considers mainly the collective identities of audiences seen from the perspective of broadcasters and producers rather than issues of individual identity, it nonetheless identifies a parallel movement from models of the audience as a semi-homogenous mass to those based on audiences

conceptualised as collectives of individuals gathered around common identity factors. This is the subject of the last section of this chapter, following a discussion of the role of the BBC as a public service broadcaster.

2.5 The role of the BBC

Having introduced some of the principles of public service broadcasting, this section looks at how the BBC interpreted its role as the UK's primary public service broadcaster. To do this, rather than reproducing a comprehensive history of the BBC and the regulatory events that shaped it, I want instead to trace the development of the metaphors that the BBC has used to describe itself and its role. Throughout its history the BBC has needed both to explain and to justify its existence and its public service duties, not least in order to justify the licence fee. Explanations have variously been in the form of communications internally with staff, externally with the government or with a wider constituency (in the capacity of audience and/or licence fee payers). Through these one can begin to build up a picture of how the organisation perceived its role as a public service broadcaster at different times and also how it positioned itself in relation to its audiences. By tracing these metaphors from the BBC's early days until the present, it is also possible to identify how the BBC's relationship with its audiences has changed during its seventy-five year history.

Later chapters illustrate the great sticking power of Reith's vision of the BBC's role to 'educate, inform and entertain' which is often still referred to in the present day. However, a little less durable was Reith's paternalist stance that the BBC was a means by which the nation might be brought to appreciate high culture (Ang 1991; Briggs, 1985) or forced, as Anthony Smith put it 'to confront the frontiers of its own taste' (quoted in Kumar 1986:59). This approach and the BBC's attitude to its audience during the Reithian era was expressed by likening the BBC to a ship which Reith, as the Director General, would steer (see Reith, 1949)⁶. The metaphor of the BBC as a ship neatly encapsulates the idea of the audience as something that should be invited on board and navigated in a particular direction - in this case towards the tastes of the educated British upper-middle class. Another of Reith's representations of the BBC at this time was that of a 'national church' (see Reith, 1949; Ang 1991:108-9). Reith saw the producers as the priesthood and Reith himself a kind of cardinal or pope (Smith, 1985: 10). This again positioned the BBC as something that must be entered into by its audiences, placing the BBC as an

object of respect and even awe, and emphasising the role of the broadcaster as an authority and guide.

This vision of the BBC was tenacious and it was not until the 1960s that another image of the organisation took hold as effectively. By this time there had been a number of challenges to hierarchical notions within society as a whole and a considerable shake-up within the BBC with the introduction of commercial competition in the 1950s (see chapter 4). These factors led to a reassessment of the position of audiences in relation to the BBC and the dominant metaphor became that of the BBC as a mirror which would reflect society back to itself (Ang 1991:115; Price, 1995:30). Rather than to take a role in shaping them as had been the case with the Reithian model, the role of the public service broadcaster was, within this metaphor, to mirror back to its audience on radio and television the activities, pastimes and attitudes that existed within society. The idea of the BBC as a mirror reflecting the audience back to itself had new implications in relation to the BBC's notions of audiences and audience research. It had not been particularly important to 'know' or 'understand' the audience as part of the idea of the ship or the church, where the destination was defined by prevailing middle class ideas about taste and culture. With the advent of the BBC as a mirror, information about the audience was a prerequisite to being able to fulfil the public service purpose. The difficulties in this are inherent in Hugh Green's statement 'I only want the mirror to be honest, without any curves and held with as steady a hand as may be' (quoted in Briggs 1985: 331). Whilst at first sight the mirror might appear to be a non-interventionist approach to the audience, knowledge of the audience must be constructed somehow and the broadcaster must therefore compose its own image of the audience, reflecting back to society its own perceptions of that society. This complicates the clear, reflective relationship that the mirror was intended to represent. From this period onward, the development of the doctrine of the 'professional' broadcaster also began to take hold (Kumar, 1977). Scannell comments that the *professional* broadcaster is marked out as the one who makes broadcast events appear natural (1996:84) and therefore, apparently, reflection rather than construction. Kumar notes another of the metaphors for the BBC at this time was the theatre, with the BBC providing the stage and technicians (the professional broadcasters) who enable the nation's stories to be played back to itself.

The discourse of the BBC as a mirror continued to hold considerable sway within the BBC up to the time of writing (see BBC, 1998, for recent examples of the language of 'reflection'). However, during the 1980s there was a concerted attempt

made by BBC management to gain credence for the notion of the BBC as a 'company'⁷. In the company, audiences (especially in their guise as licence fee payers) were cast in the role of shareholders (Madge, 1989: 54). When the BBC started *See for Yourself* in 1988 it likened the programme to issuing annual accounts to shareholders. By implication, the company brought with it associations of consumerism and profitability at a time when the BBC faced some of the greatest challenges to the traditional view of public service broadcasting. These challenges were exemplified by the Peacock Committee (1986) which for the first time amongst broadcasting committees treated television as a commodity rather than a public service (Scannell, 1990: 18). The management's drive to equate the BBC to a company acknowledged this shift and reinforced an acceptance of the audience-as-market model that was gaining ground in the British broadcasting system (see next section).

In the late 1990s, the BBC published *The BBC Beyond 2000*, which introduced another metaphor for the BBC's role, that of the 'trusted guide in a world of abundance' (BBC 1998:3). Greg Dyke, the Director General at the time of writing, built upon this when he described public service broadcasting in his MacTaggart speech at the Edinburgh Television Festival in 2000 as a flame that had been handed from generation to generation throughout the BBC's history. In this way he implied that it was the BBC's role to carry a torch to illuminate the public's path through the complex pathways of the multichannel age. These ideas revive some of the notions about public service broadcasting leading rather than reflecting the audience. However, the idea of the trusted guide was couched in terms of 'extending, enhancing and informing people's choice' and this started to unify the two positions of audience that the BBC adopted previously, those of audience as citizen and as consumer (BBC, 1998:15).

These metaphors begin to give an idea of how the BBC, in general terms, has seen and developed its role as a public service broadcaster. In its early days, as the ship or the church its role was to shape the society that it served, reaching a mass audience, educating and informing them and helping to mould them as citizens by dictating appropriate viewing and listening. As the mirror it served to reflect society as it existed, a position consistent with the broadcaster serving the public sphere through displaying the nation to itself. The BBC in its incarnation as a torch or guide had the potential to fit a model of multiple public spheres, through which individuals needed to be led, whilst the BBC retained an overview. Interesting, also, is the development of the associated images of audience. From being positioned as

followers in the ship or church, through being an object of examination in the BBC mirror, via an active incarnation as shareholders in a market model, the audience at the time of the research was again cast in the role of being led, but within this metaphor, there was an assumption that the audience would choose the direction.

2.6 Thinking about audiences

Having examined some of the roles that public service broadcasting plays and looked at the way that this has been interpreted by the BBC, this final section addresses audiences. It sets the scene for examining how the BBC perceives its audiences by looking at the different ways that audiences can be and commonly are conceptualised, theoretically and as a practical part of the production process.

Theories of audience have produced many different notions of how audiences may be perceived under different conditions or by different players. To list a handful of these, there is the audience-as-public or audience-as-market (Ang, 1991); audience-as-consumer, audience-as-victim or audience-as-commodity (Webster and Phalen, 1994); audience-as-citizen or audience-as-consumer (Miller, 1991); audience-as-object or -subject (Bennett, 1996); audience-as-target, audience-as-participant or audience-as-spectator (McQuail, 1997); audience-as-outcome, audience-as-agent and audience-as-mass (Webster 1998); and finally, something which might be called audience-as-man-down-the-pub (Madge, 1989:55). In the light of all these descriptors, Biocca's statement that 'what is occurring is the breakdown of the *referent* for the word audience in communication research' can be easily understood (quoted in McQuail, 1997:2). Much of this work deals with the problem of audience from the point of view of the academy, and some with issues around broadcasting policy and regulation. When it comes to looking at audience from the perspective of the broadcaster, only Ang's work is actually centred on the public broadcaster's basic problem with conceptualising audiences. As a framework for ensuing discussions of audiences in this thesis, it is useful to think about the literature in terms of the different ways that it engages with the question of who is the audience and how audiences might be perceived by those creating the broadcast product. On this basis, this section includes an examination of how audiences have been seen to inform the creative process, discussions of the three main theoretical models of audience to which I will refer throughout this thesis, and it also engages with some issues about how the potential fragmentation of audiences across channels are accommodated by these models.

2.6.1 *Audiences as part of the creative process*

A small body of literature provides a useful background to the research that follows about how ideas about audiences are integrated into the creative process. Several studies have examined the ways in which producers' and other creative workers' perceptions of the audience have influenced the content of programmes (for example Madge, 1989; Cantor and Cantor, 1992; Blumler, 1996; Tracey, 1978) and although none of these look specifically at the influence that audiences have on the construction or development of channels, they do reflect on how producers think about audiences as part of the detailed programmes production process. These studies find that two dominant models of audience emerge as part of the producers' frames of reference. The first of these is the audience conceived of as ratings, in which the consideration of audience is boiled down to the numbers or percentages of viewers that might be persuaded to watch a programme or who have been persuaded to watch similar programming in the past. The other way in which producers think about audiences during the production process falls into the category of audience-as-man-down-the-pub or audience-as-letter-writer-or-phone-caller (Cantor 1994:161-162).

The notion of audience as ratings appears to have a greater influence than personal contact from letters, phonecalls or pubs. This is put down to the ties between audience ratings performance and the commissioning and re-commissioning decisions taken by broadcasters and networks (Blumler, 1996:98). Blumler comments that in the USA the creative staff's perception of audiences as ratings in practice falls into the audience-as-commodity model (1996:98). Within the BBC, however, the relationship that producers have with ratings appears more complex, despite their undoubted importance to producers. Madge (1989) notes that within the BBC, audience targets in terms of reach and share are set with the apparent intention that these should be used not only to measure popularity but also to measure success against the public service requirement for universality of appeal. This is further complicated by the public service requirement to cater for minorities, meaning that the biggest ratings are not best all of the time (Hoynes, 1994). An uncomfortable balancing act may be created as a result between the need to cater for specific minority groups and to serve cultural majorities, reflected by high ratings (see Murschetz, 2002: 90). It is not possible, therefore, immediately to assume from these studies that a certain model of audience is dominant amongst BBC

broadcasting or production staff, but the studies do provide a starting point from which this research picks up.

A fairly consistent feature of these studies, however, is a recognition that production personnel tend to demonstrate a rather limited conception of audiences, within these frames of reference and more generally. Ang notes that 'knowing' the audience is equated with knowing a cluster of audience members as if they were exemplars of an alien species (1991:36). Gans asserts that whatever little knowledge they had of the audience, producers generally chose to ignore it, instead taking into account what they thought was wanted by their superiors (1979: 230). Madge comments, however, that programme-makers in the BBC in the 1980s seemed to be becoming increasingly interested in questions about their relationship with audiences (1989: 34). This study picks up on these issues and, especially in chapter 8, illustrates how these findings play out in the BBC of the 1990s/2000s.

2.6.2 Theoretical models of audience

Given the wealth of different representations of audience appearing amongst the work of media academics, it is perhaps worth starting this discussion about theoretical models with a reminder from Ang that 'no representation of the "television audience", empirical or otherwise, gives us direct access to any actual audience. Instead it gives us "fictive" pictures of "audience", fictive not in the sense of false or untrue, but of fabricated, both made and made up.' (1991:34). Despite the relative lack of interest in audiences that producers appeared to display, there were certain theoretical models of audience underpinning the language used by producers, broadcasters and observers of the media to describe their role in society. The research in later chapters reflects on how different models manifested themselves in practice, but here I want to focus on three underlying conceptualisations of the media audience that are particularly relevant to this study. These are what I will be calling the 'audience-as-public', the 'audience-as-market' and finally the 'audience-as-commodity' models. They are not intended to reflect the constituent parts of any actual audiences, but instead are models that inform the discourse of broadcasting organisations in general and the BBC in particular and are useful in identifying and illustrating some of the conflicts and developments emerging for a public service broadcaster during the period under investigation.

The audience-as-public model is perhaps that which is most intuitively in keeping with notions of public service broadcasting. In this model, the audience is

firmly situated as 'a public' that the broadcaster is designed to serve. Dayan comments that a public tends to be thought about in different ways from 'an audience': 'a public' tends to have positive connotations of sociability, being part of a debate, being performative and holding or being loyal to particular views or attitudes (2001: 746). The business of the broadcaster then becomes the creation of programming for this public, citizens of the nation (or other political entity) within which the public service broadcaster operates. The needs of the citizens and their ability to function in their civic and social duties determine what is broadcast (Blumler, 1996:101; Ang, 1991:28-29). The delivery of high quality programming which conveys important information is therefore central to this model. Impartiality and clarity are held at a premium, and content is expected to educate or inform as well as (or instead of) entertaining the audience (Alasuutari, 1999:91). The essence of this model might be best conveyed by the understanding that the value of programmes lies in their potential to transfer meanings and their symbolic value rather than in any economic measures (Ang, 1991: 105).

The conceptualisation of audience-as-public relates directly to the observations earlier about the public sphere and it is therefore subject to some of the same pressures from changes in the broadcasting industry. As multichannel broadcasting develops and potential for greater personalisation increases, the question arises as to whether there is also not only the possibility of 'sphericules' developing from the public sphere but also of a single 'public' becoming multiple 'publics'. The shift from thinking about audiences as an undifferentiated mass to something less homogenous is picked up later in this thesis.

The audience-as-market is a second prevalent model, which entered broadcasting in the UK as soon as ITV, a commercial broadcaster, launched. At this point, public service broadcasting, in the shape of the BBC, found itself in competition for audiences for the first time and therefore became susceptible to this model. The audience-as-market casts audiences as consumers of broadcast product who enter the marketplace of the broadcasting system and select the programmes that appeal to them. It assumes that audiences are rational, well informed individuals who will act in their own best interests and that they have distinct tastes and preferences in their viewing (Webster and Phalen, 1994: 27). Programmes are considered to be products rather than conveyers of meaning, and it is assumed that audiences are free to choose what they want – freedom of choice in this model becomes the overriding factor in place of the freedom of information, so important as part of the model of audience-as-public (Alasuutari, 1997: 91). Because the mission of the

broadcaster in the audience-as-market model is to attract the audience to choose their programme, informing and educating are no longer the dominant purposes for the broadcaster. Instead, entertainment becomes the primary focus of programming strategy and, unlike the audience-as-public model, there is no demand within the terms of the model for programming to be of high quality. The emphasis within the market model is to attract and retain attention, not to transmit meaning, and therefore programme quality is not of particular importance (Ang, 1991: 28).

One major impact of the advent of the audience-as-market was a serious concern with audience measurement that had been absent from the audience-as-public archetype. If the main objective was for audiences to choose a certain broadcaster's product, then it was crucial to be able to measure programmes' success by knowing how many people had chosen to watch (Ang, 1991:29-30). With the advent of the audience-as-market, ratings became a major preoccupation for broadcasters and producers, and public service broadcasters were not exempt; with competition to attract audiences, albeit to fulfil a different mission, ratings became a tool with which to justify their funding. For the BBC, the licence fee was defensible on the basis of the range and number of viewers that used its services, so ratings began and continued to play an important role. This was one manifestation amongst many of the discourse of the audience-as-market penetrating the public service broadcasting arena. Ang identifies a continual struggle between the two models within the public service broadcasting environment (1991) and Tracey (1998:47) expresses concern that the language of the marketplace has become the dominant discourse on broadcasting and television, challenging the very notion of public culture.

A third model of audience, the audience-as-commodity, also coexisted with the audience-as-public and audience-as-market. Like the audience-as-market, this model recognises the audience as consumers, but here consumption is not primarily about the usage of television programmes as products but instead is concerned with the audience in its capacity to be influenced by advertisers to buy consumer products more generally. The audience itself is seen as a commodity that broadcasters deliver to advertisers by means of their programming and a principle assumption underpinning this model is that audiences have an economic value based on their size and composition (Webster & Phalen, 1994:29-30). In this model, the existence of the media is utterly dependent on advertiser's need for audiences: 'without the need to market goods, there would be no buyers for audience time and thus no reason for its creation as a commodity' (Jhally, 1990:123).

One of the ways that the audience-as-commodity model differs crucially from the audience-as-market model, however, is that not all audiences are of equal value. In the audience-as-market model it is the sheer volume of viewers that counts; in the audience-as-commodity model, audiences with certain characteristics are deemed more valuable than others; sheer numbers may be outweighed by the 'quality' of an audience. Because of this, broadcasters are encouraged to understand which types of audiences watch which kinds of programmes and which audiences the various advertisers require for their products. Programming can then be targeted at specific audience segments, creating 'demographically pure' content, with the resulting audiences being of increased value to advertisers (Seiter, 1993:123). This tailoring of content to audience segments that match the requirements of manufacturers and their advertisers also has an effect of encouraging commercial broadcasters down a route of narrowcasting, where channels as well as programmes are specified for certain audiences (Jhally, 1990:126). In addition, processes of segmentation drawn from the marketing discipline have made it common practice to imbue market or audience segments with complex consumption and lifestyle traits (see Pauchauri, 2002), so that it is possible to start to visualise audiences as types, representative of a number of distinct individuals. These developments are discussed in more detail in chapter 8, but one of the main developments associated with the audience-as-commodity model to note here is the move away from the conceptualisation of audiences as a single, homogenous mass. This model encourages thinking about audiences as differentiated groups of individuals with specific sets of attributes. In this way, the audience-as-commodity model with its focus on segmentation is well suited to a multichannel environment.

2.6.3 Possibilities for multiple audience models

Although public service broadcasters do not have to deliver audiences to advertisers, the language of the audience-as-commodity model can nonetheless permeate the public service context and exist alongside the audience-as-market and audience-as-public models. As I discussed earlier, the fragmentation of the audience across media outlets has implications for the conceptualisation of audience in non-commercial environments, already indicating the possibility that the idea of the national community might be weakening as the potential to create other communities of interest emerges, and generating the potential of 'publics' replacing 'the public' of the unitary public sphere. The tendency for the audience-as-commodity model to

discourage the visualisation of 'the audience' as a mass, favouring instead multiple smaller or more individualised 'audiences' could serve as an indicator of a broader shift in this direction. But rather than thinking about the different models replacing each other, it may be more productive to start from a position assuming that all three models can coexist in the same space. For this to be true, it would mean that it must be possible to accommodate concepts of individualised audiences alongside the mass audience.

Thinking about how television addresses its audience(s) provides an indication of how this can be the case. Abercrombie and Longhurst comment that 'television has a particularly direct way of addressing its audience as if a conversation was taking place between the people on the set and those watching it' (1998:110). Both Ellis and Morley attribute this at least in part to the way in which television has long imagined a family audience and addressed its audience as such (Ellis 1982:165; Morley, 1990). Tracey (1978) investigates the idea of whether the effect of direct address is achieved through the construction of an individualised image of audience in the form of an 'imaginary interlocutor' and although he finds that quantified notions of audience hold more sway, he is clear, in common with the other studies of the creative process cited earlier in this chapter, that audiences can be imagined simultaneously as ratings and as individuals where these are superiors, friends or family. Both these points of view suggest that it has long been possible for mass and individualised images of audience to coexist. Perhaps the most persuasive argument for the coexistence of ideas of mass and individualised audience is the 'for-anyone-as-someone' structure of address that Scannell describes (2000). In this, the mass and the individual audience are linked through a communicative structure which enables a programme to be created for millions of viewers or listeners whilst in each case seeming to speak to each viewer or listener personally as an individual.

So, whilst it is fair to say that it is not entirely new to have individualised images of audiences occurring side-by-side with mass conceptions of audience, there is a potential difference in the scale and context in which this is occurring and the resulting implications for public service broadcasting. Returning to a point made at the beginning of this section that audiences are 'both made and made up' (Ang, 1991:34) it is also worth asking a question posed by Dayan 'not... of whether the collective subject is imagined, but by whom' (2001:746) to which I would add 'and in what context'. Audiences may be conceived of and invoked according to the discourse deemed most appropriate for the circumstances, as the statistical representation of audience ratings of the market, as public collectives or

communities, or as representations of different types of consumers. The research that follows is particularly concerned with how audiences are imagined by those people instrumental in the creation of channels, which, I will argue, are important constituents of the context in which those audiences are being visualised.

2.7 Conclusions

This literature review has covered broad range of theory and ideas relating directly or more tangentially to the development of channels and their impact on public service broadcasting. In this concluding section, it remains for me to draw together the different strands of discussion and map out the space between them that my research aims to occupy. It is worth reiterating that this piece of work is a production study, but not, as is more usually the case, a study of the production of programmes in general or of programmes within a particular genre. Instead it is about the production of channels and seeks to discover how far these can be considered to be cultural products in their own right, hence references to some of the literature on cultural production.

This study is also about the form of television as a medium. Theory about the everydayness of television and its existence as a continuous flow are clearly key to an understanding of how channels operate. Channels are important to how we think about television in their capacity as conduits which deliver television to its audiences. They are well-established and accepted within the television industry where the explosion in the number of channels over the last twenty years has become a fact of life, as demonstrated by some of the discussions referred to during this chapter. But despite this, channels have been almost totally overlooked by theorists in terms of their role, purpose and their effects on the ultimate television product; there are only a handful of studies about channels, with those that exist relating mainly to the characteristics of specific channels and none of which are set in a public service context. This study aims to move channels out of their taken-for-granted position, place them in the foreground and examine how and why they are produced, how associated production practices have changed as they proliferate and to analyse their impact on television and ideas about its audiences.

As channels themselves have not been the subject of significant scrutiny, the part that they play in the delivery of public service broadcasting is relatively uncharted territory. It is already clear from the literature about the key principles of public service broadcasting that the fragmentation of the television proposition across

a plethora of channels is likely to have a considerable impact, potentially undermining notions of the unitary public sphere and shifting television away from its traditional role reinforcing ideas of the nation as a community. An awareness of the intentions that inform the production of channels at the BBC, an understanding of how the BBC aims to fulfil its obligations as Britain's foremost public service broadcaster and a knowledge of the BBC's attitude its audiences are all required to assess the effect of the development of the number and prominence of channels on the way that the BBC delivers public service television. Having said that, this study does not intend to focus on the broadcasting institution, but on its television channels in their capacity as media products and as moulds for the television programmes shown on them.

In terms of channels' capacity to organise the delivery of public service broadcasting, the literature on the models of audience invoked by broadcasters illustrates how varied a perception of audience may be used to inform the creation of the television product. Whether the models of audiences informing the production process are affected by considerations about channels is something that this study can then go on to address. Changes in the usage of models of audience, from those that construct the audience as a mass towards those which encourage a more individualised visualisation of audiences, can then be set alongside concerns amongst media theorists about the fragmentation of audiences across channels and the potential loss of the shared and simultaneous experience of television. Similarly, an examination of the potential for channels to promote other forms of community and shared frames of reference also becomes possible.

Ultimately, these are the spaces that this study aims to occupy. In looking at how channels are produced, how the associated practices are changing, and how far channels have become cultural products in their own right, it is possible to examine also the ways in which channels are involved in organising the BBC's relationship with its audiences and how traditional public service principles are affected by changes in these media structures that have perhaps been taken for granted for too long.

Notes

¹ See chapter 4 for more detail about the development of Channel 4

² See Tracey 1998: 26 - 32 for a full explanation of the interpretation of each of these headline principles.

³ The BBC, in partnership with Crown Castle International and BSkyB took over the DTT distribution platform from the failed ITV Digital in October 2002 and relaunched it as Freeview.

⁴ He identified these as BBC1, BBC2, ITV and Channel 4

⁵ The BBC maintained an overall television share of 35% in 2003 down from 45% in 1996 (DCMS, 2003).

⁶ The notion of the BBC as a ship is also apparent in the architecture of Broadcasting House, designed to look as if it were sailing through Langham Place.

⁷ This was no doubt in part to demonstrate that the BBC had become more modern and competitive as a response to the government of that time (Murdock 1990: 97).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Having established that this research is a study of the production of television channels and how they impact on the delivery of public service broadcasting, this chapter outlines the methodological approach to the research. Firstly, it looks at some of the issues arising from the scope of the study, and then discusses the specific methods used to collect and analyse data and materials from a variety of sources. From there, the chapter situates the research in a broader methodological framework. Finally, there is a discussion of the role of the researcher in the project; this is useful as part of any reflection on methodology, but because I was in the unusual position of being not only the researcher in this study but also an employee of the institution which was the object of research, it is worth particular attention here.

3.1 Scope

The first in a series of decisions about the approach to this study was to determine its scope. As the primary public service broadcaster in the UK and the only one, when this research was being planned, that ran more than one television channel, the BBC was clearly the best place to undertake the research. At the BBC it would be possible to examine the creation of a range of channels and assess how far they differed in terms of their identity both from each other and from the broadcaster's identity. As mentioned previously, this study focuses on broadcasting activities, a different set of functions from those addressed by studies concerning programme production, which often concentrate on production techniques and systems of editorial control (see for example Silverstone 1985; Schlesinger 1987). This study instead examines commissioning, scheduling, branding and audience research, processes key to the creation of channels. At the BBC these functions together formed 'channel teams' concerned with the creation of the channels, and so the BBC also offered an environment where it was possible to look at how these broadcasting activities worked together.

The next step was to decide which channels would be included in the study. As the main thrust of the research related to the delivery of public service broadcasting, the study would clearly include a number of the BBC's public service

channels. The study covered the most established channels, BBC1 and BBC2, which were consistently available on analogue platforms throughout the research period and which were also launched on digital platforms. Also included were two other public service channels, variously known as BBC Choice/BBC3 and BBC Knowledge/BBC4, which became available, changed and developed during the research period. BBC News 24, a channel dedicated to news and current affairs, was also part of the main research. With this sample, it was possible to investigate combinations of established, mixed-genre, analogue channels and newer, 'themed', digital channels, giving good potential for comparison¹. These channels, as the principal focus of the research, also provided insight across the spectrum of public service channels whilst maintaining a manageable load for a single researcher. Where relevant, however, the research also touched on the public service digital children's channels, CBBC and CBeebies, and for comparative purposes the UKTV channels, the BBC's commercial venture in association with Flextech.

The main period under investigation spanned from 1996 to 2002, with the bulk of the data-gathering taking place between 1998 and 2001. The research period started at the time of the decision taken to restructure the BBC, splitting the television service across new BBC Broadcast and BBC Production directorates, a watershed in terms of the development of commissioning. The end of the period coincided with the completion of the BBC's television channel portfolio, a decision having been taken that no further new channels would be launched in the foreseeable future.

The collection of the bulk of materials for analysis took place after the start of the period under investigation, creating the challenge of collecting data about the recent past alongside that relating to current practice. This meant that it would be necessary to draw upon a relatively broad range of sources. Ultimately, these included individuals who had been involved in the production of channels at various times during the research period, and documentation and on-screen materials for the full research period from 1996 to 2002. Another reason to use a variety of sources was simply that no single data-type could provide information on all the aspects of channels under investigation. To answer the research questions it was necessary to include aspects of all of commissioning, scheduling and marketing processes as well as audience research. Some of these processes were well established at the BBC but not necessarily well documented whereas others, such as marketing, were relatively new to BBC television. Together, talking to BBC staff, examining BBC documentation and working with BBC on-screen materials could provide a well-rounded picture of the full channel production process, something which any one of

these sources alone would not have been able to do. BBC staff could provide historical perspective where documents were not available and also fill in the gaps about current practices. In addition, many of the cultural perspectives and taken-for-granted attitudes of those involved in the process were more readily identifiable from talking to individuals than from the printed page. Relying on interviews and observation alone, on the other hand, would have missed valuable perspectives on channel strategy and branding that circulated in the organisation in the form of documentation, and written channel schedules were also an important source of information on this aspect. These types of documentation were a rich vein of information used formally by the organisation and the opportunity to compare what was written with what was spoken was also invaluable. Finally, broadcast material such as channel identities and animations enabled the research to track the ways in which the production of channel identity was expressed in the on-screen product. Through bringing together this scattered information, a picture of the production of channels at the BBC could be constructed.

Given the range of research material being used, a similarly broad range of research methods was employed to gather and analyse data. Interviews provided information from individuals involved in the creation of channels, content and discourse analysis supplied the means to analyse transcripts, documents and images. This approach was an effective way to maximise the value of the range of sources, addressing the different media with appropriate methods of analysis. The discussion below outlines the main methods used throughout the research.

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 Approaching individuals

As BBC staff were to be an important source of data for this research both in terms of providing information about the process by which channels were created and in terms of the attitudes and perceptions that informed this production process, interviews were used to capture their contributions. Initially, 39 BBC staff were approached by letter or email to ask if they would take part in interviews, explaining, in broad-brush terms, what the research entailed. Of these, 29 agreed to participate and 28 interviews took place. Those invited to take part included the channel controller or head of programmes for each of the sample channels and the members of those channel teams. These teams were not all consistent in their constitution but

generally included representatives from channel planning and scheduling, audience research, strategy and marketing. In addition, a number of individuals with an overview of the television service were selected from the same operational functions, as were individuals responsible for creating identities and promotions and placing them in the schedules. Finally, a couple of producers were included in the sample to make it possible to get an idea of the experience of commissioning by channel from the perspective of those 'selling' to the channels. The following tables show the channel focus and the main role of the interviewees.

Channel Focus	Interviewees	Percentage
More than one channel	17	61%
BBC1	3	11%
BBC2	2	7%
BBC Choice/3	1	4%
BBC Knowledge/4	1	4%
BBC News 24	2	7%
Children's	1	4%
UKTV	1	4%
Total	28	100%

Figure 3.1: Interviewees according to channel focus

Channel Focus	Interviewees	Percentage
Senior management	2	7%
Commissioning and audience research	11	39%
Scheduling and planning	3	11%
Strategy and marketing	6	21%
On air promotion	4	14%
Production	2	7%
Total	28	100%

Figure 3.2: Interviewees according to primary role

Interviewees were asked if they were prepared to have extracts and quotations of their interviews attributed to them by name. A number of respondents

were happy with this, whilst others wanted to see any extracts before they were attributed and yet others expressed a strong preference not to be identified in any way. Because of this I took the decision that all interview extracts would be used anonymously. One consideration in this decision was that to identify some interviewees and not others would enable fairly easy identification of those who had wished to remain anonymous, as there are a relatively small number of individuals who work closely with the channels and are involved in decision-making processes. The 26 interviewees from the broadcasting (rather than production) perspective represented a substantial proportion, probably more than a third, of the total number of people working closely with the channels being researched².

The interviews themselves were semi-structured. After an introductory explanation of the context and the aims of the research, informants were encouraged to discuss a number of themes relating to the research questions (see appendix III for a list of interview themes). Conversation was open ended and lasted between 45 minutes and two hours per informant. Interviews were recorded to ensure that the responses were captured in the words of the informant. The semi-structured approach was useful for gathering in-depth information and enabled follow-up on productive areas of discussion, with informants responding in their own terms (see Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:114). Another benefit of the semi-structured approach was that it provided the opportunity to define categories for analysis based on responses rather than these being pre-ordained (see Deacon et al 1999:79). Once the interviews had been completed, twenty were transcribed in full and sections of the others were selected for transcription on the basis of their relevance to the main research questions. The transcriptions were then treated as documentary evidence and analysed as described in the next section.

Interviews were chosen as preferable to participant observation for a number of reasons. Firstly, this study required investigation across organisational boundaries. Gaining access to all the relevant participants through observation alone would have been unlikely because the range of potential informants would have demanded long, carefully chosen periods of observation that would have been difficult to secure. Interviews, on the other hand, have been used successfully to tackle similar situations to this. Tunstall, for example, relied on interviews for his study of television producers where he needed to gather information across a range of genres and a variety of organisations (1993). It was also more likely that interviews would provide comparative data in relation to the different channels. It was easy to ensure that consistent themes were covered as part of the interviews, something that might not

have been possible through participant observation; to provide comparative data across channels as well as the various functions, participant observation would have again required gaining access to and spending significant periods in a number of different organisation units and this requirement for high levels of access over extended periods would have been difficult to arrange and sustain. Interviews, feasible within controlled periods of time and requiring less ongoing commitment, were easier to organise while still enabling coverage of the channels and activities included in the research sample.

Another factor supporting the decision to use interviews as a primary method of investigation was my familiarity and ongoing involvement with the organisation as an employee. One of the difficulties for many researchers using participant observation is losing critical distance and perspective on the research subject during the research period (see, for example, Schlesinger 1987 and Deacon et al, 1999:262). This is particularly an issue when the researcher is already well acquainted with the practices and norms of the organisation under investigation. As Gans comments, 'the hardest task in fieldwork is to study people who are politically or culturally akin to the fieldworker and who take the same things for granted' (1979:77). It can be an advantage, in this situation, that interviews remove the research and the researcher from the 'natural' setting of everyday life, thereby providing a forum in which practices and opinions conforming to organisational norms can be explicitly examined. For this study, interviews provided the opportunity to explain the purpose and background of the research to all informants and to differentiate the research and my role as researcher from my existence as an employee of the organisation. This was particularly important as informants often attribute incorrect provenance to researchers which might have led to unnecessary reticence (Schwarzman, 1993:49).

It was clear from the start of the research, also, that interviews would not be the only source of data that this study would rely on. Using interviews alone to gather data can have considerable drawbacks. Cottle, having used primarily semi-structured interviews for his study of ethnicity and television producers, is careful to point out that one cannot assume that practitioners are omniscient or unfettered. He emphasises the necessity not to take interview accounts at face value but, as part of the analysis, to situate the accounts as part of the prevailing wider influences (1997:11-12). In particular, he has criticised Tunstall for underestimating the importance of this and relying too heavily on producer's own perspectives (see Tunstall 1993; Cottle, 1995). Burns, when researching at the BBC, also used

interviews as a mainstay of his research, but these were supplemented by observation and analysis of meetings and activities (Burns, 1977:xi-xii). Bringing other sources into the research helped to contextualise producers' accounts and provided alternative perspectives. For these reasons, and as a rich source of information in its own right, a considerable amount of written data was used to supplement the information gathered from the interviews.

3.2.2 *Approaching written sources*

As well as interview transcriptions, a range of written materials were analysed for the study. In order to be able to draw comparisons and conclusions across the sample, a consistent approach was chosen to analyse all these documents. A preliminary content analysis and then more detailed discourse analysis were used as complementary research methods, giving an overview of all the materials under examination, as well as a more detailed analysis of structure and language for particular documents.

All the documents in this research sample were produced by or on behalf of the BBC. Broadly speaking, they could be grouped into communications documents and working papers. For both groups, the samples were selected for their bearing on the processes of commissioning, scheduling or marketing channels and their relevance to channel identity or audiences. Within the category of communications were transcripts of speeches given by BBC Television management to internal or external audiences, articles in regular newsletters, one of which was *Ariel* (the BBC's internal newspaper), and updates for staff, for example, on competitor activity. In this group also were documents designed to explain specific processes, such as the channel 'Commissioning Guides' for BBC and external television producers, or the 'BBC Brand Guidelines' about the use of the BBC brand and logos for by programme makers and staff. Into the category of working papers fell the minutes of routine meetings such as the weekly 'Programme Review Board' minutes, project reports such as the 'BBC Television Commissioning Review' and the 'BBC Marketing Project'. Also included here were marketing positioning statements for the channels and correspondence relating to specific commissions. Permission was given by the BBC to use this wide range of documents for this research. However, it was agreed that individual documents would only be referenced by name where they had already been circulated externally to the BBC. Documents cited in the later chapters of this thesis that were solely for internal BBC use are therefore identified only by type.

Data Purpose	No. of Documents
External Communication	23
Internal Communication	82
Working Document	56
Total	161

Figure 3.3: Purpose of documentary data

Data Type	No. of Documents
Articles	19
Communications documents	32
Guidelines	9
Meeting Transcripts	1
Meeting Minutes	33
Project Reports	19
Speeches	31
Strategy Papers	11
Other	6
Total	161

Figure 3.4: Documentary data by type

Initially the documents were analysed for an overview of content. The use of content analysis was for descriptive purposes rather than to look for correlations or causality within the documents (see Alasuutari 1995:9-11). There was no formal detailed quantification of the references to different types of content; instead, content analysis was used to assist with the selection of documents for more detailed analysis by making clear where documents were typical or exceptional and highlighting interesting clusters of content. All the documents were examined to see where and how references relevant to channels and representations of audiences occurred, as well as those to commissioning, scheduling and marketing. This exercise was also used to help to define the 'nodes' used later as part of the NVivo analysis of the documents (see later in this section for a discussion of this software package and appendix IV for nodes and data coded). This brief content analysis

exercise limited the likelihood of an entirely arbitrary system of analysis at a later stage.

As a research method in isolation, content analysis can have many weaknesses. It relies very much on the initial coding and categorisation set up by the researcher and therefore is only as useful as this initial construct allows it to be (Deacon et al 1999:131); this may be arbitrary and therefore flawed (Silverman 1985:149). Also, as Deacon et al comment, it is not sensitive to questions about discursive form or aesthetic or rhetorical nuances (1999:117). However, as a complement to other techniques it can add a quantitative dimension to an otherwise qualitative study that helps to avoid unsupported generalisation (Silverman 1985:138-140; Alasuutari 1996:130-132). It was a feature of the research that this method supported another technique for analysis of the documents. As Williams et al say, 'the weakness of any single method, qualitative or quantitative, are balanced by the strengths of other methods' (1988:47)

Discourse analysis was the most extensive means used to analyse the documentary data. Discourse analysis is acknowledged as a broad term that covers a range of textual analysis techniques which have in common a concern with the structural and rhetorical features of a text, written or spoken, and an intention to shed light on the relations of knowledge, meaning and power within the text (Deacon et al 1999:310; Stubbs 1983:1; Connell and Mills 1985:32). Unlike content analysis, it provides a means to relate the text to the social. Language, in this context, is considered as inseparable from situation (Stubbs 1983:1; Deacon et al 1999:146). Discourse analysis 'enables us to focus not only on the actual uses of language as a form of social interaction but also on forms of representation in which different social categories and relations are constructed from and in the interests of a particular point of view' (Deacon et al 1999:146). This study relied on qualitative analysis for its ability to reveal the manner of the construction of 'channel' and the perception of or representation of audiences within the organisation. Its limitations, such as the sometimes opaque relationship between detailed textual features of discourse and social reproduction, made it necessary to be explicit about interpretation to compensate for the lack of predefined technique (Deacon et al 1999:179-81). Overall, however, this form of analysis had a further strength in that it could be applied to images as well as written materials. From this point of view, the basis of discourse analysis in structuralism and semiotics was a particular advantage (see van Dijk 1988:19).

As noted, discourse analysis is more indicative of an approach than a single technique. In this case, the approach involved examining the selected documents from a consistent set of perspectives. In the first instance the context of each document was considered. This involved noting its position in relation to other texts, whether it formed part of a longer or larger document or text, as did *Ariel* articles and items in 'Team Briefing' newsletters, for example. Layout and design were considered, although as many documents occurred in a number of formats (for example printed and online) this was not given undue weight. Intertextual relations, especially where these involved issues regarding the relationship between channels and programmes, were also taken into account. Once the context had been examined, themes, sequencing structures and narrative mechanisms were analysed. Framing procedures were identified and stylistic and rhetorical devices were examined, looking particularly at the ways in which lexical choices supported thematic structures. Where relevant, sources within the text were analysed for type and treatment (for a more detailed explanation of the process, refer to Deacon et al 1999:174-9 and van Dijk 1988:24-35.) For the transcripts of interviews, there were a number of additional considerations relating to the spoken characteristics of the material. This did not take the form of full conversational analysis, as this study was not about conversation in its natural context (Alasuutari 1995:101). Nonetheless, where non-verbal factors were significant to an understanding of the discourse, these were taken into account as part of the overall analysis.

From a practical perspective, the bulk of the analysis took place using a software package designed for qualitative discourse analysis, NUD*IST Vivo (known as NVivo). This package allows sections of the text of documents for analysis to be 'coded' according to a system of 'cases' and 'nodes' defined by the researcher. In this study, the cases were defined as the television channels under examination, and the nodes as various themes that emerged during analysis, ranging from those concerned with audiences to those dealing with discussions of public service broadcasting and to types and characteristics of programming. (Appendix IV includes the full range of nodes and cases.) NVivo proved a useful and effective device for carrying out the analysis of the documentary data and the interview transcripts. As all the codes could be user defined and modified throughout the analysis, it was a flexible enough tool to deal with new elements and themes emerging as the project progressed. It also facilitated the manipulation of large amounts of data and the easy comparison of sections of text relating to a single

theme. The fact that text could be coded to more than one case or node also ensured that relevant information could be called up as necessary.

3.2.3 *Approaching images*

The images used as part of this study fell into two categories. The first of these were internal communications videos. These were produced to accompany certain internal communications initiatives such as a video on 'Young Mums' designed to be part of the communication of the '100 Tribes' audience research methodology. These videos generally took the form of information films of varying length, featuring BBC managers, actors or, in some cases, 'members of the audience'. The videos were designed to be shown to BBC staff and formed part of the environment surrounding the production of channels. The videos were taken into the study as elements of the broader communications campaigns, but stood in their own right as rich sites of information, particularly about perception and representation of BBC audiences.

The second source of visual material included the identities, animations and trails broadcast on BBC channels. Identities, or 'idents' (the still channel identifiers) and 'animations' (moving channel identifiers) were regularly changed and updated over the years, often with seasonal editions produced. These, along with broadcaster logos, act as markers showing the audience which channel they are viewing, and therefore to differentiate and characterise the channels. They form a crucial part of the process of marketing and therefore were included as part of the research both in terms of their production and also as complete products. Trails, which also function as marketing tools, were included in the analysis for the same reasons. A selection of each of the main series of idents and animations available during the research period were considered as part of the study, and where relevant for comparative purposes, older series of idents and animations were also included.

The video and broadcast materials were analysed using an approach similar to that applied to the written material, in that selected examples were analysed for context, themes, structures, style and sources as described above. Attention was paid to the televisual nature of the texts in relation to television conventions of structure and style (Berger 1982; Deacon et al 1999). These include the lighting, editing, image and sound quality, and the framing. The analysis of these factors took into account Berger's work on the semiotics of television in terms of different shots and editing styles although did not follow his definitions absolutely (Berger 1982:37-

39). Trails, idents and animations were also considered in relation to the conventions of television advertising, with which they have strong similarities³. This included, for example, considering whether or how they were designed to stand out in a break or schedule junction (see Myers 1999:125) and other common features such as duration, form, function and placement in the schedule. Where possible, the creative briefs or information from interviews or correspondence about the commissioning of these materials were taken into account in the analysis of the texts themselves. Given that this study is very much focused on the production of channels, it is worth stressing that the purpose of the analysis in this context was to understand the impact of the broadcasters' intentions towards their audiences rather than looking at the resultant texts independently of the production process.

3.3 The overall critical approach

The advantages of basing this study around a combination of research methods need to be set in the broader context, and as part of that it is worth considering some of the debates that exist about triangulation. Silverman observes that triangulation is often based on assumptions which are essentially positivist in approach. He takes as his particular example Denzin, who despite his interactionist perspective, talks of triangulation as a means to overcome partial views and present something like a complete picture. Silverman also observes that this supposes some measure of social events which is not 'biased' by the view of the informant (1985:105). Stubbs, too, comments that triangulation usually refers to comparing and checking data generated from one method against that generated by others. He notes that one of the major features of the concept of triangulation is that the analysts' account should be compared to the participants' (Stubbs 1983:234-5).

However, combining methods in this way need not be indicative of a positivist approach. As was the case here, the use of multiple methods was determined by the desire to maximise the value of the available sources and data. The methods that were used were done so in recognition of their applicability to different types of material. There was no clear repository of information that described the production of television channels and therefore combining interviewing and discourse analysis made it possible to process disparate data. As the research questions were framed in such a way as to seek differences in perception, bias was not an issue (Deacon et al 1999:29). There is, nonetheless, an underlying theoretical position within the choice of methods for this research; the approach of this study has much in common

with the Alasuutari's 'specimen perspective' in the study of cultural distinction than with a factist or positivist perspective (1995:63). This position on informants and information is also congruent with features of ethnography (Alasuutari 1995:58; Deacon et al 199:6-7) with which this study shares another characteristic, a concern with the role of the researcher.

One of the cornerstones of ethnography is the positioning of the researcher as part of the research (see, for example, Willis 1980; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Geertz, 1988; Morley and Silverstone, 1991; Morley, 1997). Hammersley and Atkinson suggest that a theory should include references to mechanisms or processes by which the relationship between the variables identified are generated, and note that the mechanism is often the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:20). Ethnographic research methods place the researcher as part of the research, making reflexivity both a necessity and an advantage. Concern with reflexivity as part of this study was at once practical and theoretical. It is unusual for the researcher to be as closely connected with the organisation being studied as was the case here, since I remained an employee of the BBC throughout the research period. Some of the practical considerations around data collection were outlined in the discussion about interviews and participant observation, where ensuring clarity around which role that I was occupying, that of employee or that of researcher, was important in terms of the integrity of the study. It is worth noting also that there were also clear advantages with data collection in being familiar with the 'host' organisation. Access, for example, often proves troublesome for researchers wishing to base their research within a single organisation (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:54; Schwarzman 1993:49). Working at the BBC already, I am convinced that I received better access to people and documents than a researcher from elsewhere, and secured confidences and information that I would not have been given to 'an outsider'.

As well as issues concerning the collection of information, there are also others relating to interpretation. A relationship with the subject of the research may be seen by others to affect the researcher's ability to maintain a critical distance. This problem has been faced by other researchers who have had close links with the subject of their research. Seiter, for example, notes that her research on a parents' support group was initially considered to be contaminated by her own participation (1995: 137). Gillespie identifies advantages and disadvantages brought about by a pre-existing knowledge of the subject of the research. She observes that the understanding that the researcher can bring to the project in these circumstances

can reduce any tendency to see the subject of research as 'other' or exotic, but can also lead to unfounded assumptions. A reflexive approach can go some way to bringing these assumptions to the surface without losing the depth of understanding, as can creating some distance from the informants whilst analysing the data and writing up the research (Gillespie, 1995:50). Ferguson also identifies many advantages of prior understanding of an industry that aided her with access, analysis and interpretation for her study of women's magazines (1983: 217). The difficulties, therefore, may well be outweighed by the benefits presented by a researcher's familiarity with the organisation. In my own case, I was helped greatly in keeping a critical distance in that I was not required to occupy my role as an employee for significant blocks of time whilst I was analysing and writing up the research. In any case, I was constantly aware of and questioning my dual role during the study.

One further point of note in this discussion of methodology is this study's position in relation to the field of ethnography in media studies. Despite sharing some of the characteristics of ethnography, this research was not intended to be an ethnographic study of the BBC. Firstly, the methods I have outlined do not adhere to ethnographic methods as strictly defined (see, for example, Hammersley, 1992) although with the immersion I experience as an employee, it may be closer to ethnography than some studies which claim to be⁴. More importantly, however, it is not intended to interrogate the BBC as an institution and a culture. Instead it is a study of the production and purpose of channels in the public service context. If, in dealing with this, it shares some characteristics with an ethnographic study and also sheds light on the BBC, its culture and its practices, then all the better.

Having discussed the range of methods and the overall methodological approach of this study, the following chapters concern themselves with the substance of this research.

Notes

¹ See chapter 4 for an outline of all the BBC channels and their histories.

² Exact numbers involved in the creation of channels varied over the period and could be counted in a number of different ways.

³ Ellis states that a television advert is 'a segment of about thirty seconds, comprising a large number of images and sounds that are tightly organised amongst themselves. This segment is found accompanied by other similar segments, coherent within themselves, they have no particular connection with each other' (Ellis 1982:118)

Trails, in particular, fit closely with this definition. Animations and idents also share many of these features.

⁴ See Gillespie, 1995:55 for a discussion of how far certain media 'ethnographies' do not always conform to the strict requirements of ethnographic research.

Chapter 4: A brief history of channel-based broadcasting

4.1 Overview

Some history and context are required to set the scene for the rest of this thesis as, in order to appreciate the issues and debates which occupy later chapters, it is important to understand the timing, manner and purpose of channel development within the broader histories of broadcasting and television. An appreciation of some of the BBC's recent and longer-term history is also required in order to recognise some of the possibilities that have arisen with multichannel broadcasting in the UK. This chapter therefore sets up a channel-based approach to the history of television in Britain. Because it brings together some relatively disparate contextual information, it is divided into sections, each dealing with a crucial part of the background needed to address channel-based broadcasting at the BBC in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The first section is devoted to a brief history of the development of the major terrestrial television channels in the UK and how they came into being. It teases out the possibility for each channel to develop its own specific identity within British television either through technology, regulation or its approach to audience. The second section examines radio broadcasting and how the networks developed a differentiated approach to audiences, providing useful parallels for the recent development television channels at the BBC. The themes of the third part of the chapter are the weakening of vertically integrated broadcasting, the beginnings of multichannel television in the UK and the move from television distribution solely by terrestrial broadcasting to a system including to satellite, cable and digital. The fourth and final section deals with the recent history of the BBC, giving an account of the main organisational landmarks during the research period (1996-2002). This section provides background information about the events and activities that consumed BBC whilst the bulk of the research was being carried out, and gives details of the shifts in strategy and structure against which the debates and changes to the channel portfolio were being developed.

It is worth noting also what this chapter does not cover. It is intended to be neither a full history of UK broadcasting nor a history of the BBC (instead see, for example, Briggs, 1985 or Curran & Seaton, 1997). Although it covers some of the same ground, it focuses very much on those elements which throw light on the purpose and function of channels or which are necessary to understand references or ideas that came up consistently during research interviews or in the documents that form part of the research.

4.2 The early development of terrestrial channels in the UK

It was clear from its inception that television would be as highly regulated by government as radio had been. The frequency for transmission of the television signal was allocated by the Post Office; since the mid-nineteenth century telegraphy, telephony and radio had fallen under the control of the Post Office for security purposes and the allocation of scarce bandwidth. Television was no exception as the bandwidth for broadcasting was narrow and wavelengths had to be allocated between broadcasters in competition with the armed forces, merchant shipping and the emergency services (Scannell, 1990:11). The control of bandwidth influenced the creation of all the UK terrestrial channels.

The decision to set up a public television service was implemented in line with the recommendations of the Selsdon Committee. The first public television service in the UK began in 1936 and was broadcast by the BBC. Initially it ran for only two hours a day in the London area, but over the years this gradually increased, interrupted only during the Second World War when television transmission was suspended. By 1954 the BBC was transmitting 6 hours' television per day across the UK (Crisell 2001:71-73). In 1955 ITV was set up as a commercial competitor to the BBC's television service following a long debate after the Beveridge Committee had recommended the continuation of the BBC's monopoly in television. With ITV came the possibility of a television service with distinctions and differences from the BBC service. One of the findings of the Beveridge report had been that the BBC's television service suffered from excessive 'Londonization'. As a contrast, ITV was created with a regionalised structure to provide a less London focused service (Briggs, 1995: 624). ITV was also designed to be more 'populist' in approach. This philosophy was encapsulated by the programme controller at Associated Rediffusion at the start of the ITV service: 'from now on what the public wants it's going to get' (Sendall 1982:328). Another factor that clearly differentiated the new ITV service

from the BBC service was that it was commercially funded through spot advertising on its airwaves. A second television service immediately brought about the possibility not only of competition for the audience, who could now choose between different programmes at the same time, but of a more fundamental destabilisation of the idea of a single mass audience. The BBC, whilst it had been the sole provider of television, had been able to view the audience within the public service model of a mass audience that could be guided through and uplifted by the BBC's programming. The possibility of different audiences watching different programmes on different channels meant for the first time that audiences could be thought of as segmented into different interest groups, demographics or minorities rather than being a single mass (Crisell 2001:80). With ITV aiming to provide what viewers wanted in order to secure advertising revenue, the audience might also be seen as consumers, part of the audience-as-market rather than the audience-as-public model (see chapter 2). In response, the BBC began to think more about what the audience might 'like' and a little less about what the BBC 'ought' to cover (Tracey, 1998: 82). Competition also encouraged the systematic development of practices in television such as serialisation and scheduling, two factors (discussed in chapter 6) that underpinned the idea of the unified channel (Lury, 1993: 136). However, despite this new world where audience choice and commercial interests had entered broadcasting, television in the UK was still clearly at its heart a public service system, with ITV's commercial activities, programme range and content carefully regulated by the Independent Television Authority (ITA) (Scannell, 1990:17).

Awareness in the BBC of a sense of channel identity had surfaced with competition. In the late 1950s, the BBC commissioned audience research into the image of the two channels, BBC and ITV, and found them to be different (although both generally favourable) and concluded that channel image was one component of what influenced viewing decisions (Silvey, 1974: 190-1). However, it was not until the introduction of BBC2 that there was the potential for channels to have identities really distinct from that of the broadcaster. When the Pilkington Committee was set up in 1960 to look at the impact of commercial television, it had it within its gift the allocation of the bandwidth for a third television channel. BBC2 was created as an outcome of the Pilkington Committee report. In its evidence to the Pilkington Committee, the BBC justified its case for control of the third channel on the basis of an argument that, with the introduction of commercial television, the BBC had been forced to schedule competitively with ITV. This meant that popular programming for the majority audience had banished programmes with less obvious appeal to the

edges of the schedule. A second BBC channel would provide the opportunity to complement the existing service with programmes of a more diverse, experimental or distinctive nature. However, conscious that it needed to justify the expenditure of licence fees on all programming and that this relied on a service that had a reasonable share of viewers, the new BBC channel would not be a narrow, specialist or purely educational service (Crisell 2001:110-111). Pilkington was impressed with the BBC's overall record and position and critical of the 'trivial' programming of ITV. It therefore awarded the third channel to the BBC on the basis of its submission (Scannell 1990:18).

BBC2 was launched in 1964. Arguably, this marks the beginning of narrowcasting. Regardless of the BBC's intentions, Crisell notes that 'many of [the programmes] - and their overall packaging and presentation - wore a rather more thoughtful air than those of BBC1. They were not exactly *recherché* but neither were they likely to win the ratings war' (2001:114-5). Scheduling for the channel was initially haphazard (Tunstall, 1993: 187), but noteworthy programmes on BBC2 during its early years included *The Great War* (1964) and *The Forsyte Saga* (1966), both of which had a more serious air than comparable documentaries and dramas on BBC1. BBC2 went on to be seen as the home of the BBC's serious survey documentaries such as *Civilisation* (1969) and *The Ascent of Man* (1972). BBC2 from its start transmitted on UHF in the new 625 line technology rather than the older 405 line transmissions on VHF, on which BBC1 was broadcast. This prevented a strategy of having only serious or minority appeal programming; in order to encourage viewers to purchase the new television sets required to view the new channel, programmes had to be reasonably enticing (Briggs, 1995: 405). Because of this, *Match of the Day* (1965-) and *Till Death Do Us Part* (1965) both started on BBC2. BBC2 was also the channel on which colour television broadcasting was piloted in 1967 (Briggs, 1995: 405; Crisell 2001:16-17) and from its launch, it was used to experiment with new scheduling techniques (Briggs, 1995: 409). So the way in which BBC2 fulfilled its brief to be experimental was particularly tied up with new technology and innovation.

BBC2 was, therefore, set up with a remit to complement but differ from the existing service. 'The two BBC television channels are not in competition with each other. They complement each other. ... With the two Network Controllers in adjoining offices there is not only total cooperation but total trust between BBC1 and BBC2' said Paul Fox, Network Controller of BBC1 (1969:11). It was, of course, the introduction of BBC2 which caused the renaming of the existing service as BBC1. Since BBC2 was experimental in technological and programme terms and catered for

minorities and a more highbrow audience, BBC1 was resituated as the BBC's more populist, mainstream channel, aimed at the mass audience. 'The BBC with its many roles to play looks to BBC1 to keep one eye on audience figures' said Paul Fox (1969:12). Now not only were these channels differentiated by competition between the broadcasters responsible for commissioning, scheduling and transmitting them, they were also complementary channels differentiated by their purpose. BBC1 and BBC2 were designed to cater for different elements of the audience and were also recognisable for other specific characteristics. Some were transitory like a higher definition picture or colour versus black and white transmission but others were more durable, such a different tone of programming, which along with other distinguishing features will be discussed in later chapters.

The next terrestrial channel introduced into the British television system was Channel 4, which started broadcasting in 1982. Channel 4 was unique in that the channel remit was very closely defined in legislation. As Harvey says, 'it was probably the only television channel in the world to combine a legislative requirement to experiment, to innovate and to complement the service offered by the existing commercial television channel' (1996:93). The allocation of bandwidth to Channel 4 was preceded by the Annan Committee, which reported in 1977, and made recommendations about how the frequency for a fourth television channel should be used. The model they proposed was that of an Open Broadcasting Authority (OBA), which would act as an outlet for programmes from a wide range of sources, some of which would not be acceptable on existing channels and many drawn from alternative programme-making sources (Harvey, 1996:102). Whilst the idea of the OBA was rejected by the government, they did pick up some of the underlying philosophy: 'there must be programmes appealing to and, we hope, stimulating tastes and interests not adequately provided for on the existing channels' (William Whitelaw quoted in Goodwin 1998:26). The Broadcasting Act, 1980, enshrined the alternative mission of the new channel:

It shall be the duty of the Authority (IBA) -

- (a) to ensure that programmes contain a suitable proportion of matter calculated to appeal to tastes and interests not generally catered for by ITV
- (b) ...to ensure that a suitable proportion of programmes are of an educational nature
- (c) to encourage innovation and experiment in the form and content of programmes

and generally to give the fourth channel a distinctive character of its own. (HMSO, 1980: 3(1))

Channel 4 was therefore clearly created with a purpose and identity to drive its programming. And whereas the submission to the select committee in relation to BBC2 had only introduced an idea of having the channel as an alternative to existing viewing, with Channel 4 a requirement to be alternative and distinctive had been spelled out in law.

This requirement raised questions as to whether and how this could be achieved. Docherty et al give an account of how the commissioning editors at the nascent Channel 4 had lengthy and heated debates about the way to realise the brief through programme commissions (1988:38). In its early years, Channel 4 attempted to live up to the requirements of the Broadcasting Act through a whole range of strategies. Its intention, unlike those of the other channels, was not to keep its audience throughout each evening but to achieve a more selective audience which might be large for some programmes and smaller for others (Hood and Tabery-Peterssen 1997:37). It employed some relatively new scheduling devices such as themed evenings (see chapter 6) and used a different notion of 'balanced' treatment of political issues from that to which other channels were expected to adhere, in that Channel 4 took a longer period over which it worked to ensure balance (Lury, 1993:141). It also broadened or challenged the treatment of black, gay and feminist issues in factual programming and drama, and got a reputation for broadcasting material more sexually liberal than the other channels (Goodwin 1998:31; Docherty et al 1988; Harvey 1996:105-109). Channel 4 worked within a new industry model as a 'publisher contractor', commissioning programmes rather than making them within its own production organisation like the BBC or ITV (see section 4.3). In these ways, Channel 4 was probably the first documented example in British television of the purpose of a channel driving its commissioning and scheduling activities. Through interpretation of its brief to cater for tastes and interests not generally provided for by ITV, it also reinforced the tendency that had started with ITV and continued with BBC2 towards the fragmentation of the mass audience into segmented audiences.

Channel 5 was the latest terrestrial channel to start broadcasting in the UK. Significant issues arose for the channel from the fact that the frequency it was allocated was never likely to be available to more than about 70% of the potential UK audience; this tended to marginalise it as a channel that would never cater for all. Channel 5 was to be the last analogue terrestrial television service in Britain. The

introduction of the fifth channel had been outlined in the 1990 Broadcasting Act, which did not follow the lead of the 1980 Act in setting it a focused identity. The new channel started broadcasting in 1996 and most of the debates surrounding its launch converged on issues of programme quality, in no small part due to the process for allocation of the franchise in which projected programme quality played a rather opaque part (see Goodwin 1998:117; Fanthome, 2003).

When David Elstein was appointed to run Channel 5 he began by emphasising aspects of the channel that were akin to the satellite channels where he had previously worked. He announced that the audience was well aware of the advantages of stripped schedules¹ and of targeted programming (Hood and Tabary-Peterssen 1997:39) and that Channel 5 would be employing these strategies on terrestrial television. This was not only indicative of a tendency for terrestrial channels to adopt new scheduling and programming practices from satellite channels (see chapters 5 and 6) it was also in keeping with a channel that could not compete for the 'whole' audience due to its technological limitations.

So, a number of the key features of channels can be traced through the development of the terrestrial channels in British television, from the start of the BBC's television service, through the birth of ITV, BBC2 and Channel 4 to the introduction of Channel 5. This history is something of which current television executives are still aware:

You can trace archaeology in the schedules of BBC1 and ITV. The religious programmes now on BBC1 are absolutely to do with the settlement with the churches that was done before the launch of BBC2. That's why *Songs of Praise* is where it is, that's why *Everyman* is where it is. Sometimes things happen which persist for decades.

(Interviewee J)

A major factor influencing channel identity was the link between government regulation and channel identity. The initial recommendation of the Selsdon Committee that the first television service should be run by the BBC meant that it was set up with the same public service ethos about programme range, quality and delivery that had informed the BBC's radio services. ITV was then also subjected to obligations about programme quality and range, as well as being created as a deliberately regionalised service with spot advertising. Channel 4 had its tone, programme obligations and considerations of its audience written into legislation which then provided the basis for its commissioning and scheduling strategies. Even

Channel 5 was marked by regulation in some respects; the fact that it could never expect to reach the full UK audience may have created a predisposition towards niche broadcasting.

The introduction of different channels run by the same broadcaster and channels designed to provide alternative viewing to existing channels introduced the possibility not only of further competition but also of complementary channel systems (see Ytreberg, 2002a: 287-92). A system where a single broadcaster owns or manages more than one channel forces the channels to identify their characteristics or programming strategies as distinct from one another. This defines all the channels involved in the system more clearly and in the process, target audiences can become associated with different channels, leading, for example, to the differentiation of 'populist' channels such as BBC1 or ITV from 'minority' channels such as BBC2 or Channel 4. It also exerts pressure on broadcasters to consider audiences in a segmented manner. Channel complementarity or comparison also distinguishes between public service channels and commercial channels, encouraging broadcasters to identify their audiences according to audience-as-public or audience-as-market models. With the advent of a multichannel system even on a small scale, the idea of the single mass audience had retreated significantly.

4.2 Parallels with BBC Radio

In order to set recent developments in television into context, it is useful briefly to trace the development of the radio networks at the BBC and how the relationship between network and audience became more closely defined as the BBC reacted to changes within the media landscape, including an increase in the number of stations available, increased competition and the dominance of another medium, television.

The radio service had been set up in the 1920s according to the Reithian idea of public service, in which a mixed schedule could encourage a listener to broaden their horizons and develop their knowledge. Broadcasting was designed to lead public taste rather than satisfy it, and therefore having entertainment, information and educational content all transmitted as part of the same network was crucial to the public purpose of radio (Scannell, 1990:13). This was the *Home Service*. During the Second World War the BBC launched a second radio network, the *Forces Programme*, aimed at British troops abroad. In line with a specially commissioned piece of audience research into the listening habits of service

personnel, the schedules consisted of lighter, more entertainment focused programming such as music, variety shows and light talks. By 1942 this radio network was being listened to by more civilians than service people, and had an audience 50% higher than the *Home Service* (Crisell 2001: 54-55).

As a result of this experience, the BBC designed its post-war radio provision around three networks. The *Home Service* continued as a London-based network which regional centres could draw upon covering a broad range of output. The *Light Programme* was essentially to be a continuation of the *Forces Programme* and a new network, the *Third Programme*, was a serious cultural network, with music, talks, experimental programming, arts and philosophy. Across the three networks it was possible to listen to the full range of the BBC's output, and within each there was a mixture of genres, although on each this was not necessarily the full mix. In this way, the BBC split its radio offering neatly into three different target audiences, the *Third Programme* for the highbrow, the *Home Service* for the middlebrow and the *Light Programme* for the lowbrow, with programming to match (see Silvey, 1974: 124-5; Lury, 1993:136). The public service mission at this time was visualised as a 'cultural pyramid' by William Haley, the then Director General of the BBC. Listeners would move through the three networks, with differentiated but overlapping tones, 'each... leading on to the other, the listener being induced through the years to discriminate in favour of the things that are more worthwhile' (William Haley quoted in McDonnell, 1991: 24).

The process of matching radio networks to defined audience groups matured with the implementation of the BBC's *Broadcasting in the Seventies* strategy for radio². *Broadcasting in the Seventies* acknowledged that the role of radio had been changing; the development of the transistor had made radios transportable and television had taken over as the domestic medium for concentrated attention (Crisell 1986: 32). Radio was something that accompanied other activities. '...for most people radio is now mainly for the daytime' said *Broadcasting in the Seventies* 'They see it less as a medium for family entertainment, more as a continuous supplier of music and information' (BBC, 1969:2). The way forward for radio at the BBC was characterised by a shift from mixed genre provision towards a more generically defined radio:

Traditionally broadcasting has been based on the principle of the range of mixed programming. On a single channel the public is offered the whole range... all types of programmes covering all interests and

all 'brow' levels. But experience ... suggests that many listeners now expect radio to be based more on a different principle - that of the specialised network, offering a continuous stream of one particular type of programme, meeting one particular interest.... Already the BBC has moved in this direction, first with the Music Programme then with the all-pop Radio 1 (BBC, 1969:3).

In keeping with this, all the radio networks were streamlined towards 'format' radio. Radio 1 continued as a pop music station for young people and Radio 2, a less youth orientated music network, was split entirely from Radio 1 as soon as frequency availability allowed. Radio 3 passed most of its speech programmes to Radio 4, becoming essentially a classical music station. Radio 4 remained to some extent a mixed genre station, focusing on speech output (BBC, 1969; Crisell 2001: 145). When Radio 5 emerged many years later, its incarnation as a mixed-genre channel was dropped relatively quickly in favour of a news and sport focused network.

With *Broadcasting in the Seventies*, for radio the principle of cultural improvement through mixed scheduling was more or less abandoned. Ian Trethowan, Director General through this period, made it clear that this did not apply to the BBC as a whole: "Mixed programming" in the Reithian sense still flourishes, but it has emigrated with the evening family audiences to television - and particularly BBC1' (1970:6). So television was left to carry one of the key Reithian public service principles on behalf of the BBC. Another factor to influence the development of television channels at a later date was the idea, implicit in these changes, of a portfolio of channels or networks that together served the whole audience. In moving away from the mixed schedule in radio in the 1970s, it was clear that the full mix of BBC public service programming would now be available across the range of networks rather than within one single network. As a result, the networks were positioned so that each was aimed at a specific (albeit generally broad) section of the audience in a way that collectively attempted to cater for more or less all radio listeners; the networks together still catered for all 'brow' levels and different age groups. Thus, the principle was adopted of a system of networks working together within a public service system and of complementary network identities within this, targeted at and catering for different sections of the audience. For these reasons, *Broadcasting in the Seventies* was referred to in relation to television during the research for this study: what was planned for television was 'what BBC radio figured out in 1967 when they moved to Radios 1, 2, 3 & 4'

(Interviewee J) or 'what the radio networks did in 1970 effectively an overnight rebrand of the entire portfolio to create a mix of channels' (Interviewee T).

4.3 Changes in the UK media industry and the development of multichannel television

During the 1980s and 1990s there were two changes in the media industry which had a major impact on the way in which television channels would be perceived. The first of these was a move away from highly integrated broadcasting, production and transmission, towards a separation of these functions. The second development, facilitated by new satellite, cable and digital distribution technologies, was the growth in the sheer numbers of television channels.

During the 1980s, there was a move within many industries towards 'post-Fordist' organisation and vertical disintegration and this included media industries such as film and publishing (see Lash & Urry, 1994). In British television, the creation of Channel 4 as a 'publisher-contractor' broadcaster exemplified this tendency (Robins & Cornford 1992:190). Unlike the BBC and ITV, Channel 4 did not have its own production facilities and, under the Broadcasting Act 1980, the IBA was required to ensure that a substantial proportion of the new channel's programming would be supplied by bodies other than the ITV contractors (Goodwin 1998:29). This meant that Channel 4 had to commission programming from independent producers. This stipulation was designed to bring innovation to programme form and content and also specifically intended to generate a new pluralism within the television industry. By the time the 1988 White Paper on broadcasting was published it was proposed that there should be 'greater separation between the various functions that make up broadcasting and have in the past been carried out by one organisation' to counter the 'excessive degree of vertical integration' in the industry' (HMSO, 1988:41,6). In the subsequent Broadcasting Act, 1990, a statutory requirement was introduced for both the BBC and ITV to commission 25% of their television production from independent producers³. So, whereas in 1979 the industry had been virtually 100% integrated, by 1997 Channel 4 was commissioning or acquiring all its output from independent producers, the BBC commissioned 29% and ITV commissioned 33% from independents (Goodwin 1998:160).

These developments had profound effects on the organisation of broadcasting and on the role of channels within television. One of these was a

greater focus on the functions of the *broadcaster* as distinct from all the other production and transmission functions that traditional broadcasting organisations also performed. Channel 4 existed as an example of an organisation that carried out only the broadcasting activities of commissioning and acquiring programmes and their transmission rights, scheduling them and marketing the resulting channel. These activities also became more prominent at the BBC, as discussed in the next section.

With the tendency towards vertical disintegration in the television industry, rights to intellectual property became of crucial importance to broadcasters and producers alike. For the broadcaster, the ownership and control of the product, regardless of who produced a programme, had to be secured through ownership of transmission rights sufficient for its channels' needs (Robins and Cornford, 1992:195). This meant that the ownership of intellectual property became a significant objective in itself, and the securing and bundling of intellectual property was encouraged. Lash and Urry describe how the possibility of branding arises from the ownership of a set of iterated intellectual rights which takes the focus away from the cultural object and puts it instead onto the author (1994:137). This thinking can be applied to the television context in terms of the focus being taken from the programmes and placed instead with the channel, the site of the iterated intellectual property rights, creating a greater emphasis on the channel as part of the broadcasting process (see chapter 7). The concentration on broadcasting rights and the related tendency to enhance the value of one intellectual property by associating it with other properties lay at the root of the growing importance of television channels.

The other major change in the television industry during this same period was a marked growth in the number of television channels available through satellite and cable broadcasting to viewers with the right receiving equipment. Cable television was the subject of a government appointed panel in the early 1980s, which presumed that facilitating the longer-term development of the interactive commercial possibilities of cable would best be served in the short term by developing entertainment services. Thus, the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984 excluded cable broadcasting from the public service regulation of the IBA, making it relatively easy for cable channels to be set up, as they were exempt from most obligations about quality, range or programming content and had minimal restrictions on advertising or sponsorship. The 1990 Broadcasting Act also removed restrictions about foreign ownership which allowed many North American

companies to buy into UK cable services and pilot new channel packages on UK cable subscribers (see Murdock 2000:123-4; Tracey, 1998: 210).

Satellite broadcasting was introduced to the UK at around the same time as cable. In the early 1980s, there was enthusiasm from government, existing broadcasters and potential broadcasters to begin television services by direct broadcasting by satellite (DBS) as soon as possible. Between 1982 and 1985 the BBC and then also the IBA and ITV companies negotiated to try to get a service up and running, with the BBC bidding for two satellite channels on which to retransmit 'the best of' BBC1 and BBC2 in another form, a precursor of its later plans for digital broadcasting. However, discussions came to nothing due to doubts about the commercial viability of the proposed services and the BBC withdrew in 1985 (Goodwin 1998:41-47). In 1986 a franchise for DBS was awarded to BSB for a service to start in 1989. However, Sky started a four-channel satellite television service prior to this, directed at the UK from the Europe-based Astra satellite. Sky and BSB services merged in 1990 and the number of channels available to the UK audience on satellite grew exponentially from then on. In the late 1990s digital broadcasting became a possibility on satellite, terrestrial and cable, once again increasing the number of channels that could be broadcast. By 2001, the ITC (successor to the IBA and ITA) had issued licences for well over 500 television programme services (ITC, 2001) and channel scarcity was clearly no longer an issue. BBC audience research estimated that at the start of 2002, 42.1% of UK homes could receive multichannel television in some form in addition to the five terrestrial channels, and in 33.4% of homes this was on digital platforms.

This enormous growth in the numbers of channels available to significant proportions of the audience had a number of effects. One was a reinforcement of the vertically disintegrated model of broadcasting; many cable and satellite broadcasters acquired considerable proportions of their programming from sources other than their own production facilities. Another was a major change as to how channels were managed and in channel programming strategies. As these changes are, in many respects, the substance of much of the rest of this thesis, I will only sketch out some of the ramifications here. Firstly, many broadcasters developed a number of channels from which they have built comprehensive channel portfolios through which to offer their programming. On cable and satellite these have often been packaged together for consumers, or certain channels have been sold as premium services within a multiple broadcaster package. Together, they have enabled the broadcaster to cater for consumers through a portfolio and to target

them through their specific interests. Sky and Discovery have both used this approach, as has MTV, with its sister channel VH-1. Many channels have focused on a single genre, such as news, drama, music or sport, examples being Sky Movies or Sky Sport channels, CNN or MTV. These have broken the mould created by public service terrestrial channels of programming strategies based around mixed-genre television. Finally, a high proportion of these channels are targeted at niche audiences. MTV, for example, is clearly aimed at a very specific audience of 14 to 34 year-olds (Jhally, 1990: 95). Arguably, the idea of the mass audience and many of the public service ideas related to it are barely sustainable within a broadcasting system where multiple channels offer such a specialised television service. This is one of the major questions examined in later chapters of this thesis.

4.4 Background to the BBC

The final section of this chapter deals with aspects of the recent history of the BBC which provide a backdrop to the organisation of channels described and analysed within this thesis. This section gives an account of key events and developments within the organisation for the period 1996 to 2002 and the aim is to provide sufficient contextual information to make sense of some of the attitudes, systems, processes and changes described in subsequent chapters. During the period under review there were two major reorganisations at the BBC, both of which had a significant impact on the BBC's broadcasting functions and which were very much part of the shared experience of those working in the organisation, referred to frequently in documentation and interviews collected as part of this research. In the same period, the BBC expanded its operations, introduced a variety of new services, such as BBC Online, and, more relevant to this thesis, launched a number of new public service and commercial channels.

The first of the two major reorganisations was announced in 1996 by John Birt, then Director General. At that time, the BBC was structured as a number of directorates, primarily based on output services or professional function. These were integrated structures; BBC Network Television directorate had covered all matters relating to the commissioning, production, scheduling, publicity or transmission of television, save that which was broadcast regionally. The new BBC structure came into being in April 1997 and almost immediately became known within the organisation as the 'Broadcast / Production split'. Amongst the many changes introduced, the most fundamental was to separate the BBC's programme-making and

production operation from its functions as a broadcaster. Production and programme-making activities for television, radio and new media services were grouped together into a single BBC Production directorate. Commissioning, scheduling, audience research, strategy, marketing, publicity and presentation activities for television and radio and new media were brought together in BBC Broadcast. Within BBC Broadcast were divisions for the management of television, radio, online, regional output and those functional organisations relevant to the broadcasting process, for example marketing or presentation (see appendix V for outline organisation details). In effect, the BBC was moving itself towards a less vertically integrated model of organisation, albeit that the organisation as a whole still controlled the same breadth of the broadcasting process⁴. This internal disintegration was in many ways the natural outcome of, and in keeping with, the vertical disintegration of the broader media industry. Channel 4 had illustrated that an organisation based on a publisher/contractor model could operate very effectively and demonstrated the possibilities for commissioning structures that were not integrated with production.

BBC Broadcast immediately became the dominant partner in the BBC Broadcast / BBC Production relationship, and this was tied to the flow of money through the organisation. The licence fee revenue was allocated by the Corporate Centre to BBC Broadcast in order for BBC Broadcast to commission programmes for its channels and services. BBC Broadcast then paid BBC Production or an independent producer for programmes delivered for transmission. In the absence, initially, of well-constructed output deals and guarantees BBC Production quickly came to feel like the poor relation. In the meantime, the prominence of broadcasting skills and activities such as strategic thinking, commissioning, scheduling, presentation and marketing increased as they were separated from the previously overwhelming production and programme-making occupations: 'This combination of what have in the past been regarded as "Cinderella skills" is the key to the BBC's progress in an increasingly competitive market, and to serving audiences whose tastes and needs are constantly changing' said *Ariel* (26.03.1997), reporting the latest on restructuring. These skills were the very ones involved in the creation of channels and channel brands.

Another reason for the creation of BBC Broadcast was the management of relationships with independent producers. The BBC had been having difficulties in this area and was obliged to commission at least 25% of its output from independents. Independent producers' bids for programme commissions had

generally been handled by the heads of the BBC's own production departments. The new organisation with the separation of commissioning and production was intended to create a more level playing field between BBC production and independent programme offers, and an Independent Commissioning Group (ICG) was created in BBC Broadcast to 'develop and manage relationships with independent suppliers in order to get the very best independent productions onto all of the BBC's channels. ... The ICG acts as a bridge between the BBC and the independent community' (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000-2001). This was also intended to develop a more coherent approach to securing broadcasting and transmission rights in accordance with the priorities of a less vertically integrated organisation (see chapter 7).

The most prominently declared intention of the new BBC Broadcast, however, was to bring to the BBC a greater expertise in understanding its audiences and the capability to integrate this knowledge into commissioning and, through that, to drive it into production practices. Typical of the early focus on audience understanding was Will Wyatt's announcement in *Ariel* (26.03.1997) as the new Managing Director of BBC Broadcast: 'central to the creation of Broadcast is improving our understanding of the BBC's audiences everywhere'. During the life of BBC Broadcast, this emphasis on audience understanding reached a pitch which Born has described as 'functioning partly as a disciplinary tool by which strategists and commissioners could chastise producers for failing to meet what were described as audience wants' (2000:415). I shall be looking later at the BBC Broadcast's interest in understanding audiences through developments in audience research (see especially chapter 8), but suffice to say here that the creation of the new directorate brought to the fore this interest in, attitude to and emphasis on audiences and their needs or desires.

So the split of production and broadcasting initiated in 1996 at the BBC and enacted in 1997, moved the organisation towards a less vertically integrated model of broadcasting which threw the BBC's relationships with audiences into sharper relief and generated a concentration on mechanisms for understanding audiences. It also highlighted the broadcasting skills which had previously been absorbed in a broader production capability. In addition it raised the profile of rights acquisition. All these factors had the effect of building and emphasising the importance of television channels within the BBC. Channel-centred commissioning was the means by which money passed around the organisation, informed by the best audience research available. Rights and intellectual property were purchased by the channels as part of the commissioning process on behalf of the organisation and this, combined with an

increased marketing capability within BBC Broadcast, created the potential for channels to develop as brands in their own right.

During the 1990s, the number of television channels editorially managed and commissioned by the BBC also grew considerably. In 1991 the BBC had started a commercial international news service, BBC World. In 1992 UK Gold had been launched, another commercial channel but this time designed to exploit the BBC's programme archive, available to audiences via cable and satellite distribution. BBC Prime started up in 1995 as a subscription entertainment channel in Europe. In the second half of the 1990s there was an even greater burst of channel launch activity. In 1996, the BBC published *Extending Choice in the Digital Age*, making a commitment to digital terrestrial broadcasting ahead of other public service broadcasters. In it, the BBC promised a 'digital dividend' of extra public services, making use of the extra channel capacity that DTT provided. As part of this the BBC promised a twenty-four hour news channel and complementary services to BBC1 and BBC2, providing additional information, follow-up programming and extended live coverage (BBC, 1996:27-38; Goodwin 1998:137). In 1997, BBC News 24 started transmission. This was a public service, domestic, twenty-four hour news channel, which was available on cable or satellite and also initially broadcast overnight on BBC1. BBC Parliament, which primarily showed parliamentary proceedings, followed in 1998. Two further public service channels were launched by BBC Broadcast in the late 1990s, both available free-to-air to audiences with digital television receivers: BBC Choice began broadcasting in 1998 and BBC Knowledge followed in 1999. I shall be examining the development of these channels and their evolution into BBC3 and BBC4 in later chapters.

Further commercial channels were also launched during this period as part of two significant joint ventures that the BBC entered in the late 1990's. A deal with Discovery resulted in the launch of BBC America in 1998. For British viewers, the UKTV channels started up in 1997, funded by Flextech, but with all programmes and editorial services provided by the BBC. The UKTV channels continue to be available by subscription via satellite, cable or DTT and are still managed editorially by the BBC's television organisation.

So by the end of the 1990s, the BBC was involved with its own multichannel television proposition. This was still evolving during the second major reorganisation to take place in the research period. A new Director General, Greg Dyke, arrived at the BBC in 2000. After reviewing the structure and operation of the

internal market and concluding, amongst other things, that the deep divisions that had developed between BBC Production and BBC Broadcast were not in the BBC's longer-term interests, he initiated changes aiming 'for the BBC to be a place where people work collaboratively...and are inspired behind a common purpose - to create great television and radio services and outstanding online services' (BBC 2001:2). In order to achieve this, BBC Broadcast and BBC Production were dismantled, and television, radio and 'new media' became divisions in their own right. However, this did not signal the total reintegration of broadcasting and production. For sport, children's programming and for specialist factual and educational programming, commissioning and production were indeed reintegrated, but for all other genres the broadcasting functions remained within the new Television and Radio divisions, whereas programme-making was organised separately in a number of large genre-based production divisions⁵. The ICG was disbanded and BBC Television commissioned direct from in-house or independent producers. For the first time a pan-BBC rights and acquisitions structure was set up. These changes necessitated the development of a new commissioning process, the third time this had been reviewed and changed since 1996⁶. These constant reviews reflected the BBC's preoccupation with process management in general and in particular with how commissioning was managed across organisational boundaries, something which seemed to have become critical to its success.

With 'One BBC', as the reorganisation in 2000 was labelled, there were also changes in leadership in television and a new strategy was developed which mapped a way forward for BBC public service television channels as a portfolio which would include BBCs 1 to 4, BBC News 24 and two new children's services. Within the portfolio BBC3 would replace BBC Choice and BBC 4 would replace BBC Knowledge and approval was eventually secured from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport for all these changes. Chapter 5 looks in detail at the idea of the channel portfolio, traces the changes to commissioning implied by the new channel strategy and evaluates the impact of these on the evolution of defined channel identities and their role in the delivery of public service broadcasting.

So during this period, in many respects the BBC reorganised to align itself more fully with changes that were affecting the media industry as a whole. Not only did it launch a broad range of new television channels, both public service and commercial, it also moved significantly towards a less integrated internal model of broadcasting and positioned its many channels into a more coherent portfolio than had existed previously. These changes brought channels to the fore as part of the

BBC structure and broadcasting process, paving the way for a fundamental shift in how programmes were commissioned and audiences were addressed. These events formed the backdrop to the developments described in subsequent chapters.

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter has dealt with a broad range of contextual material about the development of channels in the UK and at the BBC. It looked at the history of television from the perspective of identifying the defining factors of the channels' nascent identities, drawing out the ways in early channel identities were influenced by technology or programming (such as the early BBC2), through structure (like the regionalised ITV), imposed by legislation (Channel 4) or through target audience, applying equally to the popular or populist aspirations BBC1 and ITV to the narrower target audiences for BBC2 or Channel 4. It also touched on the impact that the development of a number of channels in a competitive system had on the models of audience available to broadcasters, in particular the moves from the perception of a single mass audience towards a more fragmented and segmented audience and early shifts from the model of audience-as-public towards that of audience-as-market.

Radio broadcasting in the BBC in the 1970s provided another useful approach to looking at complementary channel systems, in particular with the creation of a portfolio of radio networks at the BBC, during which the obligation of mixed-programming provision passed from radio to television. The proliferation of television channels in the UK in the following decades not only put more pressure on the public service idea of a single mass audience, but also brought multiple examples of how complementary channels could be used by the same broadcaster to address segmented audiences. Finally, the move towards a less vertically integrated broadcasting model began to focus attention onto channels as part of the broadcasting process, opening the door to significant changes in power relationships between the broadcasting functions associated with channels and programme production activities. The chapters that follow examine in detail the impact of these developments on the commissioning, scheduling and marketing of the BBC's channels and how they contribute to the organisation of public service broadcasting in the UK in the early twenty-first century.

Notes

¹ Programmes running at the same time each day

² In 1967 the radio networks had been renamed: the *Home Service* became Radio 4, the *Third Programme* Radio 3, and Radios 1 and 2 had split the schedule of the *Light Programme*.

³ It also separated the roles of broadcaster and regulator for ITV and privatised its transmission structure (Nicholychuck, 2002: 121).

⁴ The exception was that BBC Transmission was privatised as result of the 1996 Broadcasting Act (Goodwin 1998:136)

⁵ Commissioning and production for specialist factual and educational programming were separated once again in 2003

⁶ The first time was during the creation of BBC Broadcast and BBC Production and the second was in 1997/8 (see chapter 5)

Chapter 5: Television commissioning at the BBC

5.1 Overview

This chapter examines commissioning practices and processes at the BBC and, as such, marks the start of the main part of the empirical research in this thesis. It traces some of the subtle and not so subtle changes to the BBC commissioning process that have taken place in the late 1990's and early 2000s which marked major shifts in broadcasting priorities and philosophy. It charts how ideas about channel purpose and channel identity became central to broadcasting during this period and in taking on the subject of commissioning as one of its major themes, it ploughs some relatively undisturbed ground. Although there are a considerable number of studies relating to the production of television programmes in the UK in a range of genres (see for example Silverstone (1985) on documentary; Buckingham (1987) for drama soap or Schlesinger (1987) for news), these tend not to deal in any detail with how these programmes came to enter into production in the first place, instead discussing the editorial issues as part of the production process. A little literature from the United States deals with programming (as commissioning is known there), but this is still limited in range and applies to the conditions of the American television or radio systems which are different to those in the UK, especially in relation to public service broadcasting (see, for example Ahlqvist, 2001). This lack of attention is somewhat surprising as commissioning, to a large extent, determines what reaches our screens. A study of commissioning, therefore, whether in the public or commercial television sectors, can provide a valuable additional insight into television as a medium and as part of a broader culture.

This chapter is divided into four main sections, the first of which deals with the commissioning process itself and examines how it changed during the research period so that channels became increasingly important. The second section looks at issues raised by the idea of commissioning for channels rather than simply commissioning programmes. A discussion of the concerns of commissioning for public service rather than commercial television forms the basis of the third section, which then examines how the resulting channels and programmes are affected. The fourth section looks more closely at two of the BBC's public service television channels, BBC1 and BBC2, and the characteristics and identities that commissioning

brings to them and their programmes. The impact of genre, of public or commercial purpose and of target audience on the identity and purpose of channels is discussed throughout the chapter.

5.2 The development of the BBC commissioning process 1996 –2001

As a starting point, it is worthwhile taking a moment to clarify some of the purposes of the commissioning process at the BBC, and some of the roles and functions involved in the process. In the context of television the commissioning is the process by which the demand for programmes for broadcast on a channel is translated into the production process in order to create programmes appropriate for broadcast. From my research at the BBC, I identified three main purposes of commissioning. The first and most relevant here is the creative element of commissioning which addresses questions as to whether a programme is of the right quality, whether there will be an audience for a programme, whether it will be possible to schedule it appropriately. It also includes considerations about whether a programme is suitable for the channel on which it will be broadcast. It is this factor which will be the concern of much of this chapter. At the BBC the commissioning process is also used to monitor and ensure compliance with its internally and externally imposed quotas (see BBC Commissioning Guide 2001-2); commissions are allocated primarily according to creative concerns, but the need to meet the quota of independent versus in-house production required by the 1990 Broadcasting Act or the BBC's regional production commitments may encourage commissioning staff to look for one sort of supplier rather than another. Finally, the commissioning process is also crucial to the management of budgets and resources as it is the way that programme budgets are negotiated and set. It therefore determines how the overall resources are allocated for a channel, a number of channels and ultimately for the broadcaster as a whole

Commissioning should not be confused with editorial control. This forms part of the production process about which much has been written. Episodes such as the rows over *Real Lives* or *Secret Society* and the associated questions about whether these should have been broadcast in their final form were issues of editorial judgement and not an inevitable part of the commissioning decision (see Madge, 1989; Barnett and Curry: 1994:29-43). For the sake of clarity, this study does not touch on the editorial elements of the production process, even where there may have been commissioning involvement.

It is also useful at this stage to have some understanding of the key roles involved in the commissioning process. During the period in question, the structure of the BBC changed a number of times. This meant that certain responsibilities moved around the organisation from one directorate or division to another or from one role to another. There was enough stability, however, to be able to give an outline of some of the main roles involved. The majority of the BBC's television channels formed part of the 'Television' organisation during the entire research period, from BBC Network Television in 1996 when broadcaster and production functions were integrated, through the television arm of BBC Broadcast when commissioning and production functions became separated, to the BBC Television division created in 2000. The exceptions to this were BBC News 24 and BBC World, which were commissioned by BBC News throughout the period. In discussing commissioning, I shall concentrate on roles within the Television organisation.

For each channel the key commissioning role was that of the channel controller (for the smaller channels sometimes known as the head of programmes), reporting to the director of Television. The channel controller held the ultimate responsibility for commissioning and acquiring programmes for their channel. A controller of daytime commissioning was responsible for the detailed commissioning of programmes for BBC1 and BBC2 daytime hours for a large proportion of this period, working to an overview defined by the channel controller, who would need to give at least tacit approval for the daytime schedules. Working with the channel controllers was a team of people with responsibility for different parts of the commissioning process. Although the exact roles changed during the research period, this channel team included those involved in forward planning, scheduling, audience research, marketing and finance. The channel team did not all necessarily come from a television production background but the channel controller almost certainly had spent a considerable time in television production (see Tunstall 1993:186-7), often in a production department at the BBC. Those making the fundamental commissioning decisions therefore shared common frameworks and knowledge about television production, about audiences and about public service broadcasting at the BBC. This knowledge permeated the channel teams and, as with other producers of cultural content, led to certain shared assumptions about what was 'good' product or what made 'good television' (see Salaman, 1997). It was therefore possible to seek from an examination of commissioning some of the 'programming philosophies in which reflexive practices are grounded' (Ahlkvist, 2001).

Until 1996, the commissioning process at the BBC had been relatively undisturbed since the 1960s (Anderson 1990:7), save for the introduction of Producer Choice in the early 1990s which affected budgets and resource planning but had lesser impact on the creative process. Even though BBC Network Television was an integrated entity, a commissioning process was still necessary to manage the allocation of commissions between the genre-based production departments. It also governed planning for a considerable part of the BBC's resource-base. An annual plan therefore existed to organise the commissioning of individual programmes and programme strands and also to manage the best use of studios, staff and equipment (see Anderson 1990 for a full account).

At that time, the commissioning cycle was centred on the producer. Tunstall, as a result of his research into the organisation of television production in the early 1990s, comments that television was 'producer-driven' (1993:184). Anderson, who was for many years in charge of the system at the BBC, commented that 'the annual plan process starts, where it should start, with the individual producer'. Producers initiated ideas for programmes and series, and the best and most appropriate of these ideas in the judgement of the head of the production department would be gathered together and discussed with the channel controllers at a series of meetings through the year known as 'editorials' and 'offers' (Anderson 1990:7). The role of the channel controller in commissioning these was to choose those that interested him (never at that time 'her') for further development, and then commission the programmes that he wanted for his channel. In initiating the process, the producers determined the range of programmes available for selection and those that were chosen were then assembled into the channel. Even at that time there was a reasonably clear idea of which ideas were appropriate for which channel, based on their nascent identities (see chapter 4). During 'editorials' and 'offers', programmes were targeted at a particular channel by the production departments. However, it was clear that the offers system took account of the channel identity only insofar as the producers understood it. Issues about channel character were not communicated broadly at producer level as part of any television or channel strategy at that time. Indeed internal communication between channel controllers and producers was considered to be fairly poor (Tunstall 1993:198).

Producers, with only a broad 'common knowledge' approach to the channel identity, were therefore supplying the huge majority of programmes from which the channel controllers would then select¹. When production was completed, if the programme fitted the broad notion of a channel other than that for which it had

originally been intended, it was often switched to that channel. Indeed one interviewee went so far as to say that ideas were commissioned regardless of channel and allocated to a channel for transmission on delivery:

what had happened in the past.... was that programmes were commissioned ... because of being a good idea for a drama, or a good idea for a documentary. And when the programmes came in they just thought 'oh that's BBC2'... or 'that's more BBC1' (Interviewee Y)

With the reorganisation that created BBC Broadcast and BBC Production in 1997 came the need to completely redesign the commissioning process. As the previously vertical structures within television were actively disintegrated, the commissioning process had to operate across new and deep operational boundaries and enable the books to be balanced for the significant proportion of the licence fee flowing through BBC Broadcast into the hands of internal and external producers. In common with other organisations that had introduced vertically disintegrated internal structures, the new commissioning process was an attempt to design an internal system of contracting which was as transparent as possible, so that comparisons between internal and external suppliers would allow for market testing if that was deemed appropriate. This meant that internal contracts had to become much more explicit than previously. The new commissioning process set up at that time involved the formal adoption and communication of a strategy for BBC Broadcast and its channels and services (Deakin and Pratten, 2000:333-334). This marked a major development in the practice of commissioning by channel; not only was there a strategy for television, but each channel also had a declared strategy that would be communicated to producers and responded to as part of the commissioning cycle. This began to shift the focus of the commissioning process from the producer, erstwhile at the start of the process, to the commissioner, now initiating the process through the publication of a strategy.

Another declared reason behind the reorganisation in 1996/7 was the perceived need to develop a deeper and more rigorous understanding of audiences. This also moved the commissioning focus away from a producer-driven activity towards a commissioning-driven one:

Traditionally television has been producer driven. Owing in part to technological changes and regulatory changes, the industry has

become audience driven. BBC Broadcast represents the BBC's response to those changes (Deakin and Pratten, 2000: 336)

BBC Broadcast became the home of the audience research function, with audience researchers represented on the channel teams. As the anxiety to understand audiences deepened and audience research was used to inform and justify commissioning activity, so the business of commissioning television increasingly had a tendency to emphasise the commissioners' role rather the producers'. Deakin and Pratten identify the development towards the justification of commissioning decisions through audience research as entirely consistent with an organisation seeking a substitute for a pricing mechanism, but comment also on its failure to function effectively in this way despite all the money spent on market research (2000: 337). This caused significant problems in the relationship between BBC Broadcast and BBC Production and undermined the trust required for the commissioning process to run smoothly.

The commissioning process introduced with the reorganisation was thought to have room for further improvement and a review was set up which continued throughout much of 1997 and 1998. The review was ostensibly driven by the desire to deliver significant economies from programming and to support development of strong in-house production whilst maintaining the 'level playing field' for independents. It also aimed to secure the BBC's long-term rights position. More importantly from the point of view of this study, it was designed to deliver a commissioning process that would 'set the strategy for and position a more complex set of channels and services' (BBC strategy paper, Dec 1997). The review recommended a much more rigorous 'upstream' process of setting strategy for the television service as a whole and for channels in particular, setting out a template for channel strategy that included a channel positioning statement, channel distinctiveness and the key audience objectives for the channel. It went on to require the editorial approach for the channel to be set out in terms of the objectives for each genre, and the role of returning strands, core programming and 'landmark' programming² (BBC strategy paper, June 1998). This template was not adopted in its entirety, but elements were evident in the subsequent documents that BBC Television and BBC Broadcast required as part of the commissioning cycle and for corporate strategy reviews.

It was also during this period that formal commissioning guides were published for the first time. These guides articulated by channel the kinds of

programming required for each genre by the channel controllers for each time slot. The guides gave details of the target audience for the slot, the target price, the number of episodes and the desired style of programming. This again put on a formal footing that it was the commissioners' requirements (and therefore the channels') that drove the commissioning process and moved further from the old world where producers' ideas were the starting point of the system.

The next major overhaul of the commissioning process took place in 2000, ostensibly as a result of the changes that Greg Dyke introduced on his arrival as Director General with his 'One BBC' reorganisation. However, the changes that were implemented at that time had been in their planning stages almost immediately following the implementation of the 1997-8 commissioning review; it soon became clear that people distrusted the process which was seen as encouraging highly competitive behaviour that was not in the best interests of the BBC:

[The Commissioning Review 2000] is actually a lot older than most people imagine. It was already clear at that stage that the old commissioning process was the root of all evil (Interviewee J)

[The old commissioning process encouraged] lack of collaboration so you might get to a point where ...three departments might have done an enormous amount of work on *The Worst Job in Britain*, any number of departments, nobody knew about it, all three would be offered, they might have different titles and we might even get to a stage where all three were, God forbid, commissioned (Interviewee L)

Within Broadcast and Production there is a growing level of cynicism that the values of senior management, commissioners and those who 'run the BBC' are insincere and in conflict with the aims of serving audiences and engendering creativity. (BBC strategy paper, Dec 1999)

The commissioning process introduced in 2000 had first of all to take account of the new shape of the organisation; BBC Broadcast and BBC Production had been replaced for the purposes of television commissioning by BBC Television and a number of large genre-based production divisions. The most fundamental change to the new process was the introduction of 'genre commissioners'. The channel controllers had been deluged with the sheer workload that commissioning 18 hours of television for seven days per week engendered, and the previous commissioning

system had continued to focus the vast majority of commissioning decisions on the channel controller, whilst increasing the formality and bureaucracy of the process. Genre commissioners were seen as one way of spreading the decision-making more broadly within the organisation. Another reason for the introduction of genre commissioners was to manage the complexities of commissioning a range of genres across the range of channels now in existence or about to be launched. Commissioners were introduced for a number of major genres – drama, entertainment, specialist factual, general factual, arts, news and current affairs. Along with their staff, their role was to sift through ideas from producers and to actively seek out the best commissions. A 'shortlist' of ideas would be presented to the channel controllers once the genre commissioner was satisfied that the potential programmes were worth commissioning. The final commission would only be made with the approval of both the genre commissioner and the channel controller.

Having genre-based commissioners facilitated the development of expertise within a genre in terms of content and suppliers, in-house and independent. It also created the capacity to think about how BBC Television commissioned across channels and services as well as looking at commissions for a single channel. This ability to look across the channels was another factor working towards the development of channel identity. Genre commissioners were in a position to ensure differentiation of genre style, tone and content according to the channel for which programmes were being commissioned. And because of the dual approval system between the channel controller and the genre commissioner, it was essential that channel strategy and editorial approach was clearly articulated. In the next section I look in some detail at how different programmes within the same genres have become differentiated by considerations of channel identity.

So, the BBC's commissioning process, after approximately thirty years of relative constancy, was reviewed continually for five years. During this period the system had changed markedly from 'an offer-led system to a demand-led system' (Ellis, 2000:132; see also Ytreberg, 2002a:293)³. The constant preoccupation with the commissioning process suggests that the changes reflected in the process went deep and had a significant impact on the way the organisation was run⁴. Born and Prosser note that 'enormous effort and expenditure went into installing 'quasi-market processes' of which the commissioning process was obviously one and go on to observe that the centralisation of planning and commissioning undermined the production departments 'and placed them in the relatively powerless position of supplying programming to templates issued from the centre rather than having some

autonomy in the initiation and development of ideas'. This, they argue, has a tendency to lead to imitation and reduced diversity (2001: 667-8). I am not going to enter into the debate here about whether the changes have necessarily had a deleterious effect on programme quality. However, without question the commissioning process had changed its emphasis. It now tended to bestow less power and autonomy on producers and production departments than it had in the early 1990s and instead moved towards a regime in which, to a much greater extent, commissioners initiated and controlled the process by issuing channel strategies and commissioning briefs to which producers needed to respond. The introduction of genre commissioning had taken the genre-based orientation of the production departments into the commissioning structures and at the same time emphasised the possibilities of differentiation between programme types of the same genres on different channels. All these changes made the identity and purpose of the channel more important in determining what television would be like in the early twenty-first century. What Born and Prosser read as imitation and the result of a stifling quasi-market bureaucracy could be interpreted instead as the change from a relatively scattergun commissioning system to one where the channels were being used to organise and tailor programming to fit a different creative commissioning philosophy.

5.3 Commissioning for channels

This section addresses some of the issues that arise when thinking about commissioning for channels rather than commissioning programmes. It starts by looking at how far the channel controllers have acted as authors of their channels and then introduces some of the factors that start to define the channels from the earliest stages of commissioning. From there it looks at the way that genre and target audience interrelate and work together to create channel identity. Finally, it addresses how a number of channels can be related to each other, specifically examining the idea of a channel portfolio that became central to the BBC's thinking about television towards the end of the research period.

The channel controller had long been the principal figure in the commissioning process, acting as the 'gatekeeper' for the channel (see Peterson, 1994: 172). One indication that it was possible to commission a channel rather than just individual programmes was the extent to which the key commissioning figures had already been seen to set a tone for their channels. Tunstall has commented on the effect that changing channel controllers had on BBC2 in the late 1980s:

The public also hears, to some considerable extent, the particular and singular voice of the BBC2 controller. When Brian Wenham.... was BBC2 controller, the output and image of the channel reflected his scheduling strategy. After Alan Yentob took over the channel's image (as reflected in research) shifted. Yentob had previously been head of music and arts and BBC2 duly expanded its arts coverage.... BBC2 also targeted a young audience, new writers and new trends in the arts (1993:190)

The tendency for a new channel controller to change the orientation, programme mix or target for the channel on appointment continued throughout all the changes in the system over the late 1990s and early 2000s. The controller remained the final arbiter of what appeared on a channel in terms of all programming, also approving all the interstitial branding and on-screen identity materials. The skills needed to run a channel became gradually more distinct from the production skills that formed the background of most channel controllers:

I think there is a new breed...there is definitely a real move and there's a big split between channel running and production...it's becoming more separate (Interviewee K).

Even with genre commissioners widening the commissioning skills base, interviewees agreed that the channel controller was still the author of the channel within the new commissioning process. The fact that the channel was recognised as 'authored', combined with the evidence from the changes in the commissioning process, suggested strongly that a vision for the channel was exercised through the commissioning process in order to create a channel with some coherence about it.

The argument that it is possible to commission channels rather than commissioning individual programmes and assembling them for distribution is based on the idea that a channel can be created with intentional coherence and with some meaning attached which gives it identity. To understand the process of commissioning channels, it is necessary to look at how channels are given coherence and meaning as part of the commissioning process. It is also interesting to examine the intentions and assumptions that underpin the commissioning process in this respect. A useful starting point for this is to consider the concept of channel 'specialisation', defined by Leshner et al as the extent to which channel content is based on homogenous content. They look at how this homogenous content is

created and alight on genre as a major factor, citing CNN as an example of specialised content, restricted as it is to news programming, and, conversely, NBC as showing differentiated content, in that it broadcasts a range of genres (1998: 23). As one of the primary means of creating channel specialisation, genre could therefore be considered as an important building block of a coherent channel identity. Certainly, during the period under discussion, genre specialisation was a feature of many channels available in the UK. Many broadcasters used a channel's genre focus to define and also to name the channel, for example, Sky Sport, FilmFour or Paramount Comedy. Genre was used either to focus programming very narrowly on a single genre or more broadly, by drawing on content from a number of genres. The decision about the range of genres to be shown on a channel would be one of the earliest considerations of the commissioning process and programmes would then be commissioned accordingly. The resulting degree of genre specialisation would be part of the character and identity of the channel, helping to differentiate it from other channel offerings.

The possibilities for genre specialisation at the BBC were based on a long history of using genre as an organising mechanism. For many years the BBC's in-house production departments had been grouped by genre, and much of the commissioning process throughout the period under discussion had been managed through genre-specific meetings for each channel. Anderson notes that:

If you look back to the early days of television in the 1950s and 1960s you will see a comprehensive range of programmes for the viewer, covering sport, entertainment, drama education, factual programmes and news and current affairs. It is worth remembering that the range and mix of programming has not been diluted or substantially changed over the years. The rich blend of programming has not been sustained by accident (Anderson, 1990: 5)

This was in no small part because genre entered the commissioning process at a very early stage. It had long been the case that at the start of the commissioning process for a specific channel, a rough schedule was drawn up identifying the balance of programmes for that channel by genre across the day, the week and the season, making genres the building blocks for the channel, schedule and the commissioning process as a whole (Ellis, 2000:131,134). Although in the first instance this division was relatively rough and ready, by the time it had reached the commissioning briefs and guides that were available to producers as a stimulus for

programme ideas, the genres and sub-genres had been closely defined. The overall 'factual' genre, for example, was sub-divided according to time slot into 'factual entertainment', 'observational documentary', 'documentary series' and a variety of other sub-categories (see BBC1 Commissioning Guide 2000 –2001). So, within the demand-led commissioning process that emerged during the late 1990s, the genre-based construction of channels was more pronounced than it had been as part of the supplier-led, producer-driven era, even where channels continued to show a broad range of genres.

This construction of channels by genre, specifically to encompass a wide-ranging genre mix within the schedules of a single channel, was central to many public service broadcasting systems. Public service television had tended to be defined by a wider range of genres than commercial television and in part this could be attributed to the fact that public service broadcasters were generally set up at a time of wavelength scarcity where all programming had to be provided on a limited number of distribution platforms (Ellis, 2000: 131-2). However, genre mix and range also came to be considered by observers and by public service broadcasters themselves as a central aspect of diversity in broadcasting and, therefore, one of the measures of quality available outside the market model (see Blumler, 1991; McQuail, 1992). In the UK, concern about showing wide range of subject matter on public service television, including a mix of genres, was enshrined in the BBC Agreement with the Secretary of State⁵. As such, having a genre mix had become part of the public service broadcasting strategy and this was as true of the BBC as of any other public service broadcaster:

The BBC has argued for many years that one of the things that makes us different from our commercial competitors is the sheer range of programmes in our schedule. Each year we report to Parliament how many different kinds of programmes we show on our main channels: this past year, for example, we showed 14 different genres on BBC ONE in peak-time. Now, I believe that commissioning a truly broad range of programmes, including less popular genres like the arts, music, religion, current affairs, as well the popular ones, really is an article of faith for a public broadcaster (Mark Thompson, speech at Banff, 12.06.2000)

However, providing genre diversity can be managed by a broadcaster in two distinctly different ways. The first is through the provision of traditional mixed-genre

public service channels. The second is through a range of more narrowly generically defined channels. In the late 1990s the BBC began doing both. The launch of BBC News 24, a single genre news channel, was the BBC's first real step away from the traditional public service television model. For the first time the BBC had created a tightly defined channel identity for one of its public service channels based on genre, with a clearly demonstrable homogeneity of content.

The launch of BBC News 24 heralded a definite although not entirely consistent tendency for the BBC to create more clearly specialised channels by defining the genre range expectation for new and existing channels. BBC Knowledge, when initially launched in 1999, was created as an educational channel, and then evolved into a channel focusing on factual programming. A more far-reaching step towards genre specialisation was announced in 2000, when Mark Thompson, then the new Director of Television, presented his strategy at the television festival in Banff. He caused something of a stir by indicating that the BBC would be moving all its channels towards greater genre specificity⁶:

The channels and content-clusters which are likely to be most useful to them are ones, not necessarily showing a single genre, but certainly with a pretty clear proposition or flavour.... Now, I don't think it would be right (or possible) to move overnight from our traditional mixed schedules into fully genre-based or attitudinally-focused channels, but I believe that unless we start the journey soon, we risk becoming irrelevant. (Mark Thompson, speech at Banff, 12.06.2000)

Leading up to this, there had been growing concern amongst BBC managers about the importance of the Sky EPG. The fact that channels were arranged by genre on the EPG was perceived to disadvantage mixed-genre channels considerably. A similar problem was forecast in relation to PVRs such as TiVo, which at that point was just coming to the UK market and which used genre as a programme selection tool. At the root of this was the fact that the huge growth in the number and availability of channels in the commercial sector included such a wealth of channels based on single genres or narrow genre range. So the BBC began to move towards greater channel specialisation in its content. BBC1 was to move towards a more drama and entertainment orientated schedule and BBC2 would be characterised by its factual output, although both would retain the presence of other genres. BBC3 was intended to focus on an attitudinally young audience with a particular focus on entertainment, and BBC4 would be differentiated by genre, showing primarily

documentary, arts, culture and performance programming (Mark Thompson, Banff, 21.06.2000). In the next section I look at the effects of increased channel specialisation on the BBC's public service delivery.

As Mark Thompson suggests, channel specialisation can be accomplished not only through genre, but also through targeting a channel at a specific imagined audience. Commissioning can be tailored to a specific audience segment through commissioning briefs and ongoing discussions during production, affecting the resulting programmes in terms of their tone, style and content. Focusing on a target audience, whether that be a broad and generalised target audience or a tightly specified niche audience, can create a form of consistency of content regardless of the genre. Conversely, focusing programming towards different target audiences can differentiate content within the same genre. Target audience is therefore another fundamental building block to generate meaning, coherence and channel identity, and commissioning for channels therefore means not only positioning channels in terms of their genre mix, but also having as clear a sense of the target audience.

As well as developing channels that were more specialised by genre, the BBC had, in the same period, been looking at the issue of targeting channels at specific audience groups:

Experience in multichannel homes so far suggests that audiences like the choice offered by a multiplicity of themed channels. They like the clarity of knowing the type of programme they will find from a channel, whether it be travel, lifestyle, or music... For us, this will mean launching new linear TV channels and radio networks alongside our existing networks - targeted at particular audience groups (BBC 'Broadcast '99' speech, 27.05.1999)

As part of the development of the new channel portfolio that emerged in 2000, BBC1 and BBC2 were clearly identified as mainstream channels. BBC1 would aim to reach everyone throughout its schedule with all programmes 'striving to include people', to reach as broad and inclusive an audience as possible. It was also designed to take into account family viewing (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000-2001). BBC1 had been consistent in this respect throughout its lifespan. BBC2, on the other hand, was changing its target audience. Rather than targeting different portions of the audience during different parts of the schedule, it would start to address a more clearly and consistently identified target group across the schedule,

the core of which was roughly identified as the 35 – 55 age group and slightly upmarket.

BBC2 becomes slightly more complementary to BBC1 like that and is allowed even more of its own identity instead of trying to serve many different audiences which it has been doing currently (Interviewee N).

BBC3, the planned successor to BBC Choice, was to be aimed at younger audiences in roughly the 25-35 age range and the 'attitudinally young', whatever their actual age. BBC4, the planned successor to BBC Knowledge was aimed at an audience, probably in the older age range, but more importantly defined by their consumption of culture:

Is there an appetite for [BBC4]? Well, more than 800,000 people visited the Monet exhibition at the Royal Academy last summer and on just one Saturday this year more people visited Tate Modern than fill Wembley Stadium for an international football match (Greg Dyke, MacTaggart Lecture, 25.08.2000)

This reflected a development of the BBC Knowledge target audience which had initially been the youthful education-seeking constituency and then an older (35 plus) audience with specific interest in factual programming.

I will discuss and analyse some of the ideas of audience that inform targeting in more detail in chapter 8, but here I want to focus on the impact that having a distinct target audience for the channel can have on the programmes that get commissioned for that channel. Notions of target audience had a definite impact on commissioning at the BBC, both from the perspective of what the commissioning staff were seeking and, as the strategy worked its way through the system, also on the ideas that were presented to the channels:

I think that the accessibility of BBC2 and the fact that it actually re-positioned itself to a 35-55 [age group] in terms of its target audience, is quite an interesting move. Two years ago you might have had a lot of ideas that were 'dot.com' and 'youthy' and 18-25, now you don't ... Partly it's the arrival of BBC3 (Interviewee L)

Possibly the best way to illustrate how commissioning for a channel's target audience can affect programmes is to use examples of programmes commissioned within a single genre for five different channels. News programming existed on all the channels discussed so far, but each had a very different type of news

programming. BBC1 was the home of the main daily news bulletins at one o'clock, six o'clock and ten o'clock. These were of approximately half an hour's duration, intended to update the nation on current events. *Newsnight* (1980-) on BBC2 catered to an audience expecting more in-depth coverage and debate on a narrower range of issues of the day. For BBC3 and BBC4, news programmes very specific to the relevant target audiences were commissioned well in advance of the channels' launches:

The news on BBC3 will actually last no longer than a minute. It's a very different kind of news, very different from the *10 O'clock News*.
(Interviewee J)

Both BBC3 and BBC4 will, to some extent, signify their arrival with the advent of a bespoke news service. In the case of BBC3, it will be a kind of very fast moving *Newsbeat*-style on the hour bulletin. And on BBC4 it will be World Service style, global news agenda show which I hope will go on at 8 o'clock for half an hour (Interviewee T)

The 60-second news service initially intended for BBC3 was shown on BBC Choice when the BBC3 launch was delayed, supplemented by a special 15 minute bulletin when BBC3 started. The fact that it was designed for the target youth audience was clearly reflected in web-style graphics, fast pace and its short duration. The news on BBC News 24 was different again. Defined in part by its continuous nature, it included full news bulletins on the hour with headlines every 15 minutes, 24 hours per day. This level of repetition was based on the expectation that its target audience would tune in for brief periods rather than watch for a whole evening, a common assumption with channels specialising in a single genre. This example of how news programming changed in tone and style according to the target audience of the channel on which it was to be broadcast is not particular to this genre. With entertainment, for example, *The Generation Game* (1971) had long been BBC1 fare as solid family viewing and had a very different feel to *Shooting Stars* (1995-), another entertainment programme, with a young and offbeat approach. *Shooting Stars*, however, had its first showing for its new series transferred from BBC2 to BBC Choice when the primary responsibility for the target youth audience also switched from BBC2 to BBC Choice.

So, a channel's target audience can have as significant an impact as genre in the creation of homogenous specialised channels. When the two factors interrelate and commissioning focuses both on certain genres or specific target audiences,

specialisation may become even more marked and the resulting channel identity drives very specific and homogenous forms of programming. Even this brief look at how some of the BBC public service channels have recently been targeted at different audiences begins to give a sense that the channels taken together could work in a complementary way to cover the BBC's responsibility for serving the audience in its totality. The idea of a channel portfolio crystallised this approach. BBC1 and BBC2 had long been seen as complementary in some respects (see chapter 4), but early in the development of the new channels it was not clear how they would all work together. The desire to maximise the value of the rights that the BBC held to its content meant that it became more necessary to think about using programming across all the channels and services, but it was also initially unclear how to make this work best. Another factor in the development of the idea of the portfolio was a question about just how many channels the BBC would ultimately aim to provide as part of its digital proposition; it was clear that there would be considerably greater capacity for channels with the digital rather than analogue platforms.

A formal channel portfolio did not fully mature until early in 2000, when Greg Dyke appointed Mark Thompson as Director of Television. For the BBC, the channel portfolio was designed to have two main functions⁷. Firstly it would work as a tool to inform internal strategy and commissioning in that the concept of a complementary portfolio would help to communicate to commissioners and producers that the BBC would have a set of clearly defined channels and services, each performing a particular role for the BBC. The full portfolio included not only channels BBC1 to BBC4 but also two digital children's services, BBC News 24 and, arguably, the BBC's commercially funded channels⁸:

Part of what we're talking about here is a way of segregating and manipulating the content so that you get it on a number of different labels which give you a good clear sense of what you are going to find. BBC1, especially before nine o'clock is going to be suitable for family viewing... BBC3 at ten o'clock is a different story (Interviewee J)

The second function of the portfolio was as a way of communicating to audiences and opinion-formers in the press and government a message about the choice and range of content that the BBC was making available so as to be seen as fulfilling its public service remit.

This then, is our proposed channel portfolio. Together the channels will deliver the BBC's core aims. All will carry predominantly British productions. All will make a contribution to achieving our educational goals. All will include a broad news and current affairs agenda and all will carry challenging factual programmes. However over time each channel will develop its own personality and will increasingly be aimed at particular target audiences (Greg Dyke, MacTaggart Lecture, 25.08.2000).

Talking about the portfolio and how it fits together, I think one element to that is making sure that the portfolio works in terms of each brand complementing the others in terms of delivery to a particular audience.... I think the other part is what you deliver to people, and ... in terms of making sure it's a complementary portfolio, at the most simplistic level it's about inform, educate, entertain (Interviewee G).

And hopefully you get a sense of people looking at portfolios and thinking I'm glad that choice exists....even if I don't want to use all of them. ... You need a kind of armoury of different channels but you'll still absolutely go for universality, but you're going for universality across a portfolio (Interviewee J).

So the portfolio became an important means of aligning and balancing target audiences in an effort to cover the total audience and especially those segments that the BBC had prioritised (see chapter 8). It also was a mechanism for balancing the genres across all the channels without having to stick quite so strictly to the traditional mixed-channel model. Finally, it made it possible to communicate this relatively simply.

Figure 5.1 below shows the BBC public service channels and the UKTV channels mapped approximately against the degree of specialisation that each existing and future channel had been assigned in 2000 in terms of genre and target audience as part of the channel portfolio⁹. At this point, before the full portfolio was available to audiences, it appeared that there was a tendency towards increased specialisation for BBC1 and BBC2, and some greater differentiation for BBC Knowledge as it translated into BBC4 and BBC Choice as it developed into BBC3. In the event, when the portfolio was complete, all channels were a little less genre specific than had been predicted, especially BBC3. Although all the channels had a

clearly defined and to some extent specialised identity, none of the public service channels could truly be identified as highly specialised or homogenous in content. This was consistent with the public service elements of their identity, on which I will be concentrating in the next section.

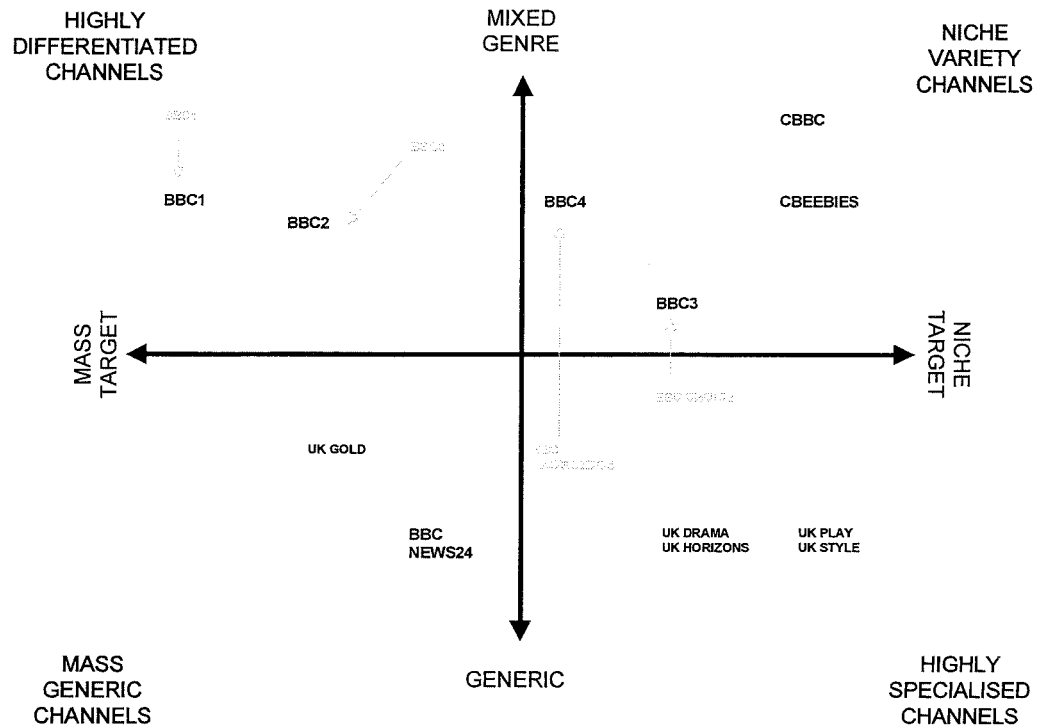


Figure 5.1: The BBC public service and UKTV channels mapped against intended generic and audience profile.

To conclude this discussion about commissioning for channels, there was strong evidence that considerations about channel had become an integral part of the thinking involved in commissioning. Not only did the channel controllers act to some extent as channel authors, but the definition of the genres and target audiences for the BBC channels had begun to shape how specialised each channel was and what was commissioned for it as a result. These focused channels could therefore be offered as a coherent and complementary portfolio to audiences and could be used to justify how the BBC fulfilled its public service remit.

5.4 Commissioning public service television

As a public service broadcaster, commissioners at the BBC had more of an obligation than those at any other broadcaster in the UK to consider the ways in

which both their channels and their programmes fulfilled public purposes. The idea of the channel portfolio discussed above was one very useful mechanism for addressing this in terms of the role of each channel in relation to the audiences that the BBC was seeking to serve. This section deals with some of the other ways in which the BBC's public service obligations were expressed during the commissioning process and how these fitted with broader ideas about public service broadcasting.

First of all, it is worth looking at the declarations the BBC made about public service broadcasting during the research period. This was a time of considerable flux for the organisation; there were huge technological changes with the introduction of digital broadcasting, the growth of online services and the possibilities for personalisation of media services afforded by hard disc technologies. The BBC's main statement during this period was *The BBC Beyond 2000* (1998). In this, the BBC started talking about its public role as a 'trusted guide':

One of the key assets we possess is our reputation as being impartial, trusted, and free of external commercial or other influence. In the digital world we can build on this to offer a new dimension to our public service remit - first as a trusted guide to digital services, via our own electronic guide or navigator - but also more widely as a trusted and essential guide to living your life (BBC 'Broadcast '99' speech, 27.05.1999)

The 'trusted guide' idea did not thoroughly embed itself into the consciousness of the organisation, and although there was a distinct resonance with some developments in scheduling discussed in chapter 6, it had little obvious impact on commissioning. Born and Prosser's comment that 'there was a lack of sustained response amongst senior management and the governors to the need to redefine the cultural dimensions of the BBC's public service ethos for contemporary conditions' seems a fair summary of the BBC's corporate position during this period (2001: 66). Consequently, the more traditional and Reithian definition of public service was a mainstay for commissioning staff. The references to 'inform, educate and entertain' were numerous. These were used not only in the context of policy or the more traditional areas of news and current affairs but were also applied to how the role of the channels could be understood in terms of the traditional public service definition:

If you say our remit is to inform, educate, entertain, then BBC1 will have a mix of those three on there, it's quite important it has all those three on, but it's predominantly about entertainment, it's 80%

entertain, 20% educate, inform. BBC2 is about those three, but predominantly about inform and educate supported with a little bit of entertain. So the balance of the genres that it delivers are different, the people it's talking to are the same. That's our long term picture (Interviewee G)

So it is almost that the institutional nature of the place reflects those core objectives and the new services sprang out of those three elements [inform, educate and entertain].... And in a way you could argue, if you're prepared to kind of blur the values between culture and education that is still what the additional channels, BBC3, BBC4 and News will be doing. Choice or BBC3 will massively strengthen the BBC's credibility in entertainment, particularly with the younger half of the population. BBC4 will seriously underpin the BBC's cultural educational mission. And News 24 does what it says on the packet but does it round the clock. ... My instinct is that the inform, educate, entertain mantra may yet find itself an even higher level in terms of the way we sort of conceive of what the BBC's purposes are because it's having a comeback rhetorically (Interviewee T)

So in a general sense, the Reithian values were embedded in how the channel propositions were conceived and therefore in the assumptions that underpinned programme commissioning.

In broader discussions about the role of public service broadcasting, the Reithian values were part of the more general purpose of promoting citizenship. Citizenship was one of the three commonly agreed purposes of public service broadcasting according to a recent survey, the others being quality and universality (Born and Prosser, 2001: 670-1; see also chapter 2). These other two purposes were also reflected in commissioning considerations at the BBC. Broadcasters at the BBC saw channels as important in uniting and reflecting the nation, relating not only to the purpose of citizenship but also some of the issues around universality:

I think our big channels, BBC ONE and TWO, do have a responsibility to capture the big cultural moments in our national life. I was proud, for example, when a few weeks ago we brought the opening of the brilliant new Tate Modern gallery to the British public not just with

programmes on BBC TWO, but on our mass audience channel, BBC ONE, as well (Mark Thompson, speech at Banff, 12.06.2000)

I believe the responsibility for reflecting the UK in all its many forms has gradually shifted from ITV to the BBC over the years. It will be a central plank of the BBC's purpose in the years ahead (Greg Dyke, MacTaggart Lecture 25.08.2000).

Channels in this sense were a 'place' where the nation could gather to share experiences as citizens, a key reason for the universality required of public service broadcasting.

Universality was a further concern to the BBC both in terms of access and universality of appeal (see chapter 2). Universal access to products and services was a major item for the BBC's digital proposition in *The BBC Beyond 2000*, in Greg Dyke's MacTaggart lecture and in the BBC's submission to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) about the Communications Bill in 2000.

...we believe we should offer a portfolio of seven services across five channels. Five, because this is the maximum number we believe we will be able to deliver on our digital terrestrial multiplex, the platform with the least capacity. Of course we could do more on satellite or cable but this would mean abandoning our aim of universality (Greg Dyke, MacTaggart Lecture 25.08.2000).

However, more specifically for commissioners, there was an issue about what universality meant in terms of content provision for the universal audience or audiences. The increasing focus on channels as commissioning tools seemed to have moved, to some extent, the framework within which the thinking about universality took place away from an emphasis on programme variety to a concern with the formulation of the channel.

I think we're saying that it's quite hard to expect that you can fulfil every single different need on a single channel. You need a kind of armoury of different channels but you'll still absolutely go for universality but you're going for universality across a portfolio (Interviewee J).

I think what we're saying is within the whole portfolio we will serve the entire audience, rather than in the past when it was just BBC1 and BBC2 they try and speak for everyone all the time (Interviewee M)

So the compulsion to provide programming for all and satisfy the obligations of universality would now be managed through the channel portfolio which would address the full spectrum of audiences across the full complement of more focused channels.

Within this framework, BBC1 was deemed to have a particularly important and relevant role. BBC1 would retain the responsibility of the traditional, mixed, public service channels as they had been prior to the multichannel age, insofar as they had brought people together and generated a shared experience of nation (see Scannell, 1988).

What we're saying is whilst BBC1 will retain its remit of being all inclusive (Interviewee M).

I mean the whole universality thing - it's all BBC1. Everything else is niched. (Interviewee E).

This role for BBC1 meant that some BBC1 programmes were specifically commissioned to cater for sections of the audience that might not be provided for elsewhere in the portfolio or the increasingly segmented multichannel television system in the UK:

Those on the lowest incomes are feeling increasingly disenfranchised from mainstream society and BBC ONE is perfectly positioned to embrace them with both broad appeal, popular entertainment and inclusive, factual programme-making reflecting 'real life'. For the poorest in our society, quality free-to-air programmes of every genre are at the heart of what public service broadcasting is all about. (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000-2001).

That BBC1 would be the only service to uphold universality in this respect meant that there was a tacit acceptance that none of the other services would aim to be universal, either in terms of seeking a 'universal' audience or by providing such a broad range of programme content. Born and Prosser argue that the shape of the new portfolio of services meant that one of the cornerstones of public service broadcasting was being abandoned. In particular they suggest that the 'niching' of

the services would undermine the exposure of audiences to programming other than that which they might automatically choose, inherent in the idea of universality and the mixed schedule,. This argument is predicated on the limits of the genre mix that would exist on each of the channels (2001: 677). In this view, they appear to be referring back to the Reithian notion of guiding people's viewing embodied in the metaphors of the BBC as a church or a ship.

The effect of a decrease in the range of genres was not only an issue in terms of universality but also formed part of a broader debate on quality broadcasting. Quality was raised as an issue in many of the BBC's communications, but the term was often not defined, and when it was this was generally only in one of two ways. The first was in relation to journalistic standards of truthfulness, fairness or impartiality. The second was in reference to early commissions for the new digital channels; the programmes in the early days of both channels were thought to have been of low quality both in content and production values due to commissions with budgets that were a fraction of those required to make programming of the quality commonly shown on BBC1 or BBC2. A major challenge that BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge had to overcome later was the perception that their commissions were of lower quality than that expected of the BBC. With the focus on channel identity, the BBC had become aware that issues such as insufficient funding could negatively affect the identities of their channels.

However, one of the biggest issues about quality and the channel portfolio strategy was in relation to quality as diversity. This was seldom alluded to within the BBC but external commentators were not afraid to raise this issue¹⁰. Criticisms and challenges related to the perceived connection between genre diversity and quality, and the potential loss of diversity within channels in the new portfolio. However, to really understand this issue, it is useful look at some studies which have specifically examined diversity in the context of multichannel systems. These have confirmed that diversity must be considered at a number of levels, the diversity within programmes ('programme diversity'), the diversity within channels ('channel diversity') and the diversity across all the channels that form the broadcasting system ('system diversity') (see Hillve et al, 1997; Hellman, 2001, Born and Prosser 2001:680). Born and Prosser suggest that one of the gravest dangers in relation to the BBC's adoption of a portfolio approach was a reduction of quality due to a loss of diversity at the channel level brought about by a reduction of genre variety in the schedules. This, they suggest, could outweigh the increased diversity at the system level generated by having more channels. However, at channel level, schedules

indicated that a significant genre mix would remain on the majority of the BBC channels. I would argue, instead, that a greater threat to diversity might exist through the homogenisation of channel content as a result of targeting programmes at specific audiences. This type of channel specialisation might be revealed at programme level, where programmes on a single channel might become demonstrably similar in tone, style and address. Whether this would be offset by the variety of programming across the portfolio as a system, it was too early to tell.

In contrast to the tendency towards consistency of programme tone and style to the requirements of the channel, the BBC was, during the same period, exhibiting an increasing concern to innovate and experiment:

An issue which has been concerning senior management recently is public perception of the BBC as innovators. The BBC has a great record of clever, original programming and we pride ourselves on it. And yet innovation and creativity are not among the values which the public readily ascribe to the BBC.... We need to stand out by being more inventive, more original, taking more risks and trying more ideas.... We have to find ways of organising ourselves to help people deliver it. This means looking at how we commission, how we work together and how we measure our work to make sure we are placing a premium on innovation. (BBC internal communication, 1999)

It is debatable whether this concern resulted in more innovative or experimental commissioning, but it would nonetheless be a consistent response to the perception, espoused by Born and Prosser, that the production departments were losing autonomy and had begun to supply programmes to templates (2001); the anxiety to innovate would aim to counter the pressure to standardise.

Finally in this section, I want to look briefly at how the BBC managed the channels it ran for commercial purpose and how these were differentiated from and yet aligned with the BBC's public service channels. Regardless of the fundamental differences in their underlying purpose, these channels had similarities to the public service channels in terms of how their identities were constructed and in the values applied to programming them. For this discussion I am focusing on the UKTV channels, as this commercial portfolio provided interesting parallels with the BBC's public service portfolio. The fact that the channels were not identified as belonging to the BBC meant that they were possibly less constrained by the BBC name than other BBC commercial ventures such as BBC World or BBC Prime. UKTV was set

up in 1997 as a joint venture between the BBC and Flextech Ltd, and from that time BBC Television was responsible for content provision for all the UKTV channels. During the period of its existence, the total number of channels and their propositions varied, but some channels remained consistent, the most familiar, perhaps, being UK Gold, UK Horizons and UK Style, all of which were available to audiences on the various analogue and digital platforms.

In some ways, the original content commissioned for these channels was very limited, as one of their values to the BBC was that they provided an outlet for commercial exploitation of the BBC programme archives. Unlike the public service channels, the UKTV channels' core purpose was income generation. As one BBC manager put it 'our job is to create channels out of the BBC archives, so it's the exploitation of the archive with a view to financial gain at the end' (Interviewee K). The commercial and public service channels shared a concern, however, that programming quality on the UKTV channels should uphold BBC values. Although the UK channels 'don't wear a BBC badge ... they do carry BBC programmes, and you do know they come from the BBC' (Interviewee C). The link with the BBC was initially also emphasised by the fact that early incarnations of a number of the channels used the names of BBC programme strands of the same genre. So, for example, UK Horizon was based on factual programming like *Horizon* (1964-) and UK Arena on arts programmes like *Arena* (1978-). Because UKTV channels were known to be run by the BBC and carry its programming, the channels were expected to conform to BBC editorial standards.

The UKTV channels were, like the BBC's public service channels, clearly determined by considerations of genre and target audience:

What we've done to some extent is link the genre typing to the target audience... You decide that fairly early on. I mean, lifestyle programming, you know you're going to be getting 25-44 year old women and probably upmarket. (Interviewee K)

Thus, the UKTV channels were set up to be specialised. Their specialisation was much more pronounced than the public service channels' in that genres were more limited and target audiences more clearly segmented (see figure 5.1). UK Style, for example, concentrated on lifestyle programming and upmarket, young women. UK Horizons was a factual channel 'targeted at ABC1 men and women, including parents with growing families - the "encyclopaedia" audience' according to one BBC internal communication document. Play UK was based on music and comedy and

16-24 year-old affluent men. Interestingly, UK Gold, a drama and entertainment channel, had the much broader target audience of 'all adults', giving it some common ground with BBC1.

The UKTV channel portfolio therefore had factors in common with the public service portfolio. It was more extreme in its specialisation but nonetheless shared a structure in that it was built around a channel with a very broad target audience and an entertainment remit, complemented by a number of niche channels which focused more narrowly and deeply on a more segmented audience. The two channel portfolios were clearly also designed to be complementary to the extent that they provided outlets through which the BBC's content could be showcased for public purposes and commercially:

They have slightly different objectives.... but [with] the content generation, what we want is a virtuous circle whereby we created value by commissioning programmes which we window through these channels. You know, it's quite possible a programme's going to BBC3, BBC1, UK Gold (Interviewee J)

Despite BBC content airing both on public service and commercial channels, care was taken that the commercial and public service channels did not have exactly the same identity in terms of genre or target audience, therefore running the risk of direct competition for audiences. Although this was not discussed in any of the interviews or documents that formed part of the research for this study, it was clear nonetheless that the implications of identical commercial and public service channel identities would be extremely problematic. Too close a match and the commercial channels would have reduced potential for revenue generation. Potentially much more damaging, a public service channel with an identity too close to a commercial channel could be seen as a service that could be provided by 'the market' and would run the risk of intense opposition from the BBC's commercial competitors and of criticism or possibly closure by the government. The danger to the BBC of a public service channel identity too similar to commercial ones was illustrated by the DCMS' rejection of the BBC's initial proposals for BBC3 which were turned down on the basis that the channel was clearly differentiated enough as a public service proposition in a market where the same genres and target audiences were already provided for by the commercial sector¹¹. So, in examining the BBC's commercial channels alongside the public service channels, several interesting observations emerge. The UKTV channels relied heavily on programmes which were

commissioned for the public service channels and were expected to maintain the same editorial standards as those channels. The channel portfolios, too, shared a number of characteristics, although the commercial channels had more exaggerated specialisation than the public service channels. However, the channel identities remained distinct by virtue of the degree of specialisation and the way in which public or commercial purpose was therefore expressed through the channel, and this was vital to survival for the public service and commercial channels alike. It appeared that developing the channel strategy and commissioning for public service channels relied on a number of established public service principles to distinguish these channels from commercial channels. These channel distinctions were constructed even when commercial and public service channels showed some of the same programmes in their schedules, albeit at different times and in different combinations or arrangements, indicating that the identity of the channel as a public service centred on its programme offering in its entirety, and was not based on single programmes, taken in isolation.

The public service requirements examined in this section all drive public service channels towards breadth in commissioning. The Reithian edict to 'educate, inform and entertain' encouraged a wide variety of programming to underpin the capacity of public service broadcasting to build citizenship. The principle of universality of appeal supported the idea of 'something for everyone' and suggested that programming should be positioned so as to allow the maximum audience to come into contact with it simultaneously, thereby creating opportunities to unite the nation. In addition, quality suggested diversity. Public service principles were therefore in direct opposition to a broadcasting and commissioning system based around highly specialised channels and in defining its channel identities more clearly, the BBC was setting up tensions with these public service principles, even though its channels were not very highly specialised.

5.5 Commissioning for BBC1 and BBC2

The final section of this chapter examines how the new channel-based commissioning conventions have worked in practice in relation to the individual BBC public service channels. It looks in greater detail at the mechanisms and intentions underpinning the commissioning of programmes for specific channel requirements and therefore it draws extensively on the BBC's own documentation and on interviews with BBC managers. It illustrates how ideas of a channel's purpose and its

public service obligations shape the type and range of programmes commissioned for each channel and many of the characteristics of those programmes.

This section deals in particular with BBC1 and BBC2 (issues relating to commissioning for digital channels are covered in chapter 9). In some ways concentrating on the most established channels makes the task of illustrating the new practices more challenging; instead of starting from scratch with a new identity as the digital channels could, any development of the channel identity for BBC1 or BBC2 had to be transitional and start from the mixed-genre model. Nonetheless, there were distinct signs that considerations of the channels' identities were influencing commissioning. The fact that this could be observed in BBC1 and BBC2 suggests that the changes taking place in the focus of commissioning were fundamental enough to affect all channels within the system, public service as well as commercial, analogue as well as digital.

5.5.1 BBC1

BBC1 had been assigned the role of a mass public service channel, with programming designed to have broad appeal:

Our task is extremely clear - it is to make the very best programmes, innovate with our programme making and scheduling and fulfil the aspirations and needs of our entire audience, whether they are 3, 23 or 83, Asian or Afro-Caribbean, a young single mum or a mature married man, a teenager mad about sport or a retired grandmother passionate about environmental issues. BBC ONE must offer value to all (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000-1).

As part of the development of the new BBC1 identity, a number of values for the channel were drawn up, designed to reflect the characteristics that BBC1 would need to embody if it were to have the broad appeal required by its mission within the portfolio. Although they were not intended to be an explicit part of the commissioning process, these were values against which the channel could be evaluated. They would also inform the type of programming to be placed on the channels by acting as a guide for commissioners, helping them to select the most appropriate programming for the channel and to communicate to producers the tone and style of the programming to be produced. Amongst the 34 values that appeared for BBC1, six key values were identified as 'the words of the new BBC1' (Interviewee M):

- Makes you smile
- Confident
- Feisty
- Enjoyment
- Friendly
- Fun

Thought had been given to what distinguished BBC1 from ITV, another mass channel perceived as the major competitor to BBC1, especially in terms of analogue television. Of these six values, the first four were seen as providing an identity distinct from that of ITV.

There was also a clear idea of the programming that should result from keeping these values in mind for BBC1:

BBC1 is intended to be a blockbuster channel, it's a channel based around programmes, *EastEnders*, *Holby*, *The Royle Family*, *10 O'clock News*, which are by their nature designed to appeal to lots of different kinds of people. I mean there's a broad expectation now that in BBC1 peak time we're going to offer you ...compelling entertainment and compelling news and factual programmes, I mean stuff that you really want to watch (Interviewee J).

'Compelling' was a term that often arose in connection with BBC1 programming despite not being one of the values referred to above, arguably as a response to the major task of capturing the mass audience.

Another characteristic of BBC1 programming related to scale. If a programme had a particularly large budget or the duration of its production was especially long, the likelihood was that it would be a programme for BBC1. This reflected the fact that BBC1 was anxious to create or to show programming that could be considered to be 'events' in programming terms through both their scale and their broad appeal:

BBC1 wouldn't look at the state of marriage in Britain today through the love life of four couples ... there just wouldn't be enough drama in there.... BBC1 will do the landmark series on sex in the 21st century and do the whole gamut (Interviewee L).

We'll always make room in the schedule at the shortest notice for the truly eventful, scoopy and momentous (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000-1).

BBC1 also relied heavily on programming with a strong narrative drive and sense of drama (in any genre). As a commissioning strategy, this had impact on the structure of the programmes on the channel, not just on their general tone:

You have to keep your audiences on BBC1 right through the evening... entertainment, entertainment, have a reveal, and... even with narrative documentary it has to be really fast paced, you can't afford to be too interior about it, you know, you can't have too much pontificating or too much philosophising, you just have to get on with the story (Interviewee L).

Accessibility is key for the Channel, which does not mean that drama has to be simplistic but that it should be inclusive and welcoming. Episodes and especially series should start with a strong hook: introductory episodes do not work well (BBC1 Commissioning Guide 2000-2001).

In the same spirit, programming on BBC1 would avoid being too quirky. It was picked up on the occasions when BBC1 had missed its mark in this respect:

He wondered if it was a little whimsical or eccentric for BBC-1 (BBC Meeting Minutes, 1999).

[They] found *Inside Story Heartbreak* to be too depressing for BBC-1 and agreed that these vivid, intense relationships might have been better served on BBC-2 (BBC Meeting Minutes, 1999).

So BBC1 programme style, tone, structure and content were determined by the need to be accessible and appealing to an extremely broad range of audience interests and to keep audiences watching with a sense of drama, event and revelation. In this way the detailed commissioning practices reinforced BBC1's role as an inclusive public service channel.

5.5.2 BBC2

Unlike BBC1, which was set to remain fairly stable in its purpose, BBC2 was a channel in transition during the research period. This transition demanded that commissioners move from thinking of BBC2 as a minority channel catering for minority interests to the idea of BBC2 as a mass channel with broad appeal programming. The older BBC2 showed programming not designed for the mass appeal required on BBC1, but instead catered to special interests, either in terms of minority groups not felt to be catered for as part of the mainstream, or by providing programming that related to people's personal pastimes:

In the old days, you know, just a four or five channel universe, BBC2 was set up specifically to be a channel that appealed to minority interests.... BBC2's role was to be an alternative, I suppose. It was to do the smaller things, the smaller voices, that existed perhaps at the end or the periphery of life or of the mainstream (Interviewee B).

[BBC2] is where individuality has a home and where viewers feel their own particular passions are recognised. For example, leisure and lifestyle is central to the channel and we are keen to see new approaches for this area (BBC2 Commissioning Guide 2000-2001)

BBC2's relationship with its target audience reflected its remit to cater for minorities rather than the broad mass audience of BBC1. This was expressed in a complex linking of schedule, genre and target audience; BBC2 focused on different constituencies at different times of the day.

BBC TWO's audience strategy is to reach different groups at different times by appealing to their specific interests and tastes. So, for example, late night entertainment is particularly for the young while *The History Zone* is for those interested in this genre no matter what their demographic profile (BBC2 Commissioning Guide 2001-2).

Different audiences for BBC2 had therefore become associated with different genres at different times of day. Commissioning for BBC2 tended towards late night comedy for a young audience and leisure and factual programming earlier in the evening for an older, well-heeled audience.

The new BBC2, the shape of which emerged with the channel portfolio strategy, was viewed as much more of a mainstream, mass appeal channel. This

BBC2 would no longer be aimed at minority audiences but would instead focus across the board on the mass audience with its core in the 35-55 year-old age group.

BBC2 we're moving into a channel which is centred around a slightly more upmarket and quality offering of documentaries, science, history, leisure programming and the kind of drama, and increasingly the kind of comedy that would appeal to people who buy into the history and the science... One of the mistakes to think BBC2's a minority channel. BBC2's got a bigger audience than the NBC Network out in the USA, it's a mass audience channel (Interviewee J).

This change in emphasis had a clear knock-on to the tone and style of programmes for the channel. Commissioning for the new approach to BBC2 was encapsulated in a single positioning statement:

Our mantra is a very simple one, it's 'Big Ideas, Done Differently' (Interviewee B).

This expression of the channel was used to guide commissioning in a similar way as the BBC1 'values', which is to say that although it was not formally included in the commissioning process for the channel, this was the idea against which potential programme commissions were tested, especially in relation to differentiating ideas that fitted the BBC1 mass appeal as opposed to the new BBC2 as a mainstream channel:

If it's a big idea, i.e. broad appeal, then why is it not BBC1? OK well it's not BBC1 because we do it differently.... Doing it differently means offering a new take or a new vision. For instance, we did *Madame Bovary*. Basically what we did was we ignited the thing that made it controversial at the time at which it was written, the sex. We made it passionate, we made it sexy in a way that, perhaps, it hadn't been. Not gratuitously, but in a way it was a different reading of it. So done differently means either a new take on an existing theme or else it means reflecting new ideas (Interviewee B).

Another way that the commissioning values were expressed for BBC2 programmes was through the choice of on-screen talent or presenter. Certain presenters were seen to epitomise BBC2 and were central to the decision whether or not to commission:

What do BBC2 viewers want to see? Basically they want something that's really intelligent, really engaging but they don't want to be talked down to....I mean I think somebody who works incredibly well on BBC2 at the minute is Louis Theroux.... Another BBC2 face would be Simon Sharma... What constitutes a face on BBC2 is somebody who is passionate and expert and who can inspire as well as make you aspire (Interviewee B).

If you've got a very high profile presenter or a celebrity presenter, it's much more likely to be on 1, like John Cleese and the *Human Face*, for example. And on 2, the presenters don't necessarily need to be well known. (Interviewee F).

The 'big ideas, done differently' guide to commissioning for the channel also tended to bind together the channel and the concern to innovate:

BBC TWO is the channel for innovation and experimentation. It is where individuality has a home (BBC2 Commissioning Guide 2000-2001).

BBC2 ...it's more innovative probably than BBC1. BBC1 is still looking for innovative breakthrough projects but BBC2 is a place that you can come with a really bold and different format (Interviewee L).

It is interesting that the channel with the most transitional identity should be the prime site of the BBC's continuing anxiety about innovation and experimentation. The transition in progress for BBC2 was more complex than simply moving from the older model of the 'minority' BBC2 to the new 'mainstream' BBC2. For a significant period, BBC2 was destined to try to encompass two slightly different identities for different audiences depending on whether they received the channel as part of the digital portfolio or whether they relied on analogue terrestrial transmission, where BBC2 was still the second of only two BBC channels.

It is also a channel with a split personality... This eclectic mix has worked brilliantly in the analogue world but in a digital world of 160 channels it may make less sense to viewers. ... In the long term we plan that BBC TWO will increasingly focus on intelligent specialist factual programmes, our key leisure and lifestyle programmes, thoughtful analysis, creatively ambitious drama and comedy, and

specialist sports. That won't be for some years, maybe not until analogue switch-off (Greg Dyke, MacTaggart Lecture 25.08.2000).

One of the commissioning strategies that had been employed to deal with this transition was to commission programmes that 'premiered' on another channel and were then repeated on BBC2, making sure that both analogue and digital audiences got a chance to see them. As far as possible, this was done within the bounds of the transitional identity of BBC2 whilst keeping the integrity of the identities of the other channels intact.

So, the channel characteristics for both BBC1 and BBC2 had considerable influence on the detailed substance, tone, structure and character of the programmes commissioned and produced for those channels. The commissioning staff had focused a substantial amount of work on defining how the channel purpose, generic profile and target audience could be translated into programme characteristics. These characteristics in turn fed into the detailed commissioning of the programmes and through to the production of those programmes. Many aspects of programmes were therefore influenced by considerations about the channel identity, from the programme's structure to the choice of presenter, to the manner in which a story was handled or a point was made. As the channel identities became more defined with the development of the programme portfolio, so the impact on commissioning and the resulting programmes became more pronounced.

5.6 Conclusions

The 1990s and early 2000s were a period of profound change in commissioning practices at the BBC, when changes to the creative aspects of the system far outpaced anything that had happened for many decades. In particular, a transition occurred from supplier to demand focus which favoured the development of channel identity as a mechanism for clarifying and regulating the demand for programming. Genre and target audience became two of the main dimensions informing the development of channel identities, working together to produce channels with varying degrees of specialisation. At the BBC the development of a structured portfolio of channels clarified the genre/audience profile for each channel, tending to result in more specialised channels. The shift away from the traditional mixed genre channel profile stopped well short, however, of creating extreme specialisation within the public service portfolio.

That high degrees of specialisation did not feature in the public service portfolio was understandable in relation to the BBC's public service obligations. A tension emerged between public service expectations, which leant towards breadth and inclusion in terms of audience, genre and programme diversity, and the tendency towards more narrowly defined channels. It was to be expected that the UKTV channels, without public service obligations, were generally more highly specialised than their public service counterparts. By analysing some of the values taken into account when commissioning for BBC1 and BBC2, this chapter also illustrated how ideas about the channels' identities moved from these general concepts of genre and audience into the actual production of programmes shown on the channels.

It is fair to observe that channel identity was not the only aspect of commissioning to influence programmes and their production during this period. Some programmes were clearly still commissioned according to the old supply-driven considerations and some programmes were less marked than others by channel requirements. However, the changes observed during this period did have an appreciable and increasing impact on the shape and feel of the television service as a whole. This was as true for public service output at the BBC as for the channels that operated in the commercial sector, although perhaps more subtle.

I do not want to suggest here that the introduction of more specialised channels and the greater homogenisation of content implied automatically meant that the commitment to the delivery of public service broadcasting could not be maintained, or that programmes necessarily suffered qualitatively; there is no such direct cause and effect relationship. Instead, it suggests to me that it is necessary to revisit some of the established ideas about universality, the public sphere and citizenship as well as those of quality and diversity to see whether they can be applied differently in the new circumstances without changing the fundamental intentions underpinning them. These issues are discussed in the last chapter of this thesis. In the next chapter I examine how scheduling also grew in importance during the same period as these changes occurred in commissioning. Whilst commissioning created programmes imbued with channel values, scheduling was the crucial factor in connecting these together, creating meanings for the channels as a whole.

Notes

¹ Occasionally ideas were initiated elsewhere but this was uncommon (Anderson 1990:8)

² For an explanation of 'landmark' programming, see chapter 7

³ The BBC was not alone in this amongst European public service broadcasters (see Meier, 2003; Hellman, 1999)

⁴ The commissioning process was raised by staff in a number of contexts to complain that it was deeply flawed. This tends to bear out the depth of the change to the organisation.

⁵ See Born and Prosser, 2001, for discussion on these requirements

⁶ Extensive debate in the media pages of the UK broadsheets appeared in the weeks following this speech

⁷ See Ytreberg, 2002a, for a more general discussion of portfolio-type strategies

⁸ During interviews there was some debate about whether the commercial channels should be considered as part of the portfolio. Editorially, there was a tendency to include them but they were clearly excluded when discussing the portfolio in terms of the BBC's public purposes.

⁹ The mapping process was based on analysis of documentary and interview materials

¹⁰ See, for example, the debate in *The Guardian* and *The Independent* following Mark Thompson's Bannf speech in 2000.

¹¹ See speech by Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, at the Westminster Media Forum, London, 12 March 2002

Chapter 6: Scheduling public service television

6.1 Overview

This chapter looks at how television schedules are created for the major public service channels at the BBC and at the development of the 'sinister art of scheduling'¹ that has grown up alongside commissioning. It traces the progress of scheduling over recent years, examining new techniques that have taken over from more established practices as the number of channels has grown. It focuses on the role scheduling plays to enhance channel identity and how scheduling practices inscribe channels with assumptions about the habits and behaviours of the target audiences. Analysing the relationship between schedules and 'the everyday' and typical ideas of audiences that are evident in the scheduling process, this chapter illustrates how scheduling has become an increasingly important part of the organisation of public service television.

Of the little that has been written about scheduling, the literature can broadly be divided into three groups. The first is a small but significant body of research, much of which refers to the television system in the USA, which focuses on the effectiveness of different scheduling strategies used by broadcasters to attract audiences to their channel (see Adams, 1993; 1997 and Eastman et al, 1997). It casts scheduling as a strictly competitive activity, the ultimate purpose of which is to win the ratings battle with other channels. The second area of work is about the television form. It includes Williams's theory of television as 'flow' (1974) and Jensen's idea of 'superflow' across channels (1996). Ellis' characterisation of the 'segmental' nature of television (1982) and his explanation of scheduling as the 'architecture of television' (2000) should also be included in this group. Thirdly, there is a body of work about television and the everyday which has a bearing on this discussion of scheduling. It includes work by Scannell (1988 and 1996) and Silverstone (1994) which look at how television schedules contribute to the regulation of the temporal.

In broad terms, the structure of this chapter follows a similar path to these three groups of literature. The first section deals with established scheduling process

and practices. The second section identifies and describes new scheduling practices that have developed during the research period and examines how these new practices affect the form and flow of channels. A discussion of the temporal aspects of the schedule forms the third section which looks at the relationship between television and the everyday, examining specific issues relating to different parts of the day, week or the year. The chapter concludes with an analysis of how new scheduling techniques affect the relationship between the schedules themselves, the individual programmes and the channel identity.

6.2 The established scheduling process

A television schedule exists at a number of different levels, and it is worth noting here some of the forms a schedule can take and the stages it goes through in its development. At its simplest level, a television schedule is just the sequence of programmes shown; it is the order in which programmes are broadcast on a specific transmission frequency and therefore a specific channel. It is how programmes are organised within a specific day, week or year against defined transmission times. This means that the television listings published in the newspapers and specialist magazines are all expressions of the schedules of the relevant channels, and these are probably the most common form in which schedules are seen.

Different forms of the schedule are used by broadcasters throughout the process of commissioning and planning channels. The practice during the research period was for a planning document to map out a very rough schedule up to two years in advance of transmission, filling in rough blocks for different programme types and genres, creating a first draft of what might be shown during a particular season at any time of day. Fixed slots were included at this point, such as established news bulletins, and any major and predictable events for which there might be special programming, for example, the Millennium celebrations. This schedule was the main tool for commissioning programmes for the channel and for allocating the channel budget. Many programmes would be commissioned between 24 and twelve months in advance of the expected transmission date, and ongoing strands such as *Horizon* would be pencilled in at this stage. A more detailed and recognisable working schedule would be in existence three to six months before the expected transmission date (see Tunstall, 1993; Ellis, 2000) and in the months and weeks leading up to the transmission, more programmes were slotted into the draft schedule. It is worth reiterating that until the late 1990s, specific programmes were

not generally commissioned for a particular slot, but were found an appropriate niche in the schedule of what seemed to be the right channel once production was underway:

What had happened in the past... going back five or six years, maybe seven years ago, was that programmes were commissioned because 'that's a good idea for a drama', 'that's a good idea for a documentary' and when the programmes came in, they just thought 'oh that's BBC2' or 'that's more BBC1' (Interviewee Y).

The development of the schedule continued right up to the day of transmission, taking late changes and more detailed planning into account. Trails for programmes were scheduled into junctions, as were the channel identifiers, animations and announcements. The final and most detailed schedule mapped the channel transmissions second by second. When thinking about what a channel schedule actually is, it is most useful to accept that it is a number of things simultaneously: it is the rough plan for the channel in the future, the detailed working document, and the listing showing an evening's viewing in the paper. It is also the experience of watching a sequence of programmes on a single channel. In many ways, the schedule is both the construction and the expression of a television channel over time.

Scheduling was viewed as a specific craft within the range of broadcasting skills. At the BBC during the research period there was a team of dedicated planners and schedulers for each of the channels, initially organised so that 'planners' took the schedule from its inception until six months before transmission, and the channel 'scheduler' took over from that stage. These two roles were amalgamated in the late 1990s into a planning and scheduling role for each channel, working alongside the commissioning staff. One of the main responsibilities for the planners and schedulers was to maximise the audience flow to the channel and from one programme on that channel to the next.

The channel controller is responsible for delivering audience flows along with their schedulers and a coherent consistent schedule (Interviewee N)

A basic theory of audience flow guided many of the techniques used by schedulers when putting the schedule together and this underpinned much of scheduling practice. Accepted broadly within the broadcasting industry, it held that that at any

time of day there is an available audience of those people who have decided to watch television. What they watch is then a secondary consideration to the overall pleasure of watching television. The assumption continued that audiences are open to manipulation by scheduling strategies because they will watch the least objectionable programme available at the time. Based on this, it followed that as long as an attractive programme (or an unobjectionable one) was provided, the audience would remain tuned to a channel rather than change to another channel (Cooper 1996; Adams, 1997; Eastman et al 1997). In the theory of flow, audiences are passive. Once they have chosen to view, they are at the mercy of the schedulers, who will draw them to watch their channel. This principle, albeit not expressed in terms as stark as this, remained the basis on which assumptions about 'inheritance', and therefore the majority of scheduling techniques, were grounded.

Inheritance was the idea that a large portion of viewers was inherited by a programme from the preceding programme (Eastman et al, 1997; Docherty, 1995). The desire to maximise the inheritance effect led to the establishment of a number of scheduling approaches such as 'hammocking', where a less popular programme is scheduled between two more popular programmes in the hope that the audience will carry through all three programmes. 'Tent-poling' was, conversely, where a particularly popular programme was shown between two programmes with lower ratings potential, so that the audience ratings for the programmes that preceded and followed the popular programme (which might be referred to as a 'banker') would be raised because of the 'pre-echo' (people tuning in early for their programme) and the inheritance effect². A great volume of information about audience viewing drawn from BARB was used to track the success of these strategies:

The heads of planning and scheduling and the channel controllers live that data. They know what's working and what isn't working and when audiences are moving from left to right, from one channel to another, why they're flowing that way, why they're flowing back (Interviewee N)

With ratings as one of the main measures of the success, scheduling should be recognised primarily as a competitive activity. For BBC1, ITV was seen as the main competition and therefore the BBC1 schedules were designed with a keen eye as to what the ITV schedules were likely to be. Programmes with high ratings on a competitor channel were seen as a challenge by the schedulers:

You look at ITV and they have about four or five bankers, successes - these are big programmes. *Emmerdale* is delivering 10-11 million a

night, *Coronation St* delivering upwards of 15 million, *Millionaire* doing the same sort of thing. ITV drama, big audiences, they have big winners there. You look around our current schedule and you think, we're struggling to get programmes delivering more than 6 or 7 million that aren't *EastEnders* (Interviewee N).

Docherty (1995) and Ellis (2000) both describe the scheduling breakthrough that took place when the BBC scheduled *Animal Hospital* (1994-) against ITV's *The Bill* (1984-) with great success:

We discovered that factual programmes aimed at younger families were our most potent weapon and that the flow from *EastEnders* helped us to hand on 35-40 per cent of the viewing (Docherty³, 1995).

Schedulers attempted either to woo the mass audience through shows with broad appeal (such as soaps) or to target narrower audiences who might be less attracted to the offering on the competitor channel. One of the main tools used to design competitive schedules was the demographic data provided by BARB that broke the audiences down for any programme or 15 minute slice of viewing by gender, age and social group. It will become clear later in this chapter how scheduling using this data began to inscribe channels with assumptions about the habits and behaviours of audiences.

A body of writing exists about audience flow and how scheduling tactics and techniques affect it. A typical example by Adams (1997) deals with how different scheduling practices can affect the success of new programmes. Another, by Eastman et al (1997), examines the transitions between programmes and the effects on audience flow. These are typical of this school of work which concentrates on whether or not broadcasters' scheduling strategies work. This research tends to function inside the same world as the broadcasters, by which I mean that success of a practice is validated in terms of the established audience research measures and the increased audience ratings, share or reach secured for the channel through the use of a particular scheduling tactic or in a particular circumstance. The ratings used in the research are the same ones that are collected by the research companies on behalf of the broadcasters (primarily Neilson in the USA) and are the same figures that broadcast schedulers examine when planning and evaluating their schedules. Therefore many of the assumptions about audiences and ratings held by the broadcasters are shared by these researchers

(for a discussion of the problems with this, see Ang, 1991). One of these flaws was identified by one BBC manager with a little distance from the scheduling process; not only is it impossible to know how far ratings based on BARB samples really reflect all audience behaviour, but there is no means of measuring the potential success of alternative schedules:

The problem for schedulers is that you never know what the maximum audience would have been if you had broadcast the best possible schedule. You only know what the maximum audience was that was watching the schedule that was actually broadcast (Interviewee H).

So far this discussion of scheduling is probably equally relevant to a public service or a commercial channel. However, there were specific scheduling issues that arose for public service broadcasters as distinct from their commercial competitors. Whereas commercial channels' primary concern was the delivery of audiences to advertisers, the public service channels had the obligation to deliver a range of public service programming. In practice, this meant having a wide range of genres in a schedule:

Our jobs as schedulers, particularly for the BBC, is to find a broad mix of programmes.... Another public service argument [is that] you have to offer a certain balance of arts programmes, science programmes and high quality drama, UK comedy, they're all the things that you kind of point to. You're looking to... provide a broad mix within any given season (Interviewee Y).

Take the mixed schedule. The BBC has argued for many years that one of the things that makes us different from our commercial competitors is the sheer range of programmes in our schedule. Each year we report to Parliament how many different kinds of programmes we show on our main channels: this past year, for example, we showed 14 different genres on BBC ONE in peak-time (Mark Thompson, speech at Banff, 12.06.2000).

There was also a perceived obligation to schedule some of the genres which attracted lower audience numbers at times when they were easily accessible to a wide range of viewers, for example documentaries that were seen to inform and educate rather than to entertain (Docherty, 1995:124). For both BBC1 and BBC2, news and current affairs and children's programming, genres with particular public

service resonance, were treated slightly differently for scheduling purposes than other genres. Both had certain blocks of the schedule guaranteed to them, and genre specialists scheduled directly into these slots without much in the way of further reference to the channel schedulers. This 'protected space' within the schedule reflected the importance of these genres to the BBC's public service identity. The importance of scheduling decisions for key genres was reinforced by the furore amongst the press and politicians when the BBC's main daily television news bulletin was moved from the 9 o'clock slot in the evening to ten o'clock in October 2000⁴.

Public service considerations also meant that measures of reach and share were often more important than sheer audience numbers:

It's imperative that BBC1 and 2 get as broad an audience for their programmes as possible otherwise you can't justify the licence ... I mean, there's always going to be the distinctive quality of programming argument that the BBC uses and that's a very potent argument. But also we've got to appeal, particularly BBC1, to a pretty broad cross section of the public and if BBC1 share dropped, that would be more difficult to argue (Interviewee Y).

In order to uphold the principle of universality it had always been important with mixed-genre channels to cater for a broad range of audiences within the schedule; 'reach', in particular, was an indicator of whether or not this seemed to be working effectively.

In addition to considerations about the range of genre and range of audience, there were fundamental public service principles embedded in scheduling techniques such as hammocking and tent-poling. In terms of public service, they could be seen as embodying a continuation of the Reithian ideology of bringing audiences to worthy programming that they might not choose if left to their own devices.

Hammocking sounds like nothing more than one tool in the scheduler's kit-bag, but it's actually a piece of public service ideology.... Some purists believed that this was the only possible justification for broadcasters like the BBC having any popular programmes at all (Mark Thompson, speech at Banff, 12.06.2000).

Hammocking, however, fell into the group of practices that was being overtaken by a newer range of scheduling techniques which were equally concerned with audience

flow, but less situated in the Reithian principles of range and mix in programming. They also lent themselves more to the creation of meaning across the schedule and made a significant contribution to the development of channel identity:

Some of the props that have fallen away: range within a single schedule, hammocking, and perhaps we could add that whole wonderful feeling of effortless superiority. And you know something? It's good that they're gone. They were based ultimately on a patronising, pessimistic view of audiences and of public taste (Mark Thompson, speech at Banff, 12.06.2000).

Scheduling during this period seemed to be moving away from its traditional view of the public service mass audience (see chapter 2) and the techniques that supported the Reithian model were being replaced by other practices more suited to a multichannel environment.

6.3 The new art of scheduling

Scheduling developed considerably in the multichannel environment that emerged in the mid 1990s. New techniques were sought to respond to the competition from increased numbers of channels and techniques were adopted that had been seen to work for satellite and cable channels. In addition, remote controls had reached a high level of penetration by this time, changing people's viewing habits by encouraging 'channel surfing' (Eastman et al, 1997) and beginning to undermine the idea of the passive audience. This section picks out some of the new practices and how they worked to emphasise the role of the channel.

In chapter 5 I looked at how commissioning had changed from being an ad hoc process where programmes were generally selected from the offers made by producers, to a more focused process where commissioning staff first identified the type of programme and the target audience and then commissioned to this brief. This new style of commissioning was underpinned by a more rigorous approach to scheduling, matching commissions to slots in the schedule according to the audience data relating to them. The commissioning guides, published each year for the major BBC channels from 2000 onwards, clearly reflected the growing importance of the schedule in creating the commissioning outlines. For each genre, commissioning briefs were given according to the likely position in the schedule for the genre or sub-genre concerned. For example:

COMMISSIONING BRIEF

DAY: WEEKDAY

SLOT: 20.00 AND 20.30

EDITORIAL GUIDE: In the extremely competitive heartland of the schedule, factual and leisure formats continue to do well whereas quizzes and games without a compulsive hook no longer attract an audience.

BBC ONE is looking to develop the next generation of entertainment shows with broad family appeal and to build on our factual success. Chiefly, these will be 30' slots, but there may be a few opportunities for exceptional ideas of 20' or 50' to precede the Wednesday Lottery Draw. ...

AUDIENCE

Available Audience Range: 23-26m

Audience Target: 35% share

(BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000-1)

This, one example amongst a vast number for both BBC1 and BBC2, made it abundantly clear that the intention was now to commission programmes according to a schedule constructed in relation to the target audience. The advent of genre commissioners in 2000 intensified this practice as the commissioning process determined that they provide channel controllers with recommendations for commissioning according to scheduled slots:

The ideas will be specific to the channel and the slot. The Genre Controller might be offering three ideas for a slot, say at 7pm on a Saturday night (Interviewee N).

Accordingly, one of the most fundamental changes in scheduling during the research period was that it became less of an assembly job and more of a fundamental architecture for the channel. Ellis supports this view, observing that the schedule had been 'used to put programmes in order. Now, in the American phrase, it "orders programmes" from the producers' (2000:33). The commissioning briefs also made it clear just how bound up ideas of audience were with the slots in the schedule. Each of the commissioning briefs for the peak time slots had some reference to the audience type, habits or availability.

The identification of slots by genre as well as audience within the schedule was not only a tool for commissioning programmes from producers, but also formed an essential building block for a number of new scheduling techniques. The first of these was the creation of 'zones' in the schedule. Essentially, a zone was a part of the schedule with a regular slot in terms of day and time, usually of a consistent duration from week to week. There might be special zone identifiers played between the programmes in a zone and mentions of the zone by continuity announcers. Within the zone, programming was of a single genre or subgenre. So, the History Zone, a genre zone on BBC2, contained only history programmes scheduled alongside each other. A wildlife zone, an art zone and a comedy zone were also shown on BBC2 for some time, and on BBC1 there was the 'Crime Doubles' zone in which the programming was consistently detective drama.

The practice of zoning the schedule was, like many traditional techniques, based on ideas of inheritance and audience flow. If programmes with the same type of content were clustered together, the hope was that audiences would remain with the channel as long as possible, flowing from one programme to the next for the duration of the zone:

The thing with zones is it's all about inheritance and flow of the audience and it's something that multichannel is teaching... What we've tried to do on BBC2 is block the schedule off so that once you've got that viewer, you're trying to hold on to them as long as possible (Interviewee Y).

Another intention behind the creation of zones was to provide visibility for certain types of content and genre to help audiences find what they want to watch more easily:

Many viewers have little idea of what some strands offer.... zones can mean clearer signposting (BBC Commissioning Guide, 2001-2)

This visibility of content could make the schedule more navigable, but it also had the potential to carry messages about the public service credentials of the channel on which it appeared:

The zone itself doesn't necessarily pull in the punters. It's a nice way of housing a number of unfamiliar programmes. It's been proved to work very successfully for comedy [...] But comedy is quite inclusive

and history and arts are less inclusive. The reason we do it, I think, to be honest, is to make a statement (Interviewee D).

This statement was about the values of the BBC in relation to its public service obligations, and in particular about the role of BBC2, the channel on which most of the zones mentioned were scheduled. The zoning did not necessarily have to be explicit to fulfil this purpose:

We ceased to call it an arts zone....but have an implicit pattern now of two long-form arts documentary pieces, which is frankly another multichannel trick.... If you have two then people get quite impressed 'oh my god the channel's really got a commitment to this'.... Learning how you shape channels and use the rhythm of the schedule to mark a message implicitly rather than explicitly. And finding a way to change the character of a programme by way of the schedule (Interviewee T).

So, zoning a channel was one way of sending messages to the audience about the values and content of that channel, and in the case of the BBC, about programming that fulfilled public service broadcasting obligations⁵. It associated a channel with particular genres and thereby took a small but fundamental step towards the identity of the generically defined channel (see chapter 5).

The role of zoning in developing the identity of channels was even clearer in the case of a zone based around target audience rather than genre. CBBC was the collective name for a number of zones allocated to children's television. This kind of zone was not exclusive to the BBC. ITV had CITV, and Channel 4 had a zone dedicated to a teenage audience, T4. CBBC existed on both BBC1 and BBC2 and was an extension of the children's programming that had always had a distinct place on these two channels. However, by the late 1990s, CBBC had become much more delineated from the host channels, with its own zone identifiers and presentation team. CBBC ultimately formed the basis for the two new children's digital channels launched by the BBC in early 2002, CBBC and CBeebies, using brand values drawn from the CBBC zones (see chapters 7 and 8). The development of zones in the schedule, whether genre or audience based, was an important step towards the creation of distinct channel identities:

Clustering similar programmes together as we do on BBC TWO's History Zone will continue to be an important technique; in a sense,

it's a step towards those EPG-friendly, attitudinally-focused channels (Mark Thompson, speech at Banff, 12.06.2000).

Another new scheduling technique that helped to build more clearly defined channel identity was to strip the schedule. Stripping in its purest sense involved showing the same programme at the same time for a number of days in a row. Often, this meant that the same programme would play Monday to Friday, pausing for the weekend and picking up again the following week. As with zoning, stripping on terrestrial channels owed a lot to practices pioneered on satellite and cable channels.

Most satellite channels are stripped, so it's an upward struggle if it's not stripped (Interviewee P).

However, there were degrees of stripping, and in the public service context showing the same programming each night was not necessarily a viable option on a mixed-genre channel. Therefore the BBC's terrestrial channels adopted a modified version of the stripped schedule:

Once [satellite and cable channels] get you they're trying to hook you, and the best way to hook you is with exactly the same thing. Whereas we tend to hook people with similar stuff. So we might have a leisure strip across the week. (Interviewee N).

The Midlands TV Research Group initiated a project to examine the programming occurring within a specific strip of the schedule between 8pm and 9pm on weekday evenings (see Brunsdon et al, 2001). They note the virtual disappearance of serious documentary, light entertainment and sit-com from this slot, which became dominated by 'factual entertainment' such as gardening, fashion, cookery and so on (Brundson, 2001:31). They attribute this in part to the requirements for cheaper programming due to the expansion in the number of channels. Whilst cost might be a factor, they overlook the possibility that stripping may be a deliberate competitive strategy with two purposes. Firstly, it can be an attempt to help viewers to navigate the schedules, to remember when programmes they want to watch might be shown:

The [BBC Choice] schedule will be much more stripped. At the moment I can't get my head around the schedule even as someone working for the channel, let alone as a member of the audience (Interviewee V).

The second reason for stripping the schedule is that, like zoning, it allows the channel to become associated with, to or be 'the home' of specific types of programming:

BBC TWO continues to be the innovator in leisure and popular factual programming. ... Examples in the ... 8.30pm leisure area: *Two Fat Ladies*, *Delia*: *How to Cook* and *Looking Good*... (BBC2 Commissioning Guide 2000 –2001)

You have to sit down and say, 'what is the pattern'.... BBC2 has a pattern in that it's starting to strip stuff - it's got the teenage programming early, it's got the leisure strand, it's starting to get the documentary kind of thing at 9 o'clock. (Interviewee N).

[BBC]2 is ... the home of leisure, I would say (Interviewee F).

The third major development in scheduling was the growing practice of 'theming' days or evenings of viewing. Theme nights, weekends and days were a common feature of the scheduling landscape in the second half of the 1990s, when commissioners and schedulers put together a package of programming dedicated to a particular event, anniversary, person, character or theme, often using both newly originated and archive material. Examples included *Spike Milligan Night*, *Monty Python Night* and *Your NHS Day*. Typically, programming for a theme evening might include a mixture of factual and fictional programming in the shape of light entertainment, documentary and films.

It's a way of signalling to the audience that this is something special and different, and to the critical press.... So it can be a specific event (Interviewee F)

As a tactic for gaining audiences, themed nights and weekends appeared to be very effective:

BBC2 and Channel 4 share when they run theme nights...knocked the socks off ITV and BBC1 on those nights (Interviewee D)

The initial theme nights and weekends tended to be 'one-offs', but their success meant that there was an appetite for themed ideas with ongoing possibilities to capitalise on audience interest. Channel 4 cracked this with their 'Top 10' themed evenings, which were followed closely by BBC2's *I Love the '70s/'80s/'90s* format.

Like zoning and stripping, the underlying purpose of themed evenings and weekends was not only to increase ratings and audience share, but also to create strong channel brands and identities. *Red Weekend* on BBC Choice was inspired by just such an intention. Created as an event in its own right, the programming for the weekend was centred on flying Gorbachev to a village square in the UK and painting the square red.

Tabloids love it...and even if people don't watch it, the brand of the channel is out there, and, importantly, the brand of the channel is out there is a way you can control. So, it's seen as creative and populist and nutty. We wouldn't do a theme weekend unless it had that type of bang with it (Interviewee V)

A number of other new scheduling practices during this period also contributed to raising the profile of channels. The first of these was the continued development of complementary scheduling to accompany the complementary portfolio commissioning discussed in chapter 5. Once again there were lessons that could be learnt by public service broadcasters from the satellite broadcasters. As David Elstein reported when still at BSkyB in 1995:

First, a range of channels is coordinated to optimum effect.... There are nine, in fact, and they need to be operated organically so that they complement each other to achieve the maximum audience. By contrast the BBC has only two channels (Elstein, 1995)

By early 2002, the BBC had its own suite of eight public service channels and was having to adopt the same complementary approach to the schedules with varying degrees of success⁶. Ytreberg comments that complementary scheduling demands a significant change to the mindset of the schedulers (2002a: 286) and the beginnings of this was evident:

We ...plan against each other competitively, but it's not competitive in the sense that we're trying to do each other down. It's just that we all want the best audiences for our own channel. But with 1 and 2 of course we schedule in a complementary way so there... won't often be a drama on 1 and a drama on 2, it just makes no sense at all. There's a limit to what we can do but kind of we try and be complementary with [BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge] as well. There's bound to be the odd time when there's a science

documentary or an arts documentary on Knowledge and there's one on BBC2... but we try to make them as complementary as possible.
(Interviewee Y)

One outcome of complementary scheduling was an attempt to align junctions across a number of the channels.

If you pick up a *Radio Times* from say six or seven years ago, you'll see BBC1 and BBC2 side by side and there'll be no common junctions. Now you've got 7.30, 8 o'clock, 9 o'clock, 10 o'clock, most nights there will be common junctions on BBC1 and 2 and probably on the commercial channels as well (Interviewee Y).

Common junctions allowed for cross-promotion and audience flow from one BBC channel to another, and ideally from competitors' channels to the BBC. Clear and memorable junction times also made it easier for an audience to remember when to tune in. When this was not achieved, it began to be seen as a problem:

On Choice tonight, you haven't got a programme starting on the half hour or the hour, they all start at 7.35, 8.05, 9.10, it's a nightmare.... we don't make it easy for viewers. So scheduling is also pretty critical
(Interviewee A).

As well as creating navigable and memorable schedules, the move towards complementary scheduling brought an opportunity to enhance the channel characteristics initiated by commissioning to complementary channel briefs.

Another development adopted from satellite and cable channels was connected with repeating programmes. Instead of showing all the programmes in a series once and then repeating the full series at a later date, commissioners and schedulers had increased their use of 'narrative repeats', that is to say, repeating a single show in a series in the same week as the original showing in order to give the audience an alternative time to view the programme as part of a 'first run'.

My impression is that whereas before you would have originated much more in a given week and then played your repeats in the summer. Now... there is much more narrative repeating going on.... I think it's a response to the number of channels a lot people have now got to choose from. It's also... that when BARB produce the ratings, they add together the audience for each show, so when you want to get in

the channel top ten or whatever... you add the figures together and bingo, you've got a higher rating (Interviewee P).

Having top rated shows was one reason for narrative repeats. Another, however, was connected with programme budgets. When BBC Knowledge and BBC Choice were first launched, budgets were spread very thin to commission a relatively high proportion of original programming. This led to the channels being seen as lower quality than was acceptable for the BBC. One response to this was to repeat more programming:

You obviously need to fund something properly and because we had a limited budget of 23 million, there were two ways of doing it; either you commission lots of cheap shows and one or two expensive shows or you what you do is you repeat the fuck out of any show you make, so you've got less hours to fill. And because you've got less hours to fill, you can spend a lot more money on the hours you do have rating... Ratings for us show that people don't have a problem with that, I think, so long as you're clever, and also so long as you acknowledge what you're doing (Interviewee V).

The practice of repeating programmes was related to the satellite and cable practice of creating 'loops' where several hours of scheduled programmes were repeated over the course of an evening or a day. This practice was adopted by BBC Knowledge, once again as a way of ensuring high quality programming without unacceptable costs but ceased when BBC Knowledge metamorphosed into BBC4; BBC4 transmitted in the evenings only and had significantly higher budgets.

Taking an overview of the new scheduling practices that grew up over the late 1990s, a number of common features emerge. The new techniques were all engaged in supporting the new commissioning practices outlined in chapter 5; the schedule had become a commissioning tool to link commissions with particular target audiences through the scheduled slot. Although new scheduling practice was still clearly aimed at maximising audiences for the channel concerned, many of the new developments focused on doing this in a way which aimed to make schedules more memorable for audiences through the development of distinctive patterns associated with the channel, with zones, themes and strips that bound sections of the schedule together. This concern with the 'navigation' of the schedule also reflected the impact of new technologies which were at the fore of television

executives' minds at this time; the PVR and the EPG were new ways for audiences to find their way direct to programmes, undermining some of the more established scheduling tactics. Also, the internet had emerged as a potential competitor to television, bringing with it a terminology in which navigation featured heavily (see, for example, Rosenfeld and Morville, 2002). The 'trusted guide' metaphor for the BBC (discussed in chapter 2) reinforced this outlook and helped position the schedules as having the potential to be 'filtering agents' akin to those on the web, helping viewers to select content (see Negroponce, 1995:155)

The schedule was also used to embed brand values for a channel and to convey messages to the audience about the types of programming associated with the channel, even if that channel was a mixed genre one. The binding of items in the schedule in this way can be seen as an attempt to create meaning that extended beyond the boundaries of individual programmes. In this sense, it was not only the audience that was intended to flow, but also the programming. 'Flow' has been an important concept for thinking about television as a form since Williams argued that what is offered is not essentially 'a programme of discrete units with particular insertions, but a planned flow' in which the elements that compose the flow have, in some ways, been unified by the television medium (1974:90-95). I would argue that the new scheduling practices worked much harder than before to unify the content of the channel schedule, building links between and expectations about the different programme and promotional elements that made up the schedule, moving television away from the currency of the programme and towards that of the 'mediascape' (see Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998: 105-7).

6.4 Scheduling and the everyday

Another important aspect of scheduling is how it organises the temporality of television, linking ideas of audiences and their lives to channels. In this section I examine how assumptions about audience behaviour are inscribed into the channel schedules by looking at different parts of the daily schedule. I also discuss the importance of seriality to television.

Schedules work simultaneously on a number of different levels to organise broadcasting over time. Scannell asserts that broadcasting is entwined with three different planes of temporality, the *longue durée*, that outlasts generations; *life time*, which is the temporal life cycle of living organisms, and *clock time*, which measures the continuous flow of everyday life (1988:15). In this section I want to look at how

scheduling works to regulate everyday life simultaneously on the registers of the day, the week, the season and the year (see Browne, 1987: 588). On each of these levels, the creation of the schedule infuses television with a range of assumptions about the audience, their activities and their habits and creates routine, repetition and seriality. Days are marked out according to the appropriate routines in the television schedules, as are weeks and years. Abercrombie and Longhurst argue, 'the televisual and the household revolve around each other', building an argument that television can actually be constitutive of everyday life (1998: 69-70) and the schedule is the root of this.

At the BBC, when the first rough schedule was created to act as a tool for commissioning, fixed annual events and national celebrations were marked into the schedule at the earliest opportunity as television events. Christmas had become a major feature of the annual scheduling calendar for all the broadcasters, a site of the ongoing ratings battle between the terrestrial channels, and as well as religious occasions, other annual events were also adopted into the television calendar over the course of the years and still feature in the annual schedule. For the BBC these included sporting or civic events such as Ascot, Wimbledon or the Trooping of the Colour (Scannell, 1988:18-19). In this way, television schedules had been integrated with broadcasters' expectations about what constitute the national events that form an important part of the lives of the audience.

As well as being driven by calendar events, schedules both reflect and create a sense of the seasonal. At the time of this research, commissioning and scheduling was organised around three seasons. The autumn season was the most important in the schedulers' calendar and was the time of year when all the broadcasters aimed to pull in the biggest audiences:

But, you know, it would be fair to say that particularly BBC1 and ITV really go for it in the autumn season in terms of their most competitive programmes.... There's a much bigger audience around (Interviewee Y).

The autumn season, when nights draw in, was when people were supposed to settle down to some serious television viewing. Because of this, many flagship series were scheduled to have their first run in the autumn season. The winter schedule, running on from Christmas, was also seen as a productive time for investment. Conversely, the third season which drew together both spring and summer into a single commissioning and scheduling round, tended not to attract as

much investment as audiences were expected to be involved in outdoor activities rather than watching their televisions⁷:

The main channels... tend not to try as hard in the summer season because audience levels aren't so high because people are doing whatever, out in the garden or just out, so as a result of that you'll find ITV has more repeats in the summer (Interviewee Y).

Although all the BBC channels tended to follow a similar pattern of scheduling across the year, even on the level of the annual schedule there were subtle differences in how the different channels saw their role in relation to their different audiences. In particular, BBC1 was charged with the major national events that bring the nation together, and so, for example, scheduled much of the Christmas viewing aimed at the mass or family audience. BBC News 24, on the other hand, had a relatively low-key approach to Christmas, continuing to focus on news output in keeping with the likely audience expectations of a news channel.

The differentiation of scheduling and programming across the week was even more pronounced than it was across the year. The commissioning guides, based on the forward schedules, made a clear demarcation between weekdays and weekend days, in which were embedded many assumptions about the audience. Most fundamentally, this division reflected a basic assumption that the audience would be working a classic five day week, from Monday to Friday. However, this presupposition about the lifestyle of the audience was accompanied by more subtle assumptions about the appropriate mood and tone of programming for different days of the week:

We have such a fixed view of what Saturday night is about. And it's quite a middle class view. I mean the schedulers are very fixed in their views, and scheduling is god around here.... They are unwavering in their views of what Saturday night means. Saturday is about Entertainment. Sunday you can schedule something more challenging - or on a week night. Their opinion is taken, but I don't get any sense of what drives it (Interviewee H).

Another good example, a classic, is Sunday night, people don't want to be reminded of the misery of work the next day so don't put a grim drama out on a Sunday night (Interviewee F).

These examples were particularly true of the scheduling attitudes of the major, mixed-genre public service channels, BBC1 and BBC2, but other channels also differentiated between weekday and weekend. The vast majority of theme days on any channel, for example, took place on a Saturday or over an entire weekend. It was also with weekly programming that it was most apparent that a key feature of the schedule was its seriality. Ellis argues that the series and serial are television's characteristic forms of repetition (1982: 122), while Browne comments that one of the central axes around which the form of the television schedule turns is the balance between free-standing, individual programmes on the one hand and the various forms of sequencing programmes on the other (1987:590). Weekly series, serials and strands formed a backbone of the schedules, and the 'runs' that were commissioned tended to get longer during the research period; in some cases seasonal runs were extended to play weekly without a break all year, as was *Holby City* (1999-) and soaps such as *EastEnders* (1985-) played more weeknights. These fixed weekly points enhanced the connection between the schedule and routine behaviour as well as associating certain programmes even more powerfully with a particular channel.

Probably, the relationship between scheduling practice and the everyday is at its clearest when looking at the daily patterns that television schedules enshrined. As Silverstone points out, 'broadcast schedules reproduce (or define) the structure of the household day' (1994:20). Scannell comments on the way that 'time-through-the-day is zoned from breakfast time to bedtime' and notes that this zoning is the way that broadcasters ensure that their output is suitable for those who are available to view or listen (1996:150). People watching breakfast television were assumed to be getting ready for work or school. A broad 'daytime' zone showed programming deemed suitable for those staying at home. Children's programming coincided with the end of school time. Peak viewing started at approximately 6pm, with 'post-peak' taking over in the late evening, after many people's bedtime. In order to understand the link between channel schedules and their target audiences more fully, it is useful to take closer look at some issues relating to these zones.

As Matelski observes, daytime television can play an important role in determining a channel's overall identity. In particular, daytime television could be designed to appeal to audiences not being served adequately elsewhere in the schedule and could help to project a strong community image (1991:10); in peak time, the particular interests of those at home during the day were less likely to be considered. Traditionally these were assumed to be housewives but more recently

the broadcasters' view of the daytime audience had expanded to include the unemployed and the retired, two groups which were not necessarily major target audiences in peak time slots either. During the daytime, these audiences were considered to be an important majority:

Older viewers and men are just as important to us as younger women. Between 1300 and 1600, for example, the retired constitute just over a third of the viewing audience (BBC Commissioning Guide, 2001-2).

Viewing was therefore designed to fit the routine of the different audience groups who were available during the daytime. Unlike the evening schedules, where complete 'stripping' was not felt to be appropriate for the mixed genre public service channels, the BBC had no such reservations about the daytime:

Our schedule is largely stripped with the same programme running in the same slot every weekday. We believe this approach makes navigation easy in an increasingly competitive environment and acknowledges that people have many demands on their time during the day (BBC Commissioning Guide, 2001-2).

It seemed that there were fewer obligations to provide variety in content and genre for daytime viewing. Also, scheduling programming that catered for the expectation that people had other demands on their time during the day signalled a continuation of the practice of mirroring of people's supposed lifestyles through the fragmented nature of the schedule and associated programming (see Modleski, 1983).

On BBC1, children's programming formed its own zone at the end of the daytime period. This timing had long roots in broadcast history:

Part of it is historic, that has always been. The traditional time is teatime.... When we start at 3.20... a lot of the child audience is still at school...or there's afternoon clubs now, activities, sport, so a lot of the audience doesn't come available until almost the end. What happens is that from about quarter to four the child audience grows and grows and grows (Interviewee O).

However, with the development of the BBC's digital channels, children's programming took over the entirety of the daytime schedules on two of the BBC's services. The two children's digital services, CBBC and CBeebies, were in essence the daytime frequencies of BBC Choice/3 and BBC4, functioning in some

ways as daytime zones extended so as to be channels in their own right. Although this extension moved away from accommodating children's programming primarily when children might return from school (see Buckingham et al, 1999:81), assumptions about the available audiences continued. Children could be put in front of the television by busy mothers during the day⁸ while those wishing to view BBC Choice/3 or BBC4 were less likely to be able to view until the evening, due to work or college commitments. In this way, the overall schedule limits for those channels enshrined presumptions about audiences.

Although programming targeted at children ended by 7pm, children's bedtime formed part of another critical scheduling consideration. The 9pm 'watershed' is the time before which programming must be suitable for family viewing in terms of its sexual and violent content and represents one intersection between scheduling and television regulation. Considerations of taste and decency, such as the watershed, ensure that it is not only broadcasters making judgements about the relationship between timing and available audiences and their habits. The watershed remains one of the indicators of a model of audience that has long been seen to inform scheduling practice – the 'family audience'. Paterson asserts that to understand the structures of television one must take account of the fact that viewing takes place in the home, that television is essentially a domestic medium and part of the family household. The watershed is an example of normative assumptions about the family and the responsibilities of parents to monitor their children's viewing (1990: 33). These assumptions were still evident in the scheduling of the main terrestrial channels in the observance of the watershed, but also more broadly in the scheduling decisions discussed above, in particular for BBC1⁹.

The post-peak zone is also provided a vivid illustration of how audience activities were visualised and consequently how their desires were perceived in relation to the time of the day. After peak time, the audience was expected to include fewer older viewers or children and programming was designed to be 'more cult than mainstream' (BBC2 Commissioning Guide 2000-1).

What are people's moods at this time of day? There are two broad groups of post peak viewers – those who have settled in front of the television by 20.00-21.00 and those who do not focus on their viewing until nearer 22.00 (having arrived home later). ... However, both groups approach these hours as a time of relaxation with few calls on

their attention other than the television (e.g. children are asleep). They are all looking to be engaged and entertained, but state a general preference for shows that require less commitment or lower levels of 'thinking' (BBC strategy paper, May 1998).

These types of knowledge about audiences permeated the broadcasting organisation and were shared with production communities through strategy papers and commissioning guides. Thus, schedules were linked with images of audience habit and behaviour determined by time of day.

The way in which schedules determine and are determined by ideas about audience behaviour is another building block in creating channel identity. Channels targeted at specific audiences can be imbued with particular ideas about those audiences, differentiating the channels further through the provision of different types of programming at certain types of day to suit that target audience. BBC1 followed a timetable geared to an audience of mixed ages and occupations, catering for families, whereas BBC2 specialised more, for example by targeting the teenage audience in the early evening and young adults in the late post peak period. Similarly CBBC and CBeebies were available only during the day and BBC Choice/3 and BBC Knowledge/4 in the evenings. Scheduling contributes to channel identity not only through the specific techniques outlined in the previous section but also through its appropriation of the perceived everyday life of its audiences.

6.5 Conclusions

Scheduling, then, had a number of roles in the broadcasting universe during the period under investigation. Not only was it a key competitive tool, it also had a critical role in building the overall channel identity by contributing to the channel brand and by linking expectations about audiences and their behaviours with the specific programming on a channel.

The new scheduling practices that developed in the late 1990s, many of which were adopted from satellite and digital channels, had a major impact on the ability to infuse a channel with identity. Certain older public service scheduling traditions, such as hammocking, took a back seat and were superseded by techniques which promoted public service content in a different way, such as zoning the schedule for key genres. The growth of zoning, stripping and theming associated channels with specific types of programming, whether public service or

otherwise, and bonded together parts of the schedule that previously would have had little or less coherence.

Another factor to emerge was that there were various models of audiences in circulation in the scheduling process, ranging from the 'passive audience' underpinning the theory of flow to the 'family audience', still important in scheduling a mass channel like BBC1. These existed alongside the fundamental audience models described in chapter 2; the audience-as-public needed to be shown a channel's commitment to inform and educate as well as entertain and the audience-as-market were to be wooed away from competitors. Through the process of scheduling, channels continued to be inscribed with considerations of the everyday, but now they did this with more clearly defined target audiences.

An interesting issue to emerge from the developments in scheduling relates to how one thinks about the television text. Traditionally in television studies, individual programmes, series or serials and genres have been viewed as the main textual currencies of television (Brunsdon, 2001: 30), and although Williams had proposed that sequences might prove a textual unit more appropriate to television (1974:96) this has not generally been adopted. However, as Brunsdon observes, programmes produce 'an object of study severed from its broadcast environment' rather than one which is 'attentive to the particular institutional and nationally timetabled aspects' of television (2001:30). Increasing linkages within the schedules call further into question the validity of the programme as the essential unit of television. Zones and themes bring with them a form of intertextuality that encourages the viewer to associate programme texts with each other and with promotional materials such as channel identifiers¹⁰. An argument emerges that a schedule could form a text in itself, and this would be a text related to the channel rather than a free-standing programme and the continued endeavour amongst commissioners and schedulers to create 'flow' underlines this possibility. The schedule as a text makes it possible to acknowledge the idea of audiences navigating the schedules, a common theme amongst the broadcasters with whom I spoke, and recognises the concept that arose repeatedly that schedules should be 'coherent' and 'make sense'. All in all, the schedule as a text could then form an important tool to help to understand the connection between the world of the everyday and the medium of television (Browne, 1987: 598), illustrating, as it does, the connection between a specific channel and its audience.

Notes

¹ In articles in the press about scheduling it is often referred to as a sinister or dark art. See for example *The Independent*, 28.11.2000 or *The Guardian*, 07.01.02.

² For a glossary of scheduling jargon, see Docherty, 1995; Paterson, 1990 or Mullan, 1997.

³ This is Docherty writing in his role as a practitioner at the BBC rather than observer and academic

⁴ There was considerable parliamentary interest and extensive coverage in the broadsheets of the BBC's move of the news to 10pm and ITV's decision, ratified by the ITC, to return a short news bulletin to the same slot.

⁵ See Ytreberg, 2002b: 764 on genre and prestige in public service broadcasting

⁶ These eight channels were BBCs 1 to 4, the two children's channels, BBC News 24 and BBC Parliament (the latter was not always included as a fully fledged member in discussions of the portfolio)

⁷ See Williams, 1989:66-9, for a note on the effect that this sometimes had on programming.

⁸ An internal communication video (see also chapter 8) produced by the BBC in the late 1990s about the viewing habits of young mothers explored this practice.

⁹ Satellite and cable channels were able to operate with 8pm watershed and the looped schedules of many of these channels meant that any demarcation between pre- and post-watershed might not clearly discernible.

¹⁰ See Fiske, 1987, for a discussion of intertextuality and television

Chapter 7: Branding, marketing and on air identity

7.1 Overview

Alongside the significant changes that took place in commissioning and scheduling channels, there have also been fundamental developments in the branding and marketing of media products. Despite being a public service broadcaster and therefore not often seen as part of mainstream commercial or consumer culture, the BBC has not been immune to these developments. In this chapter I will outline some changes in the media industries that created the preconditions for the development of branding and marketing within the broadcasting industry. I will also illustrate how the adoption of these practices encouraged the creation of channel brands and privileged channels within the organisation of television, in the public sector as well as the commercial sector.

The first section of this chapter is dedicated to a discussion of specific structural changes in the media industry that opened the way for the branding of media products. It also examines some of the ways in which the treatment of intellectual property and the legislation associated with it supports media branding in general and channel branding in particular. It then looks at the introduction of marketing and how ideas from marketing culture gradually took hold at the BBC during the 1990s. This is followed by a discussion of how the BBC began to brand its media products and an analysis of the debates that accompanied the creation of a viable brand hierarchy and some of the specific issues that arose in terms of positioning and branding the BBC's television channels. It also examines the ways in which channel brands are used within the framework of public television. The second part of the chapter looks at different promotional techniques associated with marketing television channels at the BBC. It examines the role of landmark or iconic programming and the use of trails and idents within the junctions. Finally, the chapter covers the creation of the on-air channel identities for the main public service channels with reference to specific graphic images and the presentational techniques used for channel branding.

Although the branding and marketing process is traced from the strategic level through to its execution during the course of this chapter, two areas are not addressed here in any detail. The first of these is the issue of the segmentation of audiences as it relates to consumer culture as this is covered in chapter 8. Secondly, in terms of marketing practice, this chapter deals with the branding of channels *on air*, and therefore marketing activity off air, such as billboard advertising, public relations or press activity takes a back seat in these discussions.

7.2 Television and the development of media branding

This section examines developments in consumer culture encouraging the branding of media products and the changes in the supply and distribution of media products which emphasised the role of intellectual property and programme rights. The evolution of the media industry in these respects was a critical factor supporting the development of channel branding and identity.

In chapter 4, I traced the tendency towards the vertical disintegration of the media industry taking place in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s and the development of post-Fordist production methods (see Lash & Urry, 1994). These changes in the structure of the industry began to focus broadcasters' attention onto the value of intellectual property, and in the case of television this related particularly to transmission rights to programmes. One of the features of the media is that it has a very high degree of product specialisation and this is particularly pronounced in television, where each product or programme produced is unique. Television production essentially equates to research and design (R&D) in many other industries and it is clear that television, in common with other media, is very design intensive. The higher the rates of innovation required within an industry, the more valuable intellectual property becomes to that industry, making intellectual property of critical importance to television. The value of the television product, therefore, tends to rest in rights to a programme, rather than in a programme itself as a reproduced commodity (Lash & Urry, 1994). Copyright is the mechanism used to assign ownership of intellectual property and programme rights tend not to be purchased singly, but more commonly in iterated form where rights to a number of products are purchased together through advances. In television this often takes the form of commissioning programmes in strands, series and serials rather than as single one-off programmes; when this research took place it was hard to find a single drama or documentary that was not part of a broader series or strand. The

iteration of intellectual rights takes the focus off the product itself (the unique programme product) and places it onto the factor (the strand or series) that connects the products (Lash & Urry, 1994: 123-37). It is this connection of products that opens the way for the branding of media products.

It is not only series and strands that connect media products. In television, the holders of the transmission rights to programmes, strands and series are often the channels. This puts channels in a strong position to act as media brands and during the digital age of plenty (see chapter 2 and Ellis, 2000; Todreas, 1999), television channels, as content packagers, were positioned with the power to define broadcast product and to brand it. Channels owned clusters of programmes across which values and meanings could be associated: 'put programmes together into a schedule or a cluster and...it becomes possible to name the cluster, create a visual logo and visual theme for it, differentiate it from other clusters and, in time, create an image around it - in short, to brand it.' (Todreas, 1999: 175). Both the new focus on intellectual property that emerged through vertical disintegration of the media industry and the prominence of the packagers in world with plentiful channels and content supported the growth of branding.

Brands tend to work by using a product that forms part of a series (in its broadest sense) to promote others in the same series 'forging ... links of image and perception between a range of products' (Lury 1993:87). Serialisation of media content is therefore closely tied to the way in which media organisations promote themselves. Wernick points out that 'by drawing an audience to itself, a record, TV show or film can build a market for other members of the series, or series of series, to which that item belongs' (1991:103). The cluster of content connected with this unifying factor may confer an image onto the unifying factor, which can then be transferred to new products as they emerge. In the case of television, the common factor may be a star, a character, a producer or a director (Lury, 1993; Baker 2002). Kilborn and Izod suggest, for example, that placing a documentary as part of a strand is done to promote the programme and comment that the close association of David Attenborough with BBC wildlife documentary allows an abundance of person-centred programme promotion (1997: 222-5).

However, the unifying factor may be the channel on which the programmes are shown. Scannell observes that ongoing serial forms underpin the creation of identity not only for the series itself but for the totality of channel output (Scannell, 1996:10). Thus, a television channel can have an image conferred on it through the

programmes which it broadcasts and to which it holds the rights, as well as from the stars, characters, directors or producers appearing on it. And in turn, the channel may bestow that image onto new programmes acquired by or produced for it. The connections between all these different media products, initiated by a complex web of rights to intellectual property and expressed through media brands, encourage greater levels of intertextuality. Meanings can be associated with and transferred to and from a channel by many vehicles¹. Later in this chapter I examine how this type of 'metonymic promotion' is used as part of the branding and marketing process for BBC television channels. At this point it suffices to note that the linking of meanings and intertextual context provides a mechanism for channel executives to generate meanings across the schedules, not just within programmes:

You shape channels and use the rhythm of the schedule to mark a message implicitly rather than explicitly...finding a way to change the character of a programme by way of the schedule (Interviewee T).

I think that the meaning of a programme is some sort of mixture of the programme's history and its direction and its appeal and its context, and the context is channel at the moment (Interviewee J).

All in all, television channels in the UK in the 1990s were in a particularly strong position to develop as major media brands. The vertical disintegration of the media industries favoured the development of channel brands as holders of programme transmission rights and, as packagers of clusters of content, channels brought together and unified programming which included many serial elements and featured a range of common factors such as stars, characters and authors. Through these, the transfer of meanings was made possible and brands could develop. It was in this context that the formal discipline of marketing was introduced into the BBC.

7.3 The development of marketing at the BBC

In the 1980s, marketing in the BBC did not exist as a formal discipline. There were manifestations of what could be called marketing activity, particularly press and publicity, scattered around the organisation, but these tended to be working independently of each other. The systematic development of strong brands was therefore difficult and the value of brands was little understood by the majority of people within the organisation. In the early 1990s this situation changed, as

marketers with backgrounds in consumer marketing in non-media organisations were brought into the BBC to introduce concepts of marketing to the BBC from 'fmcg' companies². Initially this occurred on a piecemeal basis, with different directorates all building their own marketing departments of varying sizes and complexity. With the reorganisation in 1997, the marketing, press and publicity departments were swept together into a single Marketing & Communications department within the new BBC Broadcast serving the majority of BBC's channels and services³. In 1998 the audience research function also became the responsibility of this new marketing organisation and although on-air promotions and idents continued to be created by the separate Broadcasting & Presentation department, they soon were working to a brief initiated by the marketing department.

The generation of a stronger marketing capability at this time was entirely consistent with the developments described in the last section and it also made sense in terms of the changes taking place specifically within the BBC. Vertical disintegration was evident at the BBC and there, in common with other organisations where post-Fordist practices had taken hold, marketing and finance began to get involved in more editorial decision-making processes. The mid 1990s was also a time when the BBC was extremely conscious that its continued existence was dependent on the renewal of its Charter in 1996. Anxiety to gain credit for its activities amongst opinion formers (especially those in the government) as well as with the general public was intense⁴:

It's important to understand that all our marketing and communications activities need to do two things above everything else:

- They need to drive listening, viewing and of course surfing; and
- They need to remind consumers of the value that the BBC delivers to each and every one of them

Completing that virtuous circle, linking consumption with credit back to the BBC and ultimately with approval of the licence fee is the context in which we all need to operate going forward (BBC 'Broadcast '99' speech, 27.5.1999)

The coordination of much of the marketing effort was intended to facilitate a more coherent approach to the management of the BBC's brands. However, many of the marketing concepts that arrived with the new marketers during this period took some time to be accorded any value within the organisation. Marketing

practitioners and others who embraced the discipline found themselves trying to break into a culture which showed considerable levels of resistance. The concept of brands as useful tools to the BBC was new to many of the day-to-day decision-makers in television who felt that television would not benefit from the same techniques used to sell consumer goods. The idea that brand communications should be driven by a brand strategy posed the threat that the marketing function would try to 'take over' activities central to other roles and which were at that time governed with reference to editorial rather than marketing considerations:

You'll find that every broadcaster in the country, the two departments don't get on. I'm a programmer, my view is marketing is a service department, their view of course is not that. Their view is that they lead the process which, of course, they don't because it's about content (Interviewee K).

Tensions developed between the television marketing function and, in particular, the more established strategy and presentation teams. Other parts of the television organisation were dismissive of what the marketing discipline would bring that was not already part of the broadcasting process or that was actually relevant to the media environment. Marketing staff were often on the defensive when explaining how to develop the BBC's brands:

So, this being the BBC, let's immediately try and claim some intellectual credibility for branding. A brand is more than a logo, more than the product or programme - it's the sum total of a person's experiences with a product or service short-handed by one symbol (BBC 'Marketing Conference' speech, 07.07.1997).

Despite these initial difficulties, many of the marketing concepts and techniques introduced during the mid 1990s gradually embedded themselves within the organisation, partly due to the incentive of marketing budgets and partly through a process of attrition. By the end of the period under discussion, references to brands were scattered through television practitioners' conversation and some of the underlying concepts were well understood both from the marketing perspective and their applicability to television products. One of the main changes that had taken place was the development of a degree of consensus around the idea that a brand and its values should drive consistent brand communications both on and off air, and that marketing messages should be prioritised to maximise their impact.

Exactly which brands should be prioritised continued to be a subject of some debate, and the battle for supremacy between the corporate brand, channel brands, genre and programme brands is discussed in the next section.

At this point, it is worth noting how the language and concepts of branding played out in a public service organisation. Certainly, some of the resistance to the formal introduction of marketing to the BBC mentioned earlier was not only due to issues of control but also a reluctance for the language and values associated with commerce to be brought into a non-profit-making, public service environment. There was also scepticism about whether marketing techniques would work where obligations such as universality had to be taken into account and simple segmentation might not be appropriate:

It's much tougher in the public service environment, there's much more going on, you can't just do a traditional piece of niche marketing and target an audience ruthlessly and hope for the best (Interviewee K).

To capture the BBC brand in its essence and to respond to concerns such as these, many of the BBC's core public service values were adopted as part of the brand values. For example, the marketing strategy drawn up shortly after Greg Dyke's MacTaggart speech in 2000 drew out specific implications of his observations about universality of provision:

Implications for BBC Marketing Strategy:

- The brand portfolio must deliver 'something for each of us'
- The brands must deliver informing, educating & entertaining content to each consumer
- We must deliver the brand portfolio to analogue (short term) and digital homes (including support of free to air digital)

(BBC strategy paper, Oct 2000)

However, as Born comments, 'while the BBC has less direct economic incentive to strengthen brand recognition, the less instrumental functions of branding – building consumer awareness, loyalty, attraction and affection – are seen to be of immense importance' (2003a: 13). The fact was that the language of the marketplace had increasingly permeated the BBC and allusions to consumers or customers were used on occasion where previously references might have been to audiences or viewers. Indeed the marketing strategy at this time referred to the 'consumer vision' and 'consumer strategy'. In this respect the BBC inched closer to commercial

consumer culture and, despite its public service status, towards an acknowledgement of the commodification of media products.

7.4 Defining channels as brands

The rest of this chapter is devoted to looking at how branding activity supported the further development of channel identity at the BBC. This section deals with how channel brands were managed within the BBC's brand management framework. In later sections some of the specific techniques used to promote television brands on air are examined in detail.

One of the first tasks for the new marketing departments was to define the BBC's hierarchy of brands. In the crowded media marketplace, it was recognised by some that the BBC could not promote all its potential brands effectively as to do so would far exceed the available time and money within the organisation as well as presenting a confused and crowded picture to the audience. Debates ensued as to which brands should be supported by marketing and which would not. The main contenders, in terms of brand categories, were the 'core' BBC brand, the channel and service brands, the content brands (which, in general, meant programmes or strands) or genre brands (see Ytreberg, 2002a: 299).

Initially it was the core BBC brand for which brand communications were most prominent. The BBC had made corporate promotions before but, driven by a clear intention to build the BBC brand, *Perfect Day* was screened in 1997 to promote 'the unique way the BBC is funded by you' in support of the licence fee. This trail was based around the diversity of the BBC's music programming on television and radio and not only did it win the Marketing Society grand prix in 1998, follow up tracking studies confirmed that it had successfully got its message across to target groups (Meech, 1999:40). The promotion spawned a successful chart single, once again illustrating the potential for the public service message to be associated with the commodification of its product.

The promotion of the main BBC brand had an influence on the BBC's channels and service brands, as any change in perception of the meanings created for the core brand would in turn affect the brand image of its 'sub-brands' through their obvious association.

Every brand is part of "BBC" and "BBC" is part of every brand.

Every brand only exists as it is because it comes from the BBC.
Individual brands collectively build the overall BBC Brand values.
The values of the BBC are delivered to each consumer by the brands
targeted at them (BBC strategy paper, Oct 2000)

However, during the late 1990s, the BBC's channel and service brands began to stand out as those from which the BBC could gain most value:

The need for clearly branded channels has also grown because if there are so many channels, it's that much more important that the consumers, viewers should have a pretty clear notion of what they're going to get (Interviewee J).

Favouring channels as brands over content brands was entirely consistent with the developments discussed in the first section of this chapter; whereas content brands were generally only able to transfer meanings and associations over a series or strand of programmes, channels could capitalise on a much more complex blend of clustered content:

[Channels] are a bundle of expectations of mood and content and in a way you could also see quite quickly how that extends to the idea of them becoming brands in a sense of BBC1 stands for something, BBC2 stands for something and so on. (Interviewee J).

Many of the specific brand values that emerged during this period for the main public service channels were discussed in chapter 5 - they were, in essence, the same values that were introduced to inform commissioning practice. But it is worth noting here that the values associated with the channels both for commissioning and marketing purposes were developed through focused discussions about each of the channel brands and their positioning. For example, the idea of BBC2 as a home of innovation was articulated in a vision statement as 'the power to surprise' and as the channel portfolio developed, so did the positioning for BBC2:

BBC2 is now a mainstream channel right in the middle of a 600 channel universe. No longer at the edge of a five channel world, these days our job is to do the really big ideas differently, for people who want pleasurable and rewarding television. (BBC internal communication, July 2002)

A draft vision for BBC1 in 1999 was expressed as 'Captivating, intelligent, funny and thoughtful TV that is exceptionally well made'. By 2002 this had developed into a statement including the intention that 'the new BBC1 will be editorially richer and more diverse than any other British mainstream channel'.

A further reason for the pre-eminence of channel brands was because it could be seen that they had been developed very successfully elsewhere in the television industry. One often-cited illustration of an effective channel brand was MTV:

Like MTV, [channels] come to mean something.... MTV's a very good example of a modern channel, a highly focused channel where you've got a very good idea of what you're going to get if you turn on (Interviewee J).

However, there was a high degree of awareness that branding BBC channels was not such a straightforward task. MTV was noted both within the industry and by commentators as representing an elision of editorial and promotional content, in that the rock videos played as part of its programming policy were also promotion for the relevant records. It benefited from being tightly targeted at a very well-defined audience segment and the homogeneity of content and style resulting from these two factors enabled the generation of a much higher degree of consistency in its brand image (see Jhally, 1990). Any mixed-genre channel, including the public service television channels, would have much less consistency of content, making the intertextual transfer of meaning across the cluster of programmes shown on the channel a more challenging proposition:

And when you're talking about the channel brands, it's not a straightforward thing in a lot of cases. The brand values as far as the consumers are concerned, some of them are very clear. Very clear for Discovery, very clear for MTV but actually a lot less clear for Sky One or BBC2 (Interviewee D).

BBC1 is millions of things; it's a different programme all the time. So it's just the number of products underneath, the number of programmes make that brand enormously more complex. And also the fact that you only ever have the product once, every time you try it, it's different, every moment you look at it it's different (Interviewee G).

Nonetheless, the development of the channel portfolio with more focused channel content and target audiences made channel branding more possible:

I actually believe that when we're creating channels, especially when we create new channels like BBC3, what we're really doing is branding a cluster of content (Interviewee J).

The question of whether the clustering of the content or the branding came first was part of the continuing tension between those from a marketing background and those with an editorial frame of reference.

Channel brands at the BBC were also seen as having the potential to lead audiences to BBC programming in a world where 'navigation' was seen as increasingly important. Brands, as much as the new scheduling techniques (see chapter 6), could function as 'signposts', 'routes' or 'pathways' into the BBC:

The thinking behind stronger brands is to ensure that the audience know what the BBC stands for, and to help them find multiple, compelling routes into our content. Our brands will be pathways into our content (BBC internal communication, Sept 99)

We need to develop the signposts and brands that will help audiences find the services and programmes they might like (BBC 'Broadcast '99' speech, 27.5.1999)

Many viewers have little idea of what some strands offer - strong brands and zones can mean clearer signposting (BBC Commissioning Guide, 2001-2)

Existing brands such as the BBC itself, BBC1, Radio 4 and so on have the potential to become 'trusted guides' in the increasingly fragmented broadcasting environment (BBC 'Broadcast '99' speech, 27.5.1999)

These spatial metaphors occurred frequently in discussions about digital media. This reflected an anxiety amongst the broadcasting staff that the BBC and its product would become lost in the welter of choice in the developing multichannel, multimedia environment. This was at the heart of the BBC's positioning as the trusted guide (BBC, 1998). Branding, and in particular, branding channels, appeared to provide a strategy to support this.

7.5 The mechanics of metonymic promotion

This section deals with some of the mechanics of how channel branding worked. It examines how clusters of content were promoted through the transfer of meanings, values or images from one element to other elements of the cluster as well as to the common factor binding the cluster together: the channel. Metonymic promotion, the promotion of one part of a series (in its broadest sense) to promote other parts of the same series, was an important factor in a number of commissioning conventions and certain marketing techniques. Through both, channel identity was constructed and enhanced. These practices reinforced key messages about the channels and the programmes shown on those channels, whether used to confirm the BBC's public service remit or aimed at developing in the minds of audiences the channel characteristics already embedded in the commissioning process.

The commissioning and promotion of 'landmark' or iconic programming developed as an important part of the demand-led commissioning environment. Landmark programming was designed to stand out from the bulk of programming on a channel. It was thought of as 'schedule busting' rather than 'schedule ballast':

A lot of the forms that we deal with in terms of television are landmarks, you know, the *Walking with Dinosaurs*, *The Human Body*, these kind of things. They're seen as key anchors of the schedules not volume entertainment pieces like *Ground Force* or *Changing Rooms* (Interviewee F)

Landmark programming was also often designed to be an 'event'. Indeed, the term 'event television' changed from meaning television covering an actual event to meaning that the television programme was an event in itself:

We will need to continue reinventing and refreshing our schedule... creating a national sense of event from Specials that are genuine Showstoppers - of the moment, must-see, remarkable (BBC Commissioning Guide 2001-2).

There were two main purposes of landmark programming. One of these was to garner a large appreciative audience. The other was specifically to create an aura for the channel on which the programme was broadcast, so that the channel became associated with the values or characteristics of the landmark programme:

Every year we broadcast a number of break-through shows which become the topic of conversation among our audiences the next day. These shows create a long-term impact, embody our role as a public service broadcaster and help define the distinct identities of our Channels (BBC Commissioning Guide 2001-2).

In creating an image and developing the channel brands, different types of landmark programming were commissioned and promoted for each channel in line with the channel's commissioning policy and brand values:

The two Channels can each do different types of landmark programming:

- From the animated pre-history of *Walking with Dinosaurs* to the texture of recent political history in *The Major Years* the BBC ONE aim is for friendly, knowledgeable companions and guides, providing a clear proposition albeit with an underlying complexity.
- BBC TWO can provide series which go a step further in challenging the audience in terms of content and style, for example from the extraordinary admissions and omissions in *The Nazis A Warning from History* to the visual confrontations of *Naked* (BBC Commissioning Guide 2001-2).

BBC1 landmarks were intended to be accessible, broad interest programming whereas BBC2's landmarks were likely to be more offbeat and stress the innovative aspects of the channel. In this way, landmark programming on the two main BBC channels was designed to promote the differences in their channel identities, even within a single genre such as factual documentary.

Landmark programming, whether specifically commissioned or acquired for the channel, could become so closely related with the identity of a channel that the channel was seen as virtually synonymous with a single series, strand or serial:

I would argue, for instance, that Sky 1 is principally defined by *The Simpsons*, (Interviewee P).

Living made a very big mistake, but it's paid off. They became the Jerry Springer channel (Interviewee K).

However, associating a channel so closely with one particular programme and its brand values was seen as a high risk strategy:

In my opinion and how I run channels is no one programme is more important than the channel. If you do that, eventually you'll get screwed because that programme won't be popular any more (Interviewee K)

[Landmarks] are important but I think probably more important to the BBC is getting those programmes day in, day out, right. Landmarks can do fantastic things for image and give you blips in your performance, but it's actually getting consistent offer of new drama and entertainment out there, so that people will continue to watch you even after they've watched the landmarks (Interviewee M)

So, the branding and promotion of channels through landmark programming had its limits, but was nonetheless an extremely useful tool and contributed to the creation of channel identity. It is worth noting that despite close links with their channel of origin, landmark programmes were often exploited across media:

Each of our landmark factual commissions will be reviewed for their ability to take people on a deeper, non-linear learning journey on the web or interactive TV (BBC Commissioning Guide 2001-2).

The notion of the landmark or iconic programme was not only important in the promotion of the channel from the commissioning perspective, it was also central to the channel marketing strategy. Landmark programmes were used as the basis of major marketing campaigns. On air, this was executed through trails on the same channel or through cross-promotion on other channels or services. Iconic programmes might also be a prominent part of off-air campaigns; in the late 1990s a number of broadcasters, perhaps most notably Channel 4, were using billboards to promote their latest iconic programme⁵. For the BBC, *EastEnders* was an iconic programme that formed the basis of a major campaign, on and off air:

There was a very influential [marketing] campaign.... to revitalise *EastEnders*, where we did a lot of work about the channel in a sense in the kind of Trojan horse of *EastEnders*. And *EastEnders* is archetypal of what BBC1's all about, and we learned a lot about the channel through *EastEnders* (Interviewee R)

For the BBC, landmark and iconic programming also represented an opportunity to make a point about public service broadcasting and the ways in which different channels reinforced its public service role:

These shows ... embody our role as a public service broadcaster and help define the distinct identities of our Channels.... They prove our creative strengths, our ability to take risks and our commitment to provide quality and range that the market alone will not (BBC Commissioning Guide 2001-2).

Walking with Dinosaurs (1999) was often given as an example of public service broadcasting at its best, in that it was informative as well as entertaining and accessible to a wide family audience who might not usually watch documentary programming. This also enhanced BBC1's position as the largest public service television channel.

Landmark programming, whilst important, was not the only means of metonymic promotion. In many ways the theming and zoning of channels discussed in chapter 6 fulfilled a similar function, especially as part of the marketing strategy:

The channel strategy included explicit marketing priorities:

- At the forefront of cross-media brand development - branded zones for key programme areas
- Aim to "own" key passions in specialist factual, leisure, entertainment and arts genres

(BBC strategy paper, July 1999)

Another important means of branding the channels was through the artist, talent or stars who frequently appeared on the channel. This could include characters in dramas as well as presenters or personalities:

Recognition of either a known writer or on-screen talent is undoubtedly important to the audience. Let's put our effort into getting those killer shows as well as growing and nurturing talent new to BBC ONE (BBC Commissioning Guide 2001-2).

The ability to use presenters and artists in the promotion of channels is related to the fact that channels can purchase rights to their work in the same way as they buy rights to programmes. For example, the anchorperson is often key to creating brand

values that differentiate one channel's news programme from another's. Although the facts that are the subject of the news cannot be copyrighted, the rights to the presenter's performance belong to the channel. Research in the USA indicates that as many as 40% of viewers choose their news channel on the basis of the anchorperson, making the anchor a critical part of the channel brand (Baker, 2002). In a similar way, the BBC capitalised on its channels' association with certain personalities:

I mean I think somebody who works incredibly well on BBC2 at the minute ...is Louis Theroux.... Another BBC2 face would be Simon Sharma. Because what you tend to find what constitutes a face on BBC2 is somebody who is passionate and expert and who can inspire as well as make you aspire. They're not just presenters; they are people who present well because they are authorities in their field (Interviewee B).

The authority of the presenters on BBC2 transferred to the channel and vice versa, enhancing the brands of both channel and presenter.

One final observation on metonymic promotion relates to channel naming. The BBC portfolio of channels worked in this respect primarily by using the BBC's name as part of each of the channel's names, through which the core brand and channel brand values could influence and reinforce each other. Initially, for BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge, the intention had been for the name to transfer brand-building meanings to the programmes on the channel. However, a decision was taken to name the main channels of the new portfolio according to the numbers 1 to 4 to emphasise their relationship and leave their meanings more open to development. Other BBC channel names, however, kept some degree of signification:

There's no point at all having a channel name which people don't understand. You imagine Channel XY29K in the EPG, why would you go there? Whereas channels like BBC Parliament, Trouble, Nick Junior, MTV either mean something obviously in the way that BBC Parliament means something obviously, News 24, Sky News, or, like MTV, they come to mean something (Interviewee J)

Well the BBC initially launched Arena as a channel because it was named after their arts strand. The same with UK Horizons is it was

named after *Horizon* which was the scientific documentary. ... But of course you are relying on the fact that the audience understand that connection (Interviewee K).

Renaming a channel to change the brand associations was not a step that a broadcaster would take lightly; one BBC manager estimated that it would cost in the region of £5 million to market a renamed channel. Changing the names of BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge to BBC3 and BBC4 was a deliberate strategy to break the brand associations relating to the low quality and production values that had plagued these two channels in their earlier incarnations.

So, in terms of metonymic promotion, channels proved to be an effective mechanism for bringing together and transferring meanings and brand values from one programme to another through the packaging that was the channel itself. The channel could take on the values of its landmark programming and bestow these on other programmes. It could also associate with the brands of the personalities that appeared on the channel and even bring new meanings to bear by virtue of the channel name.

7.6 On-air promotion: trails and media planning

The promotional strategies that enhance the channel brand and identity discussed in the last section essentially rely on the implicit relationship between programmes and channels. These are supported by active and explicit on-air promotions in the junctions between programmes. This section examines the promotional elements that form the continuity between programmes and the way that these have developed during the research period.

The spaces between programmes, the junctions, are now filled with various forms of continuity. When television began, space was deliberately left between the end of one programme and the beginning of the next, filled only by a picture to show that the service was still on the air (Williams, 1975:90). This followed the earliest Reithian principle that viewing should be carefully chosen and that having space between programmes would discourage the viewer from casually drifting rather than selecting viewing. However, junctions were gradually filled with a variety of materials, creating the flow that is now familiar to audiences from one programme to the next. This transition was in keeping with the development of the idea of the cultural pyramid, the thought that one of the merits of public service broadcasting

was to bring people into contact with programmes that they might not otherwise watch by placing them together in the schedule.

Continuity material that now might typically be found in a junction includes trails or promos for forthcoming programmes, announcements, channel identifiers and logos. In addition to all of this, on a commercial channel there may be a number of advertisements and possibly also sponsorship identifiers (see Meech, 1999, for details of types of 'clutter' found in programme junctions). I will not discuss the commercial elements that appear in junctions as they feature very little on the BBC's public service channels, but will focus here instead on the planning of junctions, trails and announcements.

Since the first use of continuity materials, planning the junctions had become part of the creation of the second-by-second transmission plan. However, during the research period there was a significant change in the way junctions were put together and in what was taken into account when creating junction plans. Until the mid 1990s, planning the junctions was essentially an editorial activity. Care was taken, for example, to ensure that the messages in a junction did not offend because of their positioning, so a trail showing sex or extreme violence would not appear before the watershed, and a trail for a film about a plane crash would not be shown after a news item about a plane crash. Mullan suggests that trails were placed according to the scheduler's intuition rather than any logic (1997: 68). However, during the second half of the 1990s, a professional media planning function grew up in the BBC and with it came junction planning according to the demographic profile of the audience likely to be watching at that time as well as the editorial fit:

Media planning was a major, major change at the BBC, but incredibly important. The promotions makers learned that you had to make a message that was targeted at an audience and that you wanted an outcome, watch the programme (Interviewee C)

Now we use the audience systems BARB data so therefore we know the demographics of the audience at any one time. We know the demographics that a future programme is likely to be aimed at and therefore you can match those up (Interviewee A).

With the demographic planning of junctions, promotions reinforced the way that channels were targeted at specific target audiences. With the advent of

professional media planners, cross-promotion on the different BBC channels and services also became much more focused:

We are maximising the use of these non-paid for resources and becoming increasingly effective at doing those things that cost us relatively little ... and the media planning function has been critical to ensuring effective cross-promotion. (BBC 'Broadcast '99' speech, 27.5.1999)

Only programmes with suitable target audiences for that channel were likely to be trailed on another channel.

Another development in media planning was to change the shape of promotional campaigns so that they would start several weeks before a series began and finish often after the third episode, based on the observation that if people missed the first three of a new series, they would be unlikely to start watching it⁶. A more scientific approach was also taken as to how many times each trail was shown. Complex messages about new programmes were given significantly more airings than simple trails about familiar returning programmes.

We've only got a finite amount of promotional air time to use and therefore you've got to be optimal in terms of getting the weight of activity correct (Interviewee A).

In short, media planning meant that although they did not have a commercial function, BBC channel junctions were planned according to marketing principles.

Media planning also reinforced some of the developments in scheduling more generally:

You've got to make promotions for all these programmes and transmit trailers in a strategic pattern.... And if you've got different programmes going out at a different time every different night of the week, you're going to have so many different messages coming from your trailers, that nobody is ever going to remember these messages (Interviewee P).

A stricter regime in terms of placing trails supported the more structured approach to scheduling discussed in chapter 6, with stripped and zoned programming helping to simplify the range of messages targeted at the audience. Even more importantly in terms of the development of channel identity, however, there was also a much more

rigorous prioritisation process about which programmes would be trailed in the first place. Each channel had a small number of high priority programmes for promotion each week and trails would be produced for these and a limited number of lower priority programmes. The programmes which were heavily trailed were very often the landmark or iconic programmes for the channel, and the promotion of these programmes reinforced the links between the brand values of the programmes and those of the channel on which they were shown.

The trails themselves also developed during the same period, in general becoming more sophisticated as part of an industry-wide tendency in the same direction (Ferguson, 2002:83). As part of this increasing sophistication, trails were no longer just edited extracts of the programme they promoted. Although the vast majority included clips, increasingly they also used specially shot material. Trails might also run as part of the final credits of the previous programme in order to try to increase the flow from one programme to another. Significantly, trails were increasingly tailored to a specific target audience. This was most apparent when the BBC experimented with making different versions of trails for the same programme, one with variants for before and after the watershed and another with one targeted at men and the other at women. Trails were also tailored according to the channel on which they appeared:

A BBC2 trail would be different from a BBC1 trail in terms of what it tries to communicate (Interviewee B)

Creating trails that conformed to the style of each channel once again reinforced the unity of the channel and the coherence between the programmes and the channel itself.

During the 1990s, trails began to fall much more clearly into one of two types. The first of these was the 'appointment to view' trail⁷, which had been part of the promotional repertoire for some time, the purpose of which was to encourage the audience to watch a particular programme, and which inevitably included the details of the day, time and channel on which it could be viewed. The other type of trail, of which there were greater numbers on BBC services once the BBC adopted the marketing discipline more formally, was the brand-building trail. This was concerned primarily with image promotion. *Perfect Day* (1997) and other similar trails that followed, such as *Curiosity* (1999), drew on aspects of the BBC's overall programming to promote the BBC brand as a whole. Such trails did not promote any programmes in particular or feature viewing details, but instead were aimed at

'getting credit for the brand', increasing the audience approval of the BBC and the licence fee. It was not only the core BBC brand for which there were brand-building promotions; BBC News, BBC Sport and BBC World Service all had prominent brand-building campaigns. Interestingly, although BBC1 was promoted through a major billboard campaign, none of the television channels were the beneficiaries of clearly defined brand-building trails, the closest thing being trails promoting the seasonal launches of new programming. It is possible that the brand of the channel was considered to be so closely associated with its iconic programmes that it was not easy to separate the brand essence for a more generic trail.

Another element of on-air promotion and continuity that was important to developing channel identity was the on-air announcement. Continuity announcers create the verbal links between one programme and another, often bridging a number of visual elements of the junction. They will often confirm which channel the viewer is watching as well as giving details of forthcoming programmes or viewing on other services. The direct address used by continuity announcers means that, superficially at least, they form a direct link between the channel and the viewer⁸. From the very earliest days of the BBC, continuity announcers were used to create an image of the BBC in the minds of its audience, initially in radio and then television. Reith argued from the start that announcers were the BBC employees best placed to 'build up in the public mind a sense of the BBC's collective personality' (quoted in Kumar, 1977:241). Announcers during the monopoly and duopoly period tended to be chosen to emphasise the unity rather than variety of the BBC services (see Ytreberg, 2002b: 763-4). However, with the range of channels and services that the BBC broadcast during the period under investigation, continuity announcers not only represented the BBC as a whole but were also carefully selected to embody in their voices the brand values of their individual channels:

BBC1 will have a very different feel and voice to BBC3. It's what is right for that brand, that channel (Interviewee W).

It was especially difficult to find continuity announcers for BBC1 as they had to appeal to a broad audience and needed voices that conveyed that the channel was 'warm and friendly but not flip or ingratiating' (Interviewee W). The more niche and focused the channel, the easier it was to find a voice that represented the channel.

It is clear, even before the examination of channel idents in the next section that the continuity between programmes strengthened the channel identity created

through the commissioning and scheduling processes. Trails for iconic and landmark programmes reinforced the links between the brands and values, as did carefully constructed and placed trails, targeted the same audiences as the channel. In addition, continuity announcers, selected on the basis of their ability to represent the brand values of the channel on which they were heard, directly addressed the target audience. The junctions that formed much of the 'flow' of the channels were therefore an integral part of the creation of the channel's particular look, feel and image and went a long way towards the creation of the whole channel environment (see Ytreberg, 2002a: 287).

7.7 On-air promotion: the channel identities

The on-air visual identities of the channels are to a large extent created by channel idents. These are more than logos, in that they are usually a discrete 3-5 second moving sequence, generally with both sound and visual elements. They come in shorter forms, sometimes known as stings or animations, but here I shall be using the term ident to cover all the graphic or filmed segments designed as channel identifiers. The purpose of the idents is to remind the viewer of the channel that they are watching and to help to create the image and branding for the channel (Eastman et al, 2002). In this section I shall be taking a close look at the channel idents used for BBC1 and BBC2 during the research period, and also at the generic idents for BBC News 24 and BBC News⁹. I will be looking at these idents primarily from the point of view of the broadcasters and as a result, I do not use a particularly detailed semiotic approach to the analysis, but instead look at the intentional signification that informed their creation. This is in keeping with the rest of this study which does not examine the channels or programmes primarily from a textual angle, but looks at the development of channels from the broadcasters' perspective¹⁰.

The channel idents developed as a progression from the channel testcards and clocks that were in use from the early days of television (see fig. 7.1 at the end of this chapter for examples of a globe and clock for the early BBC1 and BBC2). As the technology for the creation of television graphics developed and the marketing sensibility evolved, channel idents became a perfect vehicle for creatively representing the channels. The BBC2 idents used during the research period had been designed in 1991 and continued to be screened until 2002, with new editions being added to the range. BBC1 idents had also been designed in 1991 but did not have the longevity of the BBC2 idents and so they were completely redesigned in

1998. In both cases the idents were clearly seen as having the potential both to create and reflect the values and attributes of the channel brands:

Idents are just there to brand a channel (Interviewee A).

Ideally it should quickly give you an idea of what the channel is about. It's a logo device like the Nike tick. It's a mark of quality (Interviewee H).

7.7.1 BBC2 - *The Two*

In the late 1980s, the BBC2 ident was a relatively nondescript rendition of the word TWO (see fig. 7.2). At that time, it was decided that the visual identities for both of the channels needed an overhaul as they had become outdated. This was the first time at the BBC that the design of the idents was informed by the channel strategy and therefore also the intended brand values for the channels; there was a concern that BBC2 was suffering from a perception by audiences of being boring, worthy and staid:

I think probably it's fair to say people weren't quite sure what BBC2 was about; was it there for the programmes they couldn't fit on BBC1? And so I suppose the brief was to tell the audience what BBC2 was about. And it was looking at things possibly in more depth, and a different way of looking at things (Interviewee C).

The challenge was to create an identity which would display the values that BBC2 wanted to promote about itself. The aim was to portray the channel as witty, innovative and surprising. The design team came up with the idea of a range of different ident sequences that would be appropriate for the different moods of programming that appeared on the channel (Lambie-Nairn, 1997:125¹¹). These were accompanied by sound schemes which shared unifying factors (Brownrigg and Meech, 2002: 349). The '2' symbol that was central to all the idents conveyed the connection to BBC2. The style and content of the sequences were a little quirky and aimed to get over the BBC2 brand values (see fig. 7.4).

That's how the identity was run for its first four years.... And then once it was established and people knew what it was and accepted it, then you could come along and say, actually now we could be a bit

witty with it, and that's where the car and the dog came in (Interviewee C).

So, the later idents in this series were specifically designed to emphasise the wit that was one of the BBC2 brand values (see fig. 7.5). When launched, all these idents were phenomenally successful in conveying the brand message for BBC2:

The BBC2 figure became a talking point, perceived as sophisticated, witty and stylish... The new look for BBC2 signalled a growing respect for the channel among broadcasters and repositioned it in the eyes of the audience (Lambie-Nairn, 1997:135)

You go into a shop because you like the look of the window, and it's the shopfront, those idents are the shopfront. Those 2s communicate something about the channel that at times they're... playful and... witty and funny. I suppose at heart they're always clever whatever they are, even if there's more light-hearted ones and the serious ones, there's something clever about them (Interviewee B).

Something like BBC2 had made people realise that you can alter perceptions of a channel through identity. You can't do it without the programming of course because ... nobody watches a channel to see the identity, but... what happened with BBC2 is people actually would say, 'oh I love that one, that fluffy dog'.... And it did say something about the channel that carried it, which was it could be witty, it could take the mickey out of itself and sometimes it could be very serious (Interviewee C).

The success of the BBC2 idents established the idea of a range or family of idents being used to convey a complex series of brand messages. The multiplicity of idents also paved the way for idents that introduced specific zones on the channel, such as a spider's web with a '2' woven into it shown before wildlife programming.

Because these BBC2 idents were introduced at a time when there had been no editorial or programme scheduling changes and the only thing that had altered was the channel's visual identity, it also demonstrated the power that idents had to change audience perception in the channel's favour. BBC executives were very aware that since the introduction of the new visual identity, BBC2 appeared to be perceived by audiences as far more accessible and entertaining (Lambie-Nairn,

1997:135). As a result on-air visual identity took on an even greater importance in its ability to enhance channel identity. The BBC2 idents continued to be so successful in this respect that when the new idents were launched in 2002 they retained many of the features of idents developed and shown in the 1990s (see fig. 7.9)

7.7.2 BBC1 - The Balloon

The idents that had been introduced in 1991 for BBC1 had had a much more mixed reception than those for BBC2 and had been much less successful in conveying the desired BBC1 brand values effectively:

The most difficult channel is BBC1 because of the variety of it is so incredible. To find an identity and a feel and a mood that depicts the whole of that channel is very, very difficult (Interviewee W).

Consequently in 1997 a new series of idents were designed and then launched in 1998. BBC1 had long used the globe as its symbol during its junctions (see figs. 7.1 to 7.3) and so this was seen as a starting point for new idents. It was also important to reflect as part of the brand BBC1's relationship with all parts of the UK:

We realised at the time was that BBC1 had a right to the globe because it had used the globe as its identity for many years, but it didn't have exclusive right, many, many people used a globe.... So how do you make the globe your own? And how do you have this new position which is about unity and oneness with the whole nation? And so all that was in the brief, so out of all of that came a huge hot air balloon that you took to different locations, and the proposition for that was BBC1 brings the whole world to every corner of the UK (Interviewee C)

A series of idents were filmed with a huge balloon representing a globe flying over various recognisable UK locations (see fig. 7.6). A soundtrack of electronically produced music was used over all these trails to provide additional consistency between them (see Brownrigg and Meech, 2002). Over the following year, the BBC1 idents were developed further, as the BBC2 idents had been, and in this case the balloon was electronically produced, flying over even more recognisable landmarks such as the Blackpool Tower (see fig. 7.7).

However, the BBC1 idents were once again not viewed as an unqualified success. There were two main criticisms, both of which tended to originate from the perspective of marketing staff, who believed that the idents were not really promoting the appropriate BBC1 values, rather than the presentation staff, who had created the idents and who felt that they were doing their job:

As for the balloon, I believe that it came out of the globe... a sacred cow from what I can gather. The thinking behind the balloon is that it passes over the whole UK. Although no viewers! This is known, and the learning is that it is very remote, distant and cold (Interviewee H)

Because the audience research about the values conveyed by the idents indicated that this 'remoteness' was problematic for the perception of the channel, further idents were developed to include people, representative of the viewers, and to try to create a warmer more approachable feel for the channel (see fig. 7.8). However, there was still considerable discomfort about whether BBC1 benefited from these idents. By 2001 it was clear that once again they would be replaced, especially as the globe was no longer seen as an appropriate icon:

We may need to go away from the globe as an icon or device - especially as BBC1 is not at all global - it's very UK focused. But we can't write the brief until the channel proposition is defined and bought into (Interviewee H)

In the intervening period, the full range of BBC channels and services had become much more established in the minds of broadcasting staff at the BBC. The development of the idea of the channel portfolio had also clarified that in comparison, say, with BBC World, BBC1 was national rather than global channel. The new idents launched in 2002 for BBC1 ceased to feature the globe and all included the presence of people (see fig. 7.10). This change represented a formal acceptance of the value of professional marketing expertise in the creation of channel branding through the channels' visual identity.

7.7.3 BBC News 24 and the BBC News brand

When BBC News 24 was launched in 1997, there was a lot of scepticism about whether it was appropriate for the BBC to be running a twenty-four hour news channel, especially as CNN and Sky News already provided twenty-four hour news as commercial services:

And also because of BBC you've also got opinion formers, and when we did the news identity, News 24 for example, we were being lambasted by the press, by the government (Interviewee C).

Under these circumstances there was considerable potential benefit in trying to bring the brand values from the respected news services which were already in existence to the new channel through associating them in some way and treating news as a single brand.

It was group brand because obviously the news had the bulletins, the main 1, 6, and 9 bulletins at the time, had breakfast news, had News 24 and news online, BBC World outside the UK. And they all looked different (Interviewee C).

The clearest way to make the association was through the creation of similar on-air visual idents, idents which had up to that point looked significantly different (see, for example, fig. 7.11):

The strategy there was to say, there is a news brand from the BBC wherever you encounter it, so there again you can do that through identity. You say, this is news from the BBC, but it all looks the same.... That's actually what identity is about. To say, we belong to this family (Interviewee C).

Once again, the visual identity was created to try to capitalise on the values that the broadcasters wanted attributed to the brand. In the case of news this involved its reputation for impartiality and, in particular, the breadth of its newsgathering and the speedy transmission of accurate and relevant news to the appropriate audience:

If you look at the radiating circles and so on, it's obviously got an identification that relates to information being passed on, information being broadcast and it has now all the different names of cities appearing so that, depending upon what programme you're talking about, you can modify the split between how many domestic cities you've got or how many international cities you've got (Interviewee P).

The rebranding of BBC News was completed in 2000, when the new look was applied to BBC World. All news output now had a similar appearance on air (see fig. 7.12):

You're now getting common look and feel appearing throughout all of the news output, but it doesn't mean to say that all the programmes have to have the same sort of editorial sequences and pace, but it means that there's a proper family there and you know when you're watching BBC News (Interviewee P).

So once again, the identity of a channel could be strongly influenced by the brand values of specific programming if the image, values or associations were brought together. In this case, the channel brand and identity benefited from the transfer of the brand values of programmes not even appearing on that channel, but associated instead through genre. However, this process could only be effective up to a point:

I also think that people who worked on regular news programmes and then start producing a ... channel think that the whole of the reputation of that channel rests on the quality of the journalism, and I actually think the reputation of that channel also depends on everything else that makes up the channel. So I think it rests on the quality of the graphics, the quality of the astons, the quality of the junctions, the fact that the channel runs to time (Interviewee P).

This process could work in both directions. Although the collective branding of all news output had the potential to leverage the positive values across the group brand, the BBC also took the risk of negative associations that had dogged News 24 affecting its other news programmes. However, as the main news bulletins at that time had far greater reach and impact than the news-only channel, this was unlikely to be the case.

Another factor that became a subject for debate in terms of the on-air visual identities of BBC channels was in relation to digital onscreen graphics, known as DOGs. These graphics generally take the form of a semi-transparent channel logo, appearing in the corner of the picture while the channel is on air. Many broadcasters use DOGs, although Channel 5 was the only broadcaster who consistently used a DOG on its terrestrial analogue service during the period in question. The BBC followed the general trend and its digital channels used DOGs as part of their on-screen presence:

In a multichannel home when you've got a choice of 200 channels, I think DOGs are absolutely crucial, when you're flicking through, just to know which channel you're on.... So much content is shared as well

these days, you know, *Simpsons* you go to lots of people out there and say 'Who's got the *Simpsons*?' And lots of people will say Sky. Well, we show probably as much *Simpsons* as Sky does, only we get second run of it, that sort of stuff, and therefore I think it's important that you've got channel DOG (Interviewee A).

Not only did DOGs remind viewers which channel they were watching, they were also a useful device for constantly linking the channel and a programme in the eyes of the audience. Although DOGs were generally limited to a small logo, there was a little scope for using them to develop other brand associations:

When Knowledge went live it had an online incarnation of itself, the URL appeared on screen all the time instead of a normal channel DOG, it's kind of a signifier of its online-ness (Interviewee T).

In some ways, a DOG could fulfil a similar role to that which a trademark might for another type of product. A trademark does not create new units of intellectual property as copyright does, but what it does is to valorise an existing unit of intellectual property (Lash, 2002). Through DOGs, the brand associations of the channel could valorise the programmes shown on that channel.

7.8 Conclusions

During the research period the BBC's attitude to and use of branding and marketing was transformed. The opportunities to brand media products, and particularly channels, afforded by the vertical disintegration taking place across the media industry as a whole, were, after a slow start, adopted by the BBC, despite its status as a public service broadcaster. The BBC channels, as packagers of significant clusters of programming and effectively the owners of programme rights, became key brands for the BBC, with well defined brand values that associated the channels and their programmes. Various forms of metonymic promotion, using landmark programmes, well-targeted trails and the channels' visual on-air identities, was the primary mechanism through which this branding was achieved. Consequently, channels which were already unified by many of the new commissioning and scheduling practices were also imbued with a variety of cultural meanings related to the broadcasters' perceptions of the channel's target audiences.

Born comments that marketing discourses have the effect of humanising economic decision-making 'by marrying it with methodical readings of the desires and habits of that abstraction, the "audience"' (2003b: 793). The development of branding and marketing affected the models of audience in circulation at the BBC, and one of the ways that marketing had an impact on the organisation was to introduce the idea of audience or consumer segmentation from the commercial marketplace. The next chapter examines this process and its potential impact on public service broadcasting.

7.9 Examples of BBC on-air identities

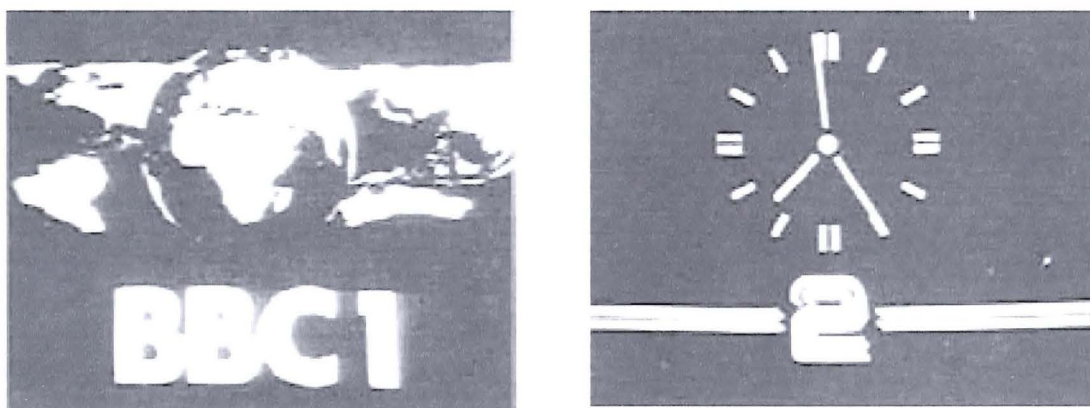


Figure 7.1: Historic BBC1 globe and BBC2 clock

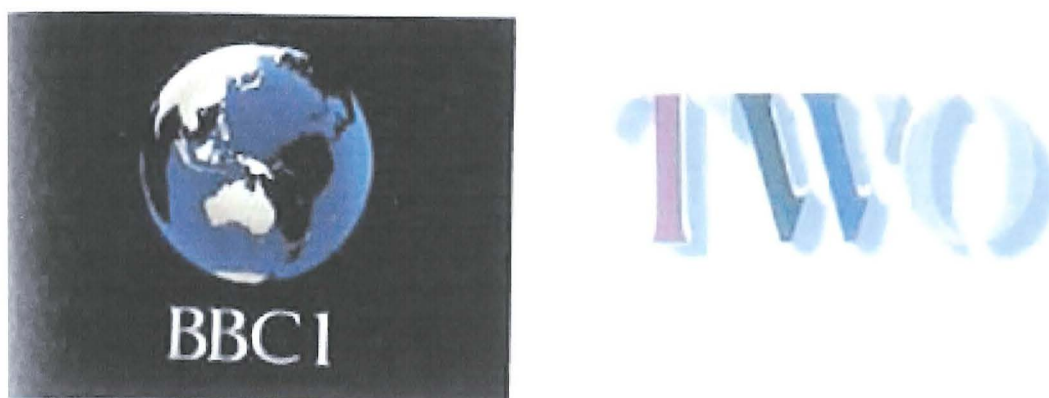


Figure 7.2: BBC1 and BBC2 idents from the late 1980s



Figure 7.3: BBC1 ident from the early 1990s

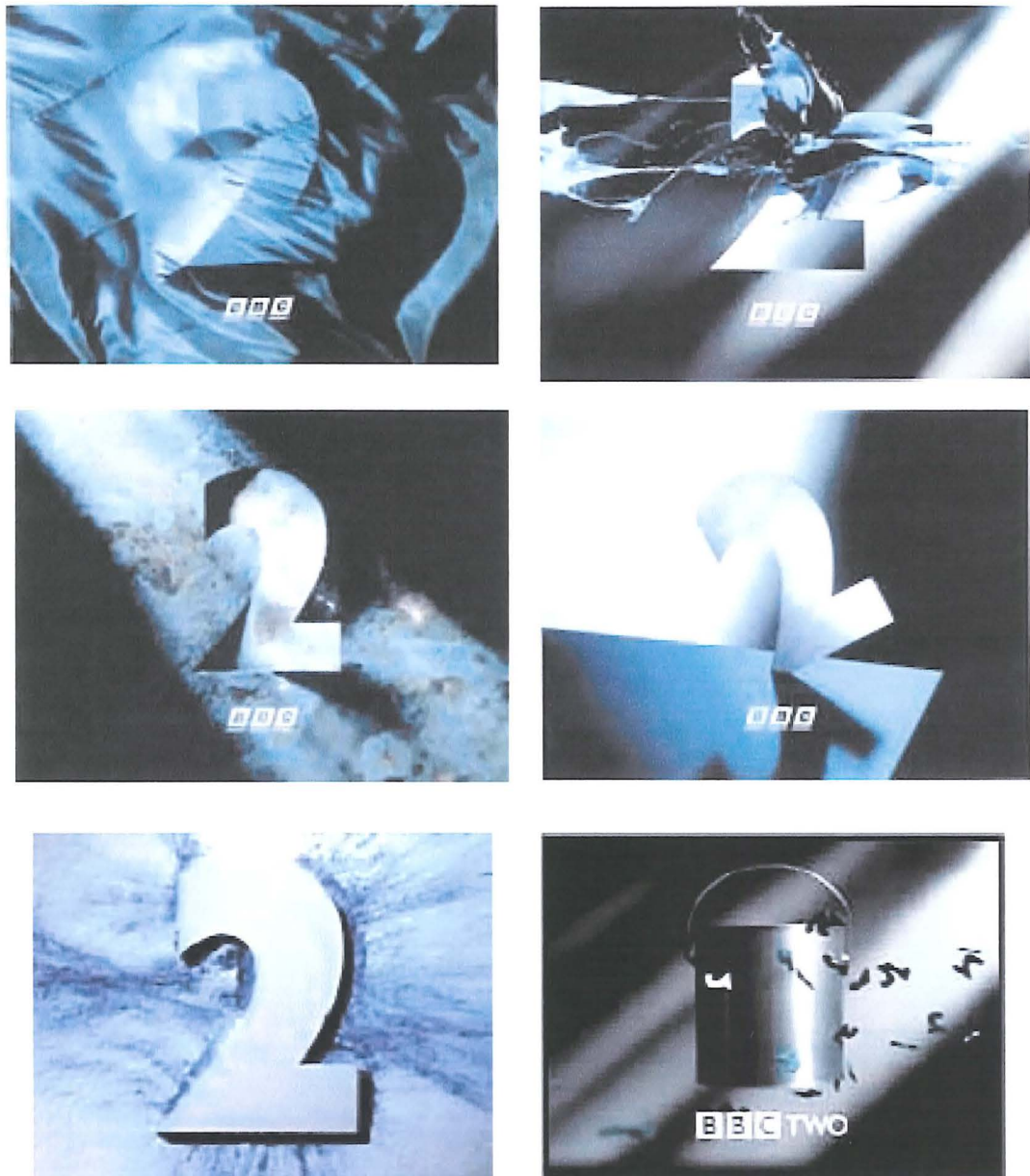


Figure 7.4: BBC2 idents from the early to late 1990s



Figure 7.5: BBC2 idents from the mid to late 1990s



Figure 7.6: BBC1 idents from the late 1990s

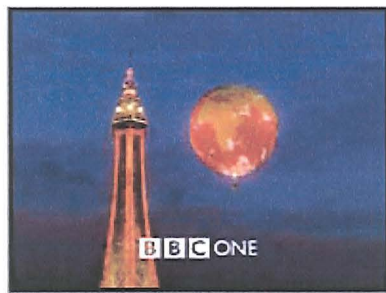


Figure 7.7: BBC1 idents from the late 1990s



Figure 7.8: BBC1 ident from the late 1990s



Figure 7.9: BBC2 idents from 2002

Figure 7.10: BBC1 idents from 2002



Figure 7.11: News bulletin ident logos from the late 1980s



Figure 7.12: News bulletin ident logos from the early 2000s

Notes

¹ For a discussion of intertextuality in this context, see, for example, Jansson, 2002; Andersen, 1995 or Fiske, 1987.

² Fast moving consumer goods

³ The overall BBC brand was managed by the BBC corporate centre

⁴ It should be noted also that marketing was introduced for PBS in the USA when its funding was under threat during the same period, and an aggressive branding strategy was also adopted (Avery & Owen, 2002).

⁵ For example, *Sex in the City* (1999) featured as a major billboard campaign for Channel 4 when it was first acquired for the channel

⁶ For an account of the shape of a typical promotional campaign, see Ferguson, 2002

⁷ This type of trail is referred to also as a 'tune-in' promo (see Eastman et al, 2002)

⁸ For a discussion of direct address in broadcasting see Ellis, 1982; Scannell, 1996 and 2000.

⁹ New idents were created and introduced for both BBC1 and BBC2 in early 2002. However, as these occur after the main research period, I do not examine these in any great detail.

¹⁰ For more about how one might apply a semiotic approach see Myers, 1999 or Solomon, 2002.

¹¹ Lambie-Nairn's company was commissioned to redesign both channels' on-air identities.

Chapter 8: Understanding audiences

8.1 Overview

From previous chapters it is clear that ideas of 'the audience' form a critical part of the development of channel identity at the BBC. 'Target audiences' have become central to the commissioning and scheduling processes used to create new, more coherent channels and the introduction of branding and marketing to the organisation has enshrined particular incarnations of the audience in the production and promotion of the channels. In this chapter, I take a closer look at the different models of audiences that circulate in relation to the broadcasting process in general and in relation to a number of channels specifically. I trace the development from the concept of a single mass audience to more recent ideas of multiple or segmented audiences and explore the qualitative versus quantitative views of audience in circulation. As well as analysing each of the models and its impact on the channels that are produced, I will also be looking at the ways in which these models coexist for public service broadcaster such as the BBC¹.

The next section deals with how the perceptions of audience by the staff of a broadcasting organisation inform the eventual output in terms of programmes and channels and why this is important both to channel identity and to the BBC's public service role. This is followed in section 8.3 by an examination of the evidence of different models of audience underpinning the broadcasters' perceptions: the audience-as-public, the audience-as-market and the audience-as-commodity. How these emerge as part of channel production and how each is used in the context of public service broadcasting is central to this section. Section 8.4 addresses quantitative concepts of audience and how these occur for a public service broadcaster. Tracing the introduction of segmentation and the development of qualitative conceptualisations of audience at the BBC illustrates the importance of perceptions of audience in shaping broadcast product and how all of these types of conceptualisation of audience work in relation to each of the BBC's public service channels forms the basis of the section 8.5. Finally I reflect on some of the implications of the move towards conceiving of audiences in segmented, channel-

based terms, characterised according to these qualitative and quantitative considerations. Before moving on to the substance of the chapter it is also worth noting what this chapter is *not* attempting to do. It is not an extensive history of audience research at the BBC (see instead Silvey, 1974; Ang, 1991; Lury, 1993) nor is it trying to address 'the social world of actual audiences' (Ang 1991:13). It is purely engaged with looking at the ways in which broadcasters perceive audiences, their relationship with them and the implications of this for the broadcast product and delivery of public service broadcasting. In many respects, this chapter tries to find the BBC's answers in the late 1990s and early 2000s to the questions articulated by Frith as the dilemma for BBC production staff in the early days of broadcasting:

They had daily to answer the questions that other intellectuals avoided.... Who were 'the people'? What did it mean to 'please' the public. If market measures (listening figures, advertising revenue, profits) were rejected, how could success ... be defined? (1988:78)

8.2 The industry, the organisation, the staff and ideas of audience

Chapter 2 examined some ideas about the creation of subject positions within programmes as a result of television's direct address to its audience. If an entire channel is created with unified assumptions about its target audience and consists of programming similarly inscribed with common subject positions, it follows that a channel could also be instrumental in constructing audiences. In the course of this chapter I will argue that one effect of the development of channels with distinct identities and target audiences is that it is no longer relevant to consider subject positions *only* in relation to specific programmes, but that channels have a role in constructing audiences (or subjects or readers) across a range of programming. This enables the development of a high degree of consistency in the construction of defined audiences within a broadcasting system. In a multichannel system, this is also potentially highly disruptive to the concept of a mass or universal audience, a point to which I will return later. For the rest of this section I shall be concentrating on how organisational responses to developments in the industry become incorporated via the broadcasting organisation into broadcasters' and producers' mental models and from there into channels and programmes.

The proliferation of channels in the 1990s (see chapter 4) created competition which was bound to destabilise the broadcasters' attitude to their audience. Kilborn

and Izod remark that prior to this, it was assumed that 'media audiences were locked into an intense unquestioning relationship with broadcasting institutions' and go on to argue that this was subject to a major reassessment in the 1980s and 1990s (1997:227). Blumler, studying the effects of similar changes in the structure of the media in the USA, noted that one of the outcomes of the arrival of multiple channel systems was to disrupt any comfort that had been established in the minds of broadcasters about audiences and their behaviour. He discovered that significant levels of anxiety had emerged in the new competitive environment and that broadcasters displayed a heightened uncertainty about audiences (1996:102). The perceived threat to the broadcasters was transmitted into commissioning and production behaviour via the introduction of talk about the audience as 'capricious' or 'elusive'. It also encouraged, for example, programming strategies that continually tried to engage the viewer, with 'a payoff every ten to 12 minutes' (Network Executive quoted in Blumler, 1996:106).

The effects of the new broadcasting environment were equally evident at the BBC in the late 1990s. Audiences were similarly seen as unpredictable and uncontrollable:

It has been an extraordinary and eventful year in Broadcasting and... not just a learning curve, more like a big dipper ride and it's not going to stop. New technology, aggressive competition, and promiscuous audiences will see to that (BBC 'Broadcast '99' speech, 27.5.1999)

Comparable strategies also emerged in programme development:

Straight to the point and keep the reveals going, all the way through the hour or the half an hour, that's what, revelation, drama, denouement, zest, high octane (Interviewee L).

One of the BBC's responses to increasing anxiety about audience promiscuity and the threat of competition was to reorganise and the audience research function was reshaped a number of times during the research period. As part of the creation of the new BBC Broadcast directorate in 1997, audience research activities for all the main channels and services were brought together as part of the Strategy & Channel Management department. This centre of expertise in matters relating to the audience was charged with satisfying the appetite for the *understanding* of audience needs that was constantly on the tongues of BBC Broadcast executives (my italics):

Understanding audiences better to serve their needs more closely is a clear priority for BBC Broadcast.... 'Central to the creation of Broadcast is improving our *understanding* of the BBC's audiences everywhere – and our staff throughout the UK have an absolutely critical role to play in carrying forward that relationship' (*Ariel*, 26.03.1997).

In fact the key to the whole of our response to political change - is to reach a new level of *understanding* and empathy with our audiences (BBC 'Broadcast '99' speech, 27.05.1999)

If we have a real *understanding* of the audience we can then feed that into the creators of the product (Interviewee G).

A series of workshops about 'the audience' were set up with the intention that all staff in BBC Broadcast should have an annual briefing on the subject, although this did not survive the first year. Nonetheless, the intense search for understanding was indicative of the anxiety and insecurity about audiences that had entered the entire media industry and from which the BBC was not immune.

Despite audience research being combined into a single department, each of the channels had a dedicated audience analyst who formed part of the channel team, ensuring that the commissioners and schedulers had access to the information available and could initiate the additional specific pieces of research that they believed they needed. In the reorganisation in 2000, the audience research function moved from Strategy & Channel Management into Marketing & Communications where it was once again reorganised and stronger ties were put in place to a single departmental head with the intention of facilitating better information-sharing across the organisation. This move into the marketing function was entirely consistent with the development of the newer types of audience research and the changing emphasis on models of audience that emerged during the late 1990s discussed later in this chapter.

To understand how these organisational changes shaped the ideas of broadcasters and producers, the relationship between the different types of participants involved in conceptualising and constructing audiences across the BBC needs to be understood. The way in which images of audience were developed within the organisation could be described, according to Hagen's categorisation, as a 'double-loop' learning system (1999: 133) in that information was generated both inside the organisation and brought in from external sources. Internally, audience research specialists, strategists, commissioners and schedulers, namely the

broadcasting functions, were professionally responsible for gathering audience information and applying it to the creation of the channels and services. It was through the audience research function that the contract with the external agency BARB was managed, and there were other external sources of data such as the Henley Centre. Although producers were to some extent beholden to keep themselves abreast of audience information, the broadcasting functions were supposed to ensure that programme producers were not only aware of the target audiences for the scheduled slot for which their programme was destined, but also of any other significant qualitative or quantitative audience information that might be relevant. However, it was generally acknowledged that producers were rarely privy to the same level of information as the broadcasters, and this was an ongoing issue for all parties. However, my research does not suggest that the relationship between broadcasters and producers in relation to audience research was as destructive as that which Born presents from her research in BBC production. She observes that audience research 'functioned partly as a disciplinary tool by which strategists and commissioners could chastise producers for failing to meet what were described as audience wants' (2000: 415). This supposes that a better quality of relationship might have resulted in an unproblematic view of audiences. In reality, as the rest of this chapter illustrates, conceptions of audiences were so varied that any idea of simple consensus would never have been the case. A number of different and sometimes conflicting mental models of the audience coexisted and circulated amongst both broadcasters and producers, informing commissioning and production practices². Despite this, during the research period some shifts in emphasis were clearly discernible.

In examining how broadcasters' and producers' ideas about audiences informed their product, one mental model to which I will return is the idea of the 'imaginary interlocutor'. This is an internalised 'other' with whom the individual 'converses' (Tracey, 1978:119). Tracey's conclusion, having interviewed BBC and ITV staff involved in the production of political television in the late 1970s was that the idea of the imaginary interlocutor does not stand up to examination, and that audience research in general received limited attention amongst this group. He determined that the absence of more specific impressions of the audience tends to emphasise the 'inner world of the programme setting rather than the linkage with the audience' (1997:135). Ytreberg argues that this attitude is typical of a paternalist broadcaster such as the BBC during its Reithian phase (2002b: 761). An internal focus was still very much in evidence during my research, with one production

informant telling me in no uncertain terms that the audience she was most concerned with was the Head of Department and the Channel Controllers. The concentration on the views of colleagues and bosses is a feature of the 'professional' broadcaster or producer, where systems of internal referral have been established and the professional is deemed to be able to professionally judge or represent themselves what is appropriate for audiences (Lury, 1993; Hagen, 1999).

Alongside the emphasis on an internal BBC 'audience', it was striking to see how very frequently people personally known to the broadcasters or producers were invoked as representatives of the wider audience, including during formal meetings:

It's interesting to talk to kids. I often try with mine, very unscientific...
Would you watch this programme? They say, I would. And you think
Wow, they represent children in a multitude of homes (Interviewee L).

His mother, a typical BBC viewer, had admired the coverage but had been uncertain about what the BBC was trying to do. (BBC meeting minutes, Jan 2000)

He said his children, of secondary age, found it fascinating. He agreed that it was a good family hit. (BBC meeting minutes, June 1999)

Her ten year-old boy watched soccer on Sky 2. Football was "it" for small boys and was missing from both shows. (BBC meeting minutes, Feb 1999)

My sister in fact, who's had analogue satellite for ten years, has watched Sky News for ten years, has just moved to a digital satellite and she's absolutely no reason on earth why she should bother to find News 24 (Interviewee S).

Other sources of such knowledge included direct feedback through letters or comments in the duty log³, but these were cited with considerable less frequency. So it seems that along with colleagues, family members, as part of the 'known' audience, were a significant point of reference for broadcasters. It is possible that these known figures to some extent took the role of the 'imaginary interlocutor' as well as sometimes being actual interlocutors in considerations of how to commission or produce appropriate programming for 'the audience'.

8.3 Conceptual models of the audience

Although known individuals might be seen to represent the audience in some circumstances, they do not provide a shared mental model for broadcasters and producers in thinking about the mass audience or audiences in their totality. In this section, I look at how the conceptual models of the audience discussed in chapter 2 manifested themselves as part of the BBC's strategy in relation to its channels, services and programmes and what the use of these models in different circumstances tells us about the way that public service television developed in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The discussion of how these models occur is not at this point channel specific, but sets the scene for later consideration of how different attitudes to audience are apparent across channels.

8.3.1 *The audience as public*

In its early days, the BBC talked about and addressed its audiences as members of a public and citizens of the nation⁴. As outlined in chapter 2, this was evident from the metaphors with which the BBC has described itself. The audience-as-public not only focused the BBC on its role as educator and informer as well as entertainer, but also cast the audience as licence-fee-payers as well as listeners or viewers. As a public service broadcaster, one might expect it still to be the case at the BBC that the audience was talked about extensively as the public, perhaps to the exclusion of other models of audience. In fact, although talking about the audience as public was frequent, it tended to occur in particular contexts.

The first of the circumstances that encouraged a clear identification of audience-as-public involved just about any public speech from a BBC executive. Public speaking situates the speaker him- or herself in the public forum and opens the BBC for scrutiny in that regard. The BBC in public was first and foremost a public service with a 'public' audience. In fact, this was the case to the extent that the BBC's audience ceased to be referred to as the audience but became 'everyone' or 'the body politic':

And it's about the belief that everyone should be empowered to take part in the great national discussion about our future, armed with facts and judgements which they know come, not from some marketing machine, but from an impartial source they can really trust (Mark Thompson, speech at Banff, 12.06.2000)

If you believe that providing an educated mind for the body politic is central to the functioning of a healthy democracy, there can be no doubt that *Newsround* plays an important part in shaping the expectations of children about the world around them. If you will forgive me turning into a sloganeer for a second I would say, no licence-fee, no *Newsround* universality (David Docherty, Warwick Debate speech, 13.04.1999)

Another context in which the audience was cast firmly in its role as public was when issues of accountability were being considered. Responding to government pressures for public service entities to be more accountable to their users (see Born, 2000: 415), the BBC started many initiatives in the late 1990s to communicate its value and responsiveness to licence-fee-payers. In such communications, audiences were licence-fee payers first and foremost and there was a heavy emphasis on the BBC's provision of services to equip individuals with skills for citizenship whilst engaged with the BBC as audiences:

Across television and radio we will continue to offer you:

- entertainment - from drama and comedy to key sporting events
- information - from a comprehensive news service to independent consumer advice
- the opportunity to learn - whether you're a child or adult, teacher or parent
- programmes that reflect the diverse political and cultural life of people across the UK
- broadcasting that brings people together to share common experiences and moments of national celebration - and services that you turn to in times of crisis. (BBC Statement of Promises 1999-2000)

However, it was not only moments when the BBC was addressing the outside world that it spoke of its audience in terms of the discourse of the public. Those speaking on behalf of the BBC slipped into the audience-as-public and especially as licence-fee-payer as soon as the BBC's existence was in any way questioned, when speaking to themselves as well as to external bodies⁵. The first line of defence, perhaps understandably, was to position the BBC in relation to its mandate to serve the public. Explicit examples of this include:

For all of our audience groups... we need to continue to provide the most distinctive, high quality and innovative programmes. We know that this is critical in delivering true value for their licence fee (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000-2001)

It's imperative that BBC1 and 2 get as broad an audience for their programmes as possible otherwise you can't justify the licence fee if audiences went down and down and down (Interviewee Y).

Even more prevalent in characterising the audience as public was the tendency to talk about audience *needs*. This is set against alternative models of thinking which would involve audience *wants* or *desires* (my italics):

Our task is extremely clear - it is to make the very best programmes, innovate with our programme making and scheduling and fulfil the aspirations and *needs* of our entire audience (BBC2 Commissioning Guide, 2000 –2001)

We will find new ways to listen and respond to feedback ensuring that all of our commissioning, programme making, scheduling and marketing meets and connects with the varying *needs* of today's UK audiences (BBC 'Broadcast '99' speech, 27.05.1999)

The use of the term 'needs' relates to the idea of the BBC providing the tools for citizenship as opposed to pandering to the potentially more frivolous audiences fancies. Audience 'needs' are entirely in accordance with the Reithian discourse of public service broadcasting whether or not there is a clear distinction in practice between needs and wants.

Another way in which the public service discourse continued was in the metaphorical representation of the BBC as a mirror of society with a duty to reflect its audiences and their lives back to themselves:

The genre includes some of the BBC's most loved programmes, those which mirror the contemporary social world in all its manifestations (BBC Commissioning Guide, 2001-2)

Explicit in a number of these types of statement was the requirement to reflect the audience in their incarnation as a public in national terms:

I believe the responsibility for reflecting the UK in all its many forms has gradually shifted from ITV to the BBC over the years. It will be a central plank of the BBC's purpose in the years ahead. (Greg Dyke, MacTaggart Lecture, 25.08.2000)

We need to reflect the richness of life and culture across the UK in other ways too, finding more space on our networks for the best talents from every corner of the land (BBC 'Broadcast '99' speech, 27.05.1999)

This concern with the audience-as-public-as-nation was strongly linked to the BBC's obligation to serve a universal audience, one of its founding public service principles. As discussed in chapter 2, the notion of universality has been used to mean both that there should be universality of access and also that the BBC should provide something of appeal to everyone with its programming:

Free to air channels which accept broad public service obligations... must be enabled to meet the primary obligation of reaching a universal audience (BBC strategy paper, July 2000).

If we want a universally available public broadcaster that upholds independent news and current affairs, is a patron to the arts, is an educator to the young, and supports creative drama, comedy and entertainment then we have to decide what is the most equitable, simple, cost-effective and accountable way of delivering such universality (David Docherty, Warwick Debate speech, 13.04.1999)

Our duty to licence fee payers, you know, 'something for you and something for everyone'. That's how we deliver 'value to you' (Interviewee H).

The notion of a universal audience that is not only entitled to access to the service but also to programmes that are relevant to them is at the root of the traditional mixed-genre mass channel which shows a variety of genres with the intention of broad appeal (see chapter 5); the traditional universal, mixed-genre channel essentially addresses an audience-as-public.

8.3.2 *The audience as market*

The definition I am using of the model of the audience-as-market is one in which the audience is identified and addressed as the direct customer or consumer of the television product. In the audience-as-market model the most common aim is to maximise the viewing audience rather than to educate or inform. This model is distinct from the audience-as-commodity model, based on the idea of selling audiences to advertisers, and rather is engaged in selling (in the broadest sense) the television product itself to the audience. This distinction is particularly important in terms of a public service broadcaster where the two different models manifest themselves differently in relation to the public service ideal.

I referred in the previous chapter to the adoption of some of the language of the market within the BBC during the research period. This was one of the most pronounced ways in which the audience-as-market model identified itself:

BUT, even as the market is mushrooming, CONSUMPTION of news is falling -- down by 20% over the last 10 years. So, how do we maintain our market leadership in this world of greater choice and competition? (BBC, 1998)

BBC consumers are a bit more like that, but to be honest it's not we own that bit of the market and you own that bit of the market, it's huge overlap (Interviewee G).

As well as explicit references to the marketplace, it is noticeable that audiences were sometimes also referred to as 'consumers':

One thing is looking at this purely from a consumer point of view but we can't ignore the opinion formers because the opinion formers are actually our paymaster in this situation and that's a little bit unique for us as a market (Interviewee G).

I suppose the ... main elements that went into looking at the portfolio were looking at consumer need, what we think people wanted from their linear broadcasting (Interviewee M).

However, these explicit references to audiences as consumers generally took place when dealing with marketing orientated activities, often by marketing staff. There

was a tendency also to temper market-language statements with a nod to public service concerns:

Yet, as the market place becomes ever-more crowded, we must have your most surprising and innovative ideas if we are to continue to delight and serve all our audiences (BBC Commissioning Guide, 2001-2)

But in the same way that discussing audience *needs* situated audiences as public, the talk of audience *wants* and *desires* placed them in the audience-as-market model. This occurred considerably more frequently than the references to audiences as consumers:

I think we are particularly focused on channel need and audience desires, we're very audience focused, we do a lot of audience research and we know what the audience like (Interviewee F).

I'll read the document when it comes out and I'll read what audiences might think of stars ...you know, it's interesting, and why they like something (Interviewee L).

In other words, rather than using the schedule to approximate the likely audience to a slot, we will be in a position to use brands to direct people to the content they are most likely to want. (BBC internal communication, Sept 1999)

Another way in which the audience was characterised as part of the broadcast market can be found in discussion of ratings. Although there was a lot of rhetoric about the BBC not having to chase large audiences, there was a significant amount of evidence to the contrary. I will be discussing this further in the next section, but here will note that there were plenty of cases where it was clear that the volume of the audience could be an overriding factor in the success or otherwise of a programme or strategy:

BBC2 needs all of that because it's still in that ratings market (Interviewee L).

And it is important to look at and understand as far as you can what the competition are doing and where your opportunities are, because

if you don't do that you're going to lose out. And fairly small changes can make a reasonably big difference to your share (Interviewee D).

By and large success is measured in terms of ratings. You know, there's critical acclaim, there's BAFTA's, you know, but by and large it's about ratings (Interviewee F).

Finally, the audience-as-market in the model also includes concerns about the actual sales of programmes. As a market model, the BBC would judge its success within the model mainly by how many viewers watched a programme. However, another way that the market intruded on the BBC, even as a public service broadcaster, was in the sales of programmes to other broadcasters or in raising co-production finance. These factors meant that additional audiences were taken into account during commissioning:

Specialist factual is a completely different economy. Because of the external investment... [it] is a completely different business model Critical to specialist factual's output is that a large proportion of it is co-produced by the Discovery channels as part of a joint venture (Interviewee F).

In the specialist factual genre, approximately 60% of programming relied on co-production finance. Co-production funding for programming brought with it a concern with international audiences (see Light, 1994) at odds with the national perspective encouraged by the audience-as-public model as well as emphasising the audience-as-market model.

8.3.2 *The audience as commodity*

The final model of audience to discuss in this section is that of the audience-as-commodity. This is a model common within a broadcasting industry that includes funding through advertising and involves the conceptualisation of audiences as a commodity that the broadcaster can sell to advertisers to secure their income. For the BBC as a public service broadcaster the audience-as-commodity model was not one which occurred frequently in the talk of the organisation. The exception to this was in connection with its commercial activities. For UKTV or BBC World, for example, the audience-as-commodity model was certainly evident:

I mean obviously advertisers want to reach a big audience and therefore... you put out a programme that's going to get big audiences, it's going to get a larger quantity of advertising revenue (Interviewee P).

But then you can go for very small target audience, I mean at Play [UK] we're trying to kind of do a shift at a moment with just purely 16-34 year old men.... Because that market is extremely valuable in terms of advertising revenue. It is the most lucrative market.... Well, it's cars, soft drinks, crisps, beer, you know, alcohol, jeans, records, movies...so it's very lucrative (Interviewee K).

What was clear from this second example was that the practice of segmentation of the audience, the delineation of a very specific section of the audience in relation to their consumer habits, was an activity that was central to the audience-as-commodity model. The segmentation of television audiences allows advertisers to select those which are most valuable to them, to prize certain audiences above others because of their spending power or buying habits. Market segmentation is born from consumer culture (Pachauri, 2002; Solomon, 2002) and audience segmentation is born from the audience-as-commodity (Jhally, 1990). Although this model was not much in evidence for the BBC's public service channels, the segmentation and characterisation of audiences that sprang from this model had a big impact on the BBC's output, something discussed in a later section of this chapter.

So, having examined the way in which the organisation talks about its audience, it might appear that the dominant model of audience in circulation at the BBC was still that of the audience as public. This was particularly the case when the organisation spoke in public or when called upon to defend itself from attack in relation to its role within the broadcasting industry. However, in accordance with the development of the branding and marketing culture traced in the last chapter, there were notable occasions when audiences became consumers of the television product. And in addition, the BBC's commercial channels treated audiences as a commodity to be sold to advertisers. The impact of the audience-as-market and audience-as-commodity models should not be underestimated.

8.4 Audiences as numbers

The conceptual models of audience discussed in the last section position audiences in terms of their role in society and economy. Another dimension of the conceptualisation of audiences is in quantitative versus qualitative terms. This section examines the ways in which audiences are expressed as numbers. Numerical audience measurements and ratings inform many everyday discussions as part of the commissioning, scheduling and marketing processes for the television service. This section does not describe the history or technology of audience measurement, but instead examines how this type of audience information is used as part of decision-making processes about public television service at the BBC. It explores how different audience measurements interact with the different models already discussed and looks at some of the implications of considering audiences in terms of numbers and percentages.

It is already clear from the discussion in the previous section that ratings were considered to be a central measure of the success of a television channel or service. However, for a public service broadcaster there was also a certain ambivalence about whether or not this should be the case:

I think we've always been really ashamed and embarrassed by ratings and I think now we can't afford to be, we have to say, you know, we want people to watch our programmes (Interviewee L).

Now, of course, the BBC..., they will tell you they're not in the ratings game, they publicly say that constantly, but of course they are. We're all in the ratings game, that's all that it's about (Interviewee K).

By and large success is measured in terms of ratings (Interviewee F)

At the heart of this ambivalence was the fact, discussed earlier, that ratings, as an indicator of the number of people who watched a programme or channel, were primarily an expression of the audience-as-market model. The numbers watching a programme suggest what the audience wanted (as opposed to what they needed) to watch and measure the audiences' consumption of television. This is uncomfortable for an organisation that owes its existence to the audience-as-public model. Despite this discomfort, ratings were at the heart of many broadcasting decisions in a number of forms. Provided by BARB, the 'overnights' (provisional figures) were avidly consumed by both broadcasting and production staff alike the morning after the

scheduled broadcast. The weekly audience report was discussed at Programme Review Board meetings where many comments about the week's programming concerned the viewing figures.

There has been a significant amount of commentary by television studies theorists about the purpose and validity of the ratings produced and consumed by the broadcasting industry and the fact that the system works because it is based on confidence and consensus between broadcasters, producers and advertisers (see, for example, Ang, 1991; Morley, 1990; Meehan, 1990). It became clear to broadcasters during the research period that with the advent of the digital television and the growth in multichannel homes, the samples used by BARB were not adequate to provide them with meaningful figures for the new digital channels. It was therefore agreed that BARB would revise its sample the better to reflect the new viewing possibilities, and apart from a significant hitch in getting the new system up and running in January 2002, the new figures were accepted and incorporated into the commissioning and scheduling processes. However, this experience added to the anxiety about audiences and to pressure on existing models.

As well as the overall audience numbers for a programme, figures for reach and share were routinely reported and discussed. BARB reports, presented by channel as well as by programme, show trend data for reach and share, both of which are viewed as measures of success for a channel, and both of which have the capacity to capture the audience-as-public elements of audience as well as the sheer market model. Indeed, share is used across Europe to measure the success or otherwise of public service channels (Pickard, 2002). However, with share in particular, an ambivalence between the models of audience implied was evident, as can be seen from the opposing underlying sentiments illustrated here:

The Licence Fee is paid by every household which owns a TV set - for this system to be sustainable the BBC needs to retain its presence and significance in people's lives so that it offers something of value to everyone who pays for it. The BBC must not only maintain a healthy share of our licence payers' viewing and listening, but also achieve broader public service purposes through our programmes and services (BBC, 1998)

The BBC's purpose is not to chase audience share, but to provide a diverse range of programmes and services which satisfy all our

audiences in ways that the market alone will not (BBC internal communication, Aug 1999).

Reach, whilst being referred to less than the overall ratings or the share, has a clear link with the BBC's public service obligation of universality, particularly in terms of providing something for everyone. High magnitude reach for the combined channels and services suggests that the BBC is achieving this goal. The value of this measurement when looking at individual channels, however, is more complicated. High reach for a channel is a measure of success only if that channel's strategy is that of a traditional mixed-genre public service channel aiming to reach a mass audience. Channels with more tightly defined target audiences could not be expected to maximise their reach regardless of their intended constituency, setting up another potential conflict for those BBC channels with a more delineated target audience such as BBC3 or BBC4. However, in the course of my research, the channel where the conflict between audience figures and channel mission was most apparent was for BBC2, which during this period was attempting to redefine its remit as a mainstream channel rather than a minority channel:

In terms of ... BBC2...actually ratings is quite far down the list.... But the reason we've been doing well is not because we sat back and thought Right how can we maximise the numbers, you know, that would be disaster to do that, it would never work if you did that. What we said is OK, what rings true for the channel, what is the channel and what rings true for it? (Interviewee B).

BBC2 used to be our niche channel and now in a multichannel world where we're going to have a portfolio of channels, BBC2 we now regard as another mainstream channel... and we're looking for a minimum of 3 million viewers to each of its programmes, whereas 3 million viewers would have been a huge, huge, huge phenomenal success for BBC2, now that is the target on average (Interviewee M).

This conflict was exacerbated but not created by the transition into the new channel remit.

Conflicts between the market and public models of audience which pervade the use of these audience measurements set the terms of one of the ongoing debates that surround the BBC. This involves the oppositional placing of 'quality' in programming, based on traditional public service model, against 'popularity', based

on success in market terms. The result is the question of whether there has been a 'dumbing down' of British broadcasting in general and the BBC's output in particular. The discourse of ratings leads to a perceived privileging of the market model and, because of the BBC's attempts to secure higher ratings, the hypothesis has been developed by observers wedded to the public model of audience that programmes that are designed to be popular are, by definition, not going to satisfy the objectives of public service television. This debate is something I will return to in the last chapter of this thesis, but it arises here because this conceptualisation of the audience as numbers works to support the notion of the audience as the undifferentiated mass invoked by these two models. The use of figures and percentages to represent audiences not only creates a veneer of the scientific, but also masks any information that might differentiate or individualise sections of the audience. Although some demographic categorisations are used, the results are still expressed in numerical terms and the demographic descriptions tend to be sparse and alphanumerical, such as 'ABC1' or 'C2DE'. This depersonalises and homogenises the data, and the presentation of this type of information through technological displays such as 'peaktime'⁶ encourages the idea that audiences are some kind of inanimate force rather than a collection of human, socialised individuals. This is entirely consistent with the concern with audience 'flow' discussed in chapter 6 in relation to scheduling practice and enables the ratings to be appropriated as part of the internal concerns of the organisation rather than as in any way representative of external influences:

Part of the problem with the BBC is we tend to focus on ourselves and our universe quite a lot, how are we doing on television; how are we doing in peak; how is this programme doing, and we don't turn it round and say, forget about that and let's look at the audience and let's understand what they need (Interviewee D).

One of the interesting developments in audience research in the late 1990s was the introduction of initiatives which attempted to counteract the impersonalising force of the audience data that had held sway for the majority of the life of the television service. Segmentation of the audience was central to these developments.

8.5 Visualising a segmented audience

The models of audience discussed so far have had in common the fact that they are all compatible with the idea of the audience as a single mass. However, with the proliferation of channels and services, the segmentation of the broadcast audience became more and more common from the late 1980s onwards, and by the late 1990s was also evident at the BBC. This was apparent in several audience research and marketing initiatives, the most notable of which was known as the '100 Tribes', which will be discussed in some detail later in this section. Such experiments in complex segmentation brought with them new ways to visualise television's audiences.

Segmentation developed in the 1960s and 1970s as a way of viewing a heterogeneous market as a number of smaller homogenous markets. As a way of trying to reach different specific markets within the mass market, it has become a well-recognised and prevalent marketing practice (see Jhally, 1990). Although segmentation most commonly works on economic divisions, markets may also be delineated according to geographic, socio-economic, usage, psychological or personality dimensions, with the latter examples being introduced more recently (for a detailed history of the development of consumer research and segmentation see Pachauri, 2002).

Initially, segmentation of the audience for the purposes of the broadcasting industry was done according to demographic dimensions. BARB audience information, still a crucially important source of data, is reported by age, employment status and geographical region with the resulting information presented in a highly statistical fashion. Definitions of the categories do not provide much information on which to base any visualisation of the audience. Take the BARB definition of housewife, for example, which we can contrast with descriptions of similar groups discussed later:

The housewife is the member of the household who is solely or mainly responsible for the household duties.

- a) There is one and only one housewife in a household
- b) A housewife may be male or female
- c) If two persons of a different sex share the household duties the woman is regarded as the housewife

- d) If two of the same sex have equal claims to be the housewife, the elder is taken as the housewife
- e) A man is the housewife in an all male household

(BARB, 2000)

The BARB demographic segmentation informed other practices. For example, for the purposes of media planning, 'TVRs' (television ratings) were used to target different types of viewers with trails and promotions. These similarly presented audiences in a highly numerical fashion. An exception to this highly statistical view of audiences that had existed for a considerable period was the assumption that viewing took place in a family unit, something noted by a number of commentators (see Ellis, 1982; Morley 1990; Paterson 1993). Scheduling assumptions such as the watershed support this (see chapter 6). However, the nature of 'the family' was never made very explicit. There was little interrogation as to how far families conformed to the 'average' nuclear family or any portrayal of how families interacted or differed across the country or social or economic groupings.

In the mid 1990s the statistical view of audiences began to be supplemented by other types of audience research and information. This was related to the development of consumer research in the wider market. Psychographic research, a form of consumer lifestyle research, became widespread during the 1990s, supported by the increase in computing power available to collect, store and analyse data. This type of research separated consumers into categories based on choices in consumption and product usage and was considered to provide some answers not only to *what* consumers consumed, available from demographic information, but also to *why* they consumed it (Pachauri, 2002: 328; Mackay: 1997: 5). Data generated by psychographic research focused on lifestyle and habits and tended to be presented descriptively as much as statistically. On occasion, this even extended to the creation of pictorial 'portraits' of the different consumer segments (Maxwell, 2000: 153). These developments were concurrent with the adoption of branding and marketing within the broadcasting industry and it was logical that this type of research would also be taken up.

The use of segmentation in the broadcast industry belonged, in principle, to the model of audience-as-commodity. As Jhally observes, 'in broadcasting in particular... this concern with segments of the audience led in the direction of narrowcasting and specification, in which the commercial media tried to match the *market* segment of the manufacturers with the *audience* segment that they could

deliver' (1990: 126). He goes on to demonstrate how MTV became the prime example of a television channel developed especially to deliver a specific audience segment to advertisers, in this case the hard-to-capture young men to whom the advertisers were interested in selling. One reason that MTV was perceived to have been so successful in this endeavour was that its research into its target audience not only examined the demographic profile, but also researched the target audience's lifestyle extensively and 'a whole consciousness of living' (1990: 127).

The BBC began to develop its own approach to psychographic audience research immediately following the split of broadcasting and production functions in 1997. At the time of the reorganisation, it was already clear that a different kind of conceptualisation of audiences was on its way:

For Michael Jackson, Director of Television, the task is to look at viewers and listeners 'almost as individuals'. 'We have to think about audiences, plural. It's not just one mass any more. The big idea is not to think of a series of channels, but to think of the audiences, and how best we can use our different services to address them.' (*Ariel*, 26.03.1997)

As part of this new way of looking at audiences, the mass audience was fragmenting into multiple audiences. Although the BBC did not tend to conceptualise its audience as a commodity audience, in the audience research initiatives that followed, the conceptualisation of audience was drawn from practices associated with that model. From here onward, I will refer to this hybrid model of audience, drawn from the commodity audience model but without the expectation of 'selling' audiences to advertisers, as the lifestyle and consumption model of audience.

The '100 Tribes' was the unofficial name used within the BBC for the project 'The Many Faces of Britain' which attempted to encourage the reconceptualisation of audiences 'almost as individuals'. The unofficial term for the project betrayed an almost anthropological approach to audiences, an attitude that perhaps was deemed unsuitable for public consumption, given the different tone of the official and rarely used alternative title. In reality the Tribes project did not identify as many as 100 audiences but nonetheless segmented audiences on a number of complex lifestyle dimensions to arrive at three different categories, within each of which there were a number of segments. These categories were lifestages, passions and communities, all of which were thought to be defining factors for audiences in relation to their media consumption. Individuals could belong to several tribes simultaneously, so, for

example, a 'Better Off Young Mum' (a lifestage tribe) might also be part of the 'Looking Good' (passion) tribe and also be a 'Northerner'.

People are complicated and belong, of course, to more than one (and often many) of these groups at every stage in their life. And within groups each person has completely individual desires, preferences, motivations, issues that they are passionate about and so on (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000-2001).

There was also some sense of biographical progress from one tribe to another through life events.

As well as the sheer complexity of the endeavour – the full list of segments ran to several pages - it was clear even from the names of the segments that the 100 Tribes was a move away from the audience as numbers:

We need to stop thinking about statistics and think about people. The more we understand, the better we will serve.... We want a language that is relevant to our role as a media company funded by a licence fee... in other words we don't want the classification focused entirely on economically derived demographics such as ABC1/C2DE (BBC internal communication, July 1998)

Consequently, the strategy, marketing and audience research staff at the heart of the project made considerable efforts to communicate the personalities of each of the major tribes to all the commissioning and production staff, through presentations and documents outlining the habits, characteristics and consumption patterns of each of the tribes. Although these still contained a lot of statistics, this was supplemented by much more descriptive information. Taking the example of 'Young Mums':

Mums with young children are united through their interests in education, family activities, childcare and health scares, but have quite distinct preferences for where they buy their clothes, their attitudes to the workplace or the books, magazines and media they enjoy (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000-2001).

Returning to our young mums example. How are they feeling at 8.30pm after 14 hours of childcare (or, for half of all young mums, an equally exhausting combination of both childcare and work) when their children are, at last, asleep? Because their free time is so precious

(an average of less than 2 hours exclusively for themselves a day), the programmes have to be especially relevant to their needs, otherwise they will not hesitate to switch off. They have told us they want 'shared viewing' and 'enjoyment' at this part of their tough day. But, from the BBC they expect these programmes to be fresh, witty, intriguing and delightful. These mothers also expect from the BBC a commitment to learning and high quality and trustworthy story-telling and journalism. (BBC2 Commissioning Guide, 2000 –2001).

This description was accompanied by a video, featuring a selection of 'typical' young mums talking about their lives and media consumption habits and preferences. This approach contrasts enormously with the example of the BARB definition of the housewife cited earlier.

As well as providing a more descriptive approach to audiences, allowing broadcasting and production staff to feel that they might understand their needs and desires better than from the cold hard statistics, the fragmentation of the audience from a mass to a series of segments enabled the BBC to develop a much more specific strategy about how it was serving its (multiple) audience(s). An explicit analysis of usage and appreciation amongst the different audience segments made it possible to assess which audiences seemed to be well catered for by the BBC versus those who, despite paying their licence fees, appeared to find the BBC's products unappealing or irrelevant. Figure 8.1 illustrates how the tribes were set in the context of programme spend versus usage, giving a sense of how some segments might be perceived as 'overserved' as opposed to others who appeared to be 'underserved' by the BBC. The conclusion of this type of analysis was that:

Marketing and/or programming spend and effort 'received' by certain tribes [is] not always rewarded by significant share and perception (BBC internal communication, Sept 1998).

The intention was consciously to develop programmes and services for those segments for whom the BBC did not seem to be providing value for their licence fee investment. Groups that were perceived as particularly underserved as a result of the Tribes analysis were younger audiences, young families and 'the disenfranchised'⁷, as well as some ethnic groups and geographical zones. The aim was to increase appreciation from these groups without alienating those who had a high appreciation of the BBC:

Four Clusters Of Tribes

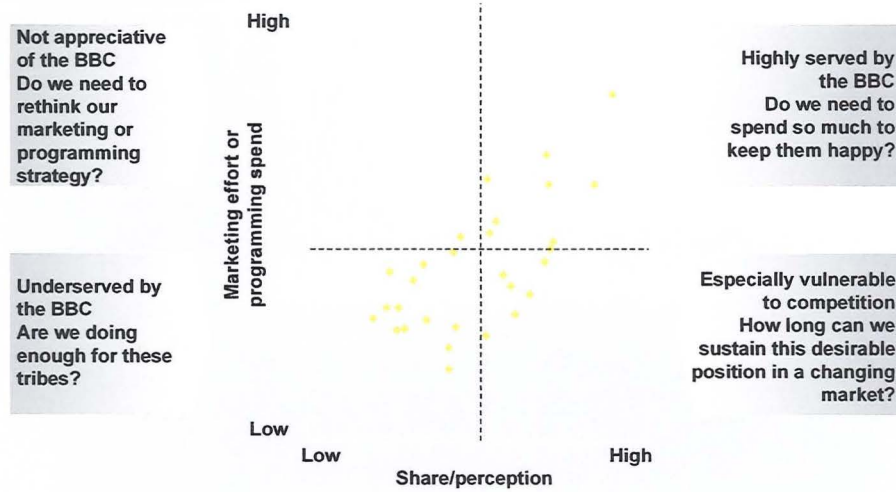


Figure 8.1: Four clusters of 'Tribes' (BBC internal communication, Sept 1998)

In addition to ensuring that we retain the allegiance and trust of our most loyal audience groups by continuing to serve them in ways which they appreciate, we are especially keen to reach out both to the audience of tomorrow - young families - and to those on the lowest incomes in the UK (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000-2001).

It was this strategy that formed one of the foundations for the portfolio approach to the BBC television channels launched in 2000, albeit that by that time, the language of the 100 Tribes had pretty much been abandoned. The complexity of the research categorisation proved to be indigestible for many broadcasters and producers.

The Tribes work that the BBC did ... was by and large discredited or labelled 'too difficult' (Interviewee N).

The Tribes...was quite helpful in focusing the management's minds on where the opportunities and threats were... if you just treat that as one big project to understand the audience it was quite a good thing. Where it went wrong was it then became a systematic thing that

everyone was supposed to incorporate into their thinking and didn't work particularly effectively (Interviewee D).

I think it really did attack crude demographics and made us think about our audiences in a much more sophisticated way. So I was happy to be stimulated by it, but it was very hard to put lots of what it stood for into practice on a channel as broad as BBC1 (Interviewee R).

Essentially, this segmentation was drawn from the audience-as-commodity model and those who were more comfortable with the complex segmentation that was introduced as the 100 Tribes tended to be those who were most accustomed to consumer branding and marketing practice. The segmentation designated audiences as consumers in the sense that they were identified as users and consumers of a range of media products (not only television programmes and channels, but radio stations, internet, games, newspapers and magazines) and their common purchasing habits were noted. The visualisation of audiences as consumers was a natural extension of the development of media products as brands as discussed in chapter 7, creating a consistent approach within the discourse of branding.

Despite the fact that the 100 Tribes did not embed itself into the thinking of the organisation, a legacy remained in the way that commissioners, schedulers and producers thought about audiences. This was not just that they thought more about audiences *per se*, with target audiences incorporated into commissioning briefs, but also that the audiences they visualised were conceptualised not only in terms of their sheer volume and percentage, but also in a much more personalised way, representing different kinds of consumers of media product. The Tribes project was also the root of much of the common concern within the BBC about underserved audiences and the need to provide for them in order to meet the BBC's obligation for universal provision and to secure the organisation's long term future:

Where Tribes worked was it was a great tool for saying, all right, we're the BBC, we have an obligation to be universal, how effectively are we...? What are the audience groups that really feel quite disenfranchised from the BBC? (Interviewee D).

The 100 Tribes project was not replaced by another audience research initiative of such a formal nature. However, a simpler 'attitudinal' approach to

audiences appeared briefly in 2000-1 and also left a legacy. In this model, the BBC's audience could be loosely broken down into three groups. These were the 'heartland' audience, the 'mainstream' and the 'young'. This segmentation was intended to pick up on generational differences in attitudes to morality, politics and society as well as to leisure and viewing television:

What I'm actually trying to do is to find the attitudinal extremes which will either switch people off or switch people on to content, because what's obvious is about making content (Interviewee G).

As well as being far simpler than the idea of the Tribes, the segmentation into heartland, mainstream and the young picked up on language already within use in the organisation and therefore was used more intuitively. The heartland tended to be the 'pre-war generation'. This segment covered audiences perceived to value the BBC, consuming a lot of its output and tending to fall into the older, whiter, more middle class and southern profiles, holding a relatively traditional morality. The mainstream was more liberal and permissive and consisted of baby-boomers, included many young families, and was consumers of a fair volume of BBC product. The young, which included not only those considered young in demographic terms but also those who were 'attitudinally young', were the 'e-generation', post-Thatcher, technologically literate and accustomed to AIDS, divorce and the breakdown of the nuclear family. This last group included many of the underserved identified as part of the 100 Tribes and were seen as the audience of the future:

The people brought up in the Thatcher age are the biggest challenge of all whether you're a politician, the Chief Executive of Marks and Spencer or a television executive. For these are the children of the multichannel age, they are used to choice and love it – whether it's shopping, music or television and they are certainly not deferential to Britain's traditional institutions like the BBC. This generation doesn't complain if they don't like our schedules they simply turn over.

"Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells" is disappearing and being replaced by "Not bothered of Newcastle". (Greg Dyke, MacTaggart Lecture 25.08.2000)

Segmentation thus moved the BBC from a dominant model of the audience as a single mass, often conceived as a statistical construct, a flow of numbers without any lifestyle characteristics. It naturalised the idea of multiple audiences and made it

possible to visualise these as having personality, character and a certain lifestyle. With the lifestyle and consumption model, profiles and representations of audience segments with their associated lifestyles and consumption habits were available to take the place of an 'imagined interlocutor'. Indeed, individual representatives of these groupings were used as actual interlocutors in the form of focus groups for audience research. Lury considers this practice as a means of including a 'virtual' audience in the programmes themselves (1993:89), another way in which the inscription of audiences into channel output took place.

Segmentation also functioned within the audience-as-public model. The concept of multiple audiences allowed the organisation to identify how it was delivering its obligation in relation to universal provision in terms of targeting its channels and programmes. Through this, it revealed that its programming tended to over-cater for certain segments of the UK:

They tend to be southern, white, middle class, middle-aged and well educated. Strangely enough, they are ... the type of people who consume a disproportionate amount of the BBC's services - people who get more out of the licence fee than they put into it. (Gavyn Davies, Westminster Media Forum, 12.03.2002)⁸

Through segmenting the audience, the BBC positioned itself to try to reach those who did not fall into that group, perhaps providing services also for the 'Asian teenager on the streets of Leicester' (ibid.). Thus the objective changed from 'something for everyone' to 'something for you and something for everyone':

You know, 'something for you and something for everyone'. That's how we deliver 'value to you'. If we have the right range and quality across the portfolio and people have things for themselves and see also things for others then that is good value. And ultimately that is defence of the licence fee (Interviewee H).

8.6 Audiences for channels

By 2000, armed with the audience information discussed above, the BBC's channel strategy had been developed to serve the variety of audiences that the organisation perceived to exist within the universal audience. As discussed in chapter 5, the resulting channel portfolio was designed to address a range of concerns, including the transition to digital broadcasting and limited budgets, but

which nonetheless centred on how the BBC served its audiences. Here, I will examine how the different models of audience played out in relation to the channel propositions that resulted from the new channel strategy and the impact of this on the identity of those channels.

8.6.1 BBC1 & BBC2 – the traditional channels

BBC1 was very much identified as the BBC's public service television channel. Indeed, in many respects BBC1 was the only television channel in the traditional public service sense, intended to appeal to a universal audience and thereby bring the nation together and reflect the audience in its entirety. These examples are amongst numerous references to BBC1 in its capacity to reach the broadest audiences:

I mean the whole universality thing it's all BBC1, everything else is niched (Interviewee E).

What we're saying is... BBC1 will retain its remit of being all inclusive (Interviewee M).

BBC1 is intended to be a blockbuster channel, it's a channel based around programmes, *EastEnders*, *Holby*, *The Royle Family*, *10 O'Clock News*, which are by their nature designed to appeal to lots of different kinds of people (Interviewee N).

From this point of view, this channel was clearly one which was intended to address an audience-as-public. It was also one in which the metaphor focused on reflecting the nation most commonly occurred, for example:

Those on the lowest incomes are feeling increasingly disenfranchised from mainstream society and BBC ONE is perfectly positioned to embrace them with both broad appeal, popular entertainment, and inclusive factual programme-making reflecting 'real life' (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000-2001).

And I suppose I wanted [BBC1] to feel like it reflected their world and that they saw themselves in the channel and their lives and their values of the channel, and it captured most of the biggest moments of their lives (Interviewee R).

However, it is interesting that BBC1 was also positioned as the BBC's premier entertainment channel. In terms of its public service remit, entertainment was the area where the BBC was most often called upon to justify itself, as entertainment was not seen by many competitors and some regulators as a justifiable aim for a public service broadcaster.

If you say our remit is to inform, educate, entertain, then BBC1 will have a mix of those three on there, it's quite important it has all those three on, but it's predominantly about entertainment, it's 80% entertain, 20% educate, inform (Interviewee G).

BBC1 basically is the mainstream populist channel (Interviewee L).

Entertainment is much more likely to revolve around what people *want* to watch rather than what they *need*, making BBC1 subject to the demands of the audience-as-market. It was with BBC1 of all the channels that the ratings were under most scrutiny. The intention to create broad appeal and the concern with ratings meant that BBC1 was probably least affected by moves to visualise audiences as segmented and characterised by lifestyle or consumption habits. The 100 Tribes, for example, was most problematic for BBC1:

It fragmented the audience so much, it approached the audience as a kind of hundred fragments really. And I think in more niche services you could avail yourself of that information more easily and do something useful with it.... What happened with BBC1 was that we had 100 tribe targets which were basically the whole 100 tribes (Interviewee R).

So, as an isolated channel, BBC1 retained pretty much exactly the dilemmas of the public service broadcaster from the previous era. However, it was the only channel for which this was true.

BBC2 was positioned as part of the new channel strategy as a channel in transition. Instead of being conceptualised as a minority channel for minority audiences, BBC2 was becoming a 'mainstream' channel. And until BBC3 and BBC4 were available to a more substantial proportion of licence-fee payers, BBC2 would continue to cater for the audiences that the new channels would be targeting as well as serving a specific, albeit broad, audience segment of its own:

Mainstream, that means you're going to have a demographic attached to that. For us that's about 35+. How that differs is that in the old days, the heartland of BBC2 was definitely 45+, very male as well. So in fact actually what we've done is this fairly sort of crucial...we've extended our core audience, rather than sort of replacing it because of course we're still going to want those people (Interviewee B).

So BBC2 will be in transition for a while but nevertheless it's really coming together as an intelligent channel for 35-55 year olds (Interviewee M).

So short term whilst digital is not total audience we need to make sure that 2 is almost sort of covering our bottom, a bit of 4, a bit of 3 and a bit of what 2 is (Interviewee G).

The word mainstream was ambiguous in that it could denote a sense of a mass audience or mean the middle generation in terms of the broad attitudinal segmentation. However, discussion about BBC2 tended not to be framed within the discourse of audience as public, undermining the idea of the mainstream meaning the mass public audience. When this did occur it tended to be in one of two contexts, and the first was in relation to BBC2's concentration on factual programming in contrast to BBC1's entertainment remit:

BBC2 is about those three [inform, educate, entertain], but predominantly about inform and educate supported with a little bit of entertain (Interviewee H).

The second context was that BBC2, despite its core target audience, still retained a residual role to cater to and reflect a broad range of different audiences.

Our aim is, as it always has been, to provide something of value to all licence fee payers and in order to do this equitably there are some groups whose needs we have a particular requirement to address (BBC2 Commissioning Guide, 2000-2001)

However, unlike BBC1, the programmes were not necessarily designed to appeal to the broadest range of viewers simultaneously. BBC2's audience was segmented and served at different times across the schedule and this would continue whilst it catered for the analogue as well as digital viewer⁹:

BBC2 at the moment is aimed at everybody but at different times so it will meet you with your specialism... Or it will schedule things for teenagers because they know they're available between 6 and 7, so it'll be the *Startrek* cult thing. So it's a mixture of what you're interested in and when you're available (Interviewee M).

BBC2's audience strategy is to reach different groups at different times by appealing to their specific interests and tastes. So, for example, late night entertainment is particularly for the young while the history zone is for those interested in this genre no matter what their demographic profile (BBC Commissioning Guide, 2001-2002)

The fact that different audiences were catered for at different times on BBC2 meant that the issue of ratings was less clear cut and talk was even sometimes contradictory. Although there were ratings targets, they were lower and, arguably, less of a defining factor of success:

BBC2 is about intelligent pleasure, leisure and we're looking for a minimum of 3 million viewers to each of its programmes, whereas 3 million viewers would have been a huge, huge, huge phenomenal success for BBC2, now that is the target on average (Interviewee M).

You know, the bottom line is that on BBC2 they don't need to attract the same audience, you know, they're not looking for the same numbers, the same share which makes a huge difference to what you're doing (Interviewee F).

The lesser concern with ratings on BBC2 than on BBC1 was indicative of the comparative weakness of the market model in relation to that channel.

So, BBC2 was essentially catering for a variety of niche audiences at different times of the day, with a longer term focus on a core group of 35-55 year olds, with the models of audience-as-public or the audience-as-market less clearly dominant than with BBC1. BBC2's niche audiences, however, were much more susceptible to characterisation according to the lifestyle segmentation or consumption model. For example, BBC2's core target audience was not only defined by age but also came across as an upmarket group with aspirations:

BBC TWO has always been a home for some of Britain's most talented programme-makers. It's one of the few places in a crowded

television world where audiences positively want to be stretched by experiences they've never had before. (BBC2 Commissioning Guide, 2000-2001)

It is where individuality has a home and where viewers feel their own particular passions are recognised. (BBC2 Commissioning Guide, 2000-2001)

BBC2 we're moving into a channel which is centred around a slightly more upmarket and quality offering.... and increasingly the kind of comedy that would appeal to people who buy into the history and the science..... upmarket and older in a way that, you know, slighter older people are more likely to be attracted to gardening programmes, to history programmes, to *Newsnight* and so one and that's always been true of BBC2 (Interviewee M).

I mean BBC2 also has a lot of brand qualities they like, it's a little more upmarket, it's got an aspirational kind of dimension to it as a channel. (Interviewee R).

...if you ever wanted to make an analogy with print media, [BBC]2 would now play confidently the territory of a *Daily Mail* or a *Marie Claire*, or maybe the more popular end of the broadsheets... 2 has a centre of gravity, confidently over 35s channel but then, courtesy of the Young [Programme Strategy Review], providing us over 35s who look, feel and act incredibly younger than our caricature of them (Interviewee T).

As illustrated by this last example, the audience for BBC2 could be seen as having similar attributes to the audiences/readers of other media products, ones where the audience was actually a commodity audience. So, for BBC2, the audience was conceptualised in a very different way from that of BBC1, being more affected by the new ways of visualising consumers drawn from the commercial world.

8.6.2 *Developing the digital portfolio - BBC Knowledge/4, BBC Choice/3 and BBC News 24*

Both BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge went through a number of incarnations during the research period. As the history of both the channels is discussed in greater detail in chapter 9, here I will restrict myself to some observations about the models of audience apparent towards the end of the research period. At this time each of the channels was in the transition towards becoming part of the digital portfolio, a transition completed much sooner for BBC4 than BBC3.

By the time that BBC Knowledge was entering its transition towards BBC4, its target audience had settled broadly as older viewers with a taste for factual programming. This was to some extent the attitudinal 'heartland' audience:

We decided to focus on Passions. We wanted to get away from the 'worthy' launch, but to appeal to the 35-55 year-old 'heartland'. If you present them with the right material they will come into digital. We need to remember the Marks and Spencer example of what happens if you take your heartland for granted (BBC internal communication speech, Feb 2000)

Perhaps because this was the same audience to which BBC2 was staking a claim, it was decided that as BBC Knowledge transformed itself into BBC4, it would move even further into the 'heartland' terrain. BBC4 would be the channel to provide the kind of programming that was indisputably public service and that many observers of the BBC considered to be its mission first and foremost:

[BBC]4 is really about the area of BBC strength. Quite frankly if the BBC were not producing high brow, intellectual, specialist factual arts, science, history, documentary output, if the BBC didn't do it, where are you going to get it? I mean if public service broadcasting is not about that then what is it about? ...it supports arts, you know, it's a cultural patronage I suppose, and it's where a lot of our heartland already audience interest lies (Interviewee M).

It was interesting that in debates about the later incarnation of BBC Knowledge and about BBC4, the audience itself was referred to considerably less than with the other channels, with the genre and the intellectually edifying nature of the programming being the dominant topic. This is recognisable as a public service mode of operation,

placing the audience as the public. However, there was also evidence of the lifestyle and consumption oriented segmented model of audience:

BBC4 will play in with the more kind of highbrow broadsheets or the weekly magazines, sort of, *New Statesman*, whatever (Interviewee T).

More than 800,000 people visited the Monet exhibition at the Royal Academy last summer and on just one Saturday this year more people visited Tate Modern than fill Wembley Stadium for an international football match... We know there's a potential audience, the challenge is to attract it to the channel (Greg Dyke, MacTaggart Lecture 25.08.2000)

What was more or less absent was any sense of the audience as market and there was a distinct lack of interest in ratings:

We get BARB data for BBC Knowledge, but so few people watch it that there really is no point in looking at the data, it can tell you nothing. But partly because BBC Knowledge is effectively an experimental channel anyway and it's targeting a very precise audience... we almost don't need to research it (Interviewee D).

BBC News 24 was, on the surface, in a similar position to BBC Knowledge/4, being a channel with a defined genre and a role in the portfolio that had clear links with the public service remit to inform the public. As was the case for BBC Knowledge, this obligation had a tendency to encourage those defining target audiences to aim for an older, more intellectual segment:

But there is an argument, and I'm very mixed in my own view about it, there is an argument in which you could say that News 24 should go for the high ground as well, the bit like you know you can never be too thin, you can never be too highbrow in order to show how public service you are (Interviewee S).

Both News 24 and BBC4, with their public service emphasis, highlighted the way in which public service provision tended to be considered a preoccupation of the more intellectual, older and upmarket sections of the audience. However for News 24 there was a much greater awareness of the market in terms of direct competition from Sky News and CNN. Audiences tended to be set much more clearly between

the public and market models with considerably less evidence of the lifestyle and consumption conceptualisation.

BBC Choice was probably the channel for which the possibilities of constructing lifestyle and consumption profile was most developed. Shortly before transforming into BBC3 it was clearly targeted at a young audience, especially the 25 to 34 age group, but more generally at the 'attitudinally young segment', recognised to reach to at least 44 and probably older. With this target audience, BBC Choice was clearly addressing an 'underserved' audience identified through audience segmentation:

BBC3 is essentially an entertainment channel ... it appeals to its own heartland which is younger, a place where you can do youth hip things.... What's quite interesting about Choice is that isn't niche (Interviewee L).

We said if we're to have the slightest chance of opening up a digital service that reaches young viewers, let it be Choice, Choice was a fluid brand and it was the opportunity there to position that with a... decisively young identity (Interviewee T).

[BBC Choice] will continue to have themed weeks. These will probably be about once a month on topics underserved by the other channels. For example we had Gay Weekend for the Millennium weekend and Asian Fun Weekend timed to coincide with Mega Mela (BBC internal communication speech, Feb 2000)

Although the channel clearly had a public service mission, the audience for BBC Choice was already some distance from being visualised as a mass, public audience. And although BBC Choice was not presented as niche channel but in some respects as a 'mini-BBC1', this was not clear from discussions of its audiences, their characteristics and lifestyle. A profile was drawn up of attitudes considered typical of the BBC Choice audience:

We're trying to appeal to the audience who have got to the stage where:

- They'll tell the electrician that s/he has done a bad job
- Sex is a bonus

- They are beginning to read again - Nick Hornby or Bridget Jones

(BBC internal communication speech, Feb 2000)

The profile included attitudes to work, leisure and aspirations, some of which were expressed in terms of consumption habits:

- Boots 3 for 2's still excite you when you care nothing for brand loyalty (unless its McLean's Whitening)
- You fly BA twice a year max, booked months in advance, and even though the rest of your flights are in economy with scaldy RyanAir or Virgin Express you think you are a High Maintenance Traveller

(BBC working document, 2000)

This knowledge of the audience was taken with a pinch of salt but nonetheless informed the programming strategy:

A lot of it's kind of marketing bull, but as part of that you'd say 'what type of floors are they buying?' 'if it were a cow, what cow would it be?' For me, 25-34 year olds or 16-34 year olds are going through a period of social instability, they're questioning their sexuality, their jobs, they're having to face parental divorce in a way that penetrates the demographic so much more than it penetrated 16-34 year olds previously. And they're worrying about everything That has a direct effect on what they want to see for entertainment. Sometimes they'll want to see entertainment that reassures them, so that's quiz shows with questions that are slightly too easy. Or ironic bookings where they think 'actually I get what you're trying to do, I get the joke'. This audience react to that in a knee-jerk way by becoming obsessive about what they can control.... So it might be in terms of weight or it might in terms of knowing in detail about celebrities, or it might be actually being obsessive about record collections or something (Interviewee V).

This conceptualisation of an audience is a long way from the traditional impersonal representations common in the audience-as-public and audience-as-market model

prior to the development of consumer culture within the media industry. Having said that, the market model of audience was still present, although in the same conflicted way as for BBC2:

What is public service about Entertainment on CHOICE? Relative immunity to ratings in commissioning and re-commissioning (BBC internal communication, Feb 2000)

In nine months we've doubled the share and reach, which is just unheard of and has been on the same budget (Interviewee V).

The proposals for BBC3 were not initially approved by the Secretary of State on the basis that the channel was not clearly differentiated enough as a public service channel, but were ultimately approved on resubmission. It is possible that a relative absence of the familiar audience-as-public model from the discourse surrounding the channel was a contributing factor.

8.6.3 *The children's channels – CBeebies and CBBC*

It is worth outlining briefly how the audience was conceptualised in relation to the new digital children's channels which were born out of the CBBC zone on the BBC's terrestrial channels and both of which had tightly defined target audiences based on age. CBeebies was aimed at pre-school children up to about five years old, whilst CBBC was targeted at the 6 to 13 year-old age group.

The provision of a distinct service for children has been seen as a 'defining marker of the public service principle' (Buckingham et al, 1999:45). This focus on the public service role of children's television might be expected to lead to a particular emphasis on the audience-as-public role of the child audience, and some evidence of this was present. With the launch of the two channels it was frequently stressed that the content was UK produced and free from advertising. This was even more upfront than the educative or stimulating nature of the programming:

These [channels] would offer a distinctive and high quality alternative to commercial children's television with a strong UK identity and free from advertising. The pre-school channel would seek to stimulate children to learn through play. The channel for older children would provide an outlet for their passions, opinions and creativity and carry

innovative, enthralling and interactive new drama, entertainment and factual programmes. (BBC external communication, Oct 2000)

Even children can get fed up of an endless diet of American cult humour and teen soaps (Interviewee M).

These considerations indeed cast children in the role of mini-citizens to be protected and nurtured for the nation, and were entirely consistent with the audience-as-public model. However, the market model was also very prevalent:

Competition for children's time is now fierce. The proliferation of specialist children's television channels means that children are now faced with a much greater choice and mix of TV programming. As a result, terrestrial viewing among children has been affected more than any other audience (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000-2001)

We lose half our share amongst children as soon as multichannel hits their house. So multichannel arrives in their home and we lose half their viewing straightaway, just like that, overnight, because of the fantastic choice they've got (Interviewee M).

Equally, there was significant evidence that the lifestyle and consumption characterisation had taken hold for these channels. Arguably, a more characterised and well-rounded knowledge of the child audience has existed for some time through the requirement to understand their educational needs (Buckingham et al, 1999). However, the representations of children evident in the late 1990s and early 2000s did not appear to be particularly driven by educational concerns, as illustrated by this extract:

Children, just like grown-ups, are complicated. Age and gender are the most (but not exclusively) differentiating factors:

0-4 YEAR OLDS Playing, having treats and surprises, going to parties and being with their immediate family are the central activities for this group of 2.8 million children....

4-6 YEAR OLDS The differences between girls and boys are now starting to become even more obvious. For boys, the things of most importance are their Playstation, TV, dinosaurs, football, school, their bike and toys. With their limited attention spans, they are looking for

instant gratification, action and excitement.... For girls, central to their lives are the latest girl band, TV, pets, school, jewellery, shoes and clothes, reading and the radio (for pop music). Already they are alert to other people's needs and operate as a group.... (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000-2001)

So, for the children's channels, all three of the main models of audience were abundantly evident.

To sum up, it is clear that all the channels demonstrated the conceptualisation of the audience across the range of different models discussed in the previous sections of this chapter to a greater or lesser extent¹⁰. The audience-as-public can be seen in connection with all the channels, as one might expect for a public service broadcaster. The audience-as-market model is also present for each of the channels, as one might expect in a media industry which was becoming more and more competitive. Both these models tend to homogenise audiences either into a mass of citizens requiring universal provision of programming or as numbers and ratings.

The main development in the conceptualisation of audiences, however, was in relation to the emergence of a model of audience based on lifestyle and consumption habits. This was consistent with the permeation of the organisation by consumer and brand culture, and the only channel where this model was not readily apparent was BBC1 which was preserved as a traditional public service channel serving a mass audience. With all the other channels, especially BBC Choice/3, BBC Knowledge/4 and, somewhat more surprisingly, BBC2, there was considerable evidence that this model was informing the channel commissioning strategy and practice. This model of audience, drawn from the idea of the commodity audience, had an impetus opposing the previous two models in that it tended to give the impression that audiences could be characterised as individuals. On this basis, target audiences for each of the channels bar BBC1 might be viewed as having distinct characteristics, lifestyles and consumption habits. The balance of each of the models for each of the channels also contributed to each channel's unique identity.

8.7 Some implications of a new approach to audiences

From the discussion of models of audiences and how these relate to the different channels it is clear that the development of consumer culture in the media industry had an impact on how audiences were conceptualised in the BBC. Although these developments were gradual and the older models of audience were still very evident, this section starts to address some of the ramifications of the new model for the BBC's public television service.

The models of audience ingrained in the minds of the broadcasters and producers illustrated during this chapter are likely to have an influence on the programmes commissioned and produced. On close analysis, the assumptions that inform the commissioners' and producers' idea of the audience may surface in the programmes by way of a favoured subject position or implied reader. A move from homogenising models of audience to individualising models is likely to affect this and in an environment where channels have increasing importance, the representations of audience inscribed into the broadcast product will not be limited to individual programmes. Previous chapters have demonstrated that channels operate in an environment of intertextuality, whereby the schedule works to connect and unify the programmes shown on the channel, operating through sharing meanings across content. The ultimate logic of this position is that a 'regime of representation' (Hall, 1997:232) may be created by a channel and that in this way an audience can be constructed with relative consistency by the agglomeration of the content of a channel. How far the channel constructed a consistent audience would obviously depend on a number of factors such as how widespread or deeply imbedded was a particular audience profile in the minds of the commissioners and producers, and whether one model dominated over others. However, taking the example of BBC Choice where the lifestyle and consumption model of audience was most evident and the target audience profile most specific, it might be reasonable to expect that the audience implied in the programmes would share characteristics with the profile constructed by the broadcasters to inform their commissioning practice. This inscription of the audience profile could even become exaggerated by a strange circular practice of visualising the audience profile as characters from a television programme (albeit one shown on another channel)¹¹:

Think of the audience as the characters in "Cold Feet" (BBC Commissioning Guide, 2001–2002)

The individualising tendency of the lifestyle and consumption model of audience has further implications. All the models of audience discussed in this chapter tend to situate the audience as an 'other', but this is probably most striking in the case of the lifestyle model. Hartley observes that imagining the audience as 'individuals with identities, experiences, motivations or personalities' can lead to the ultimate 'othering' of the audience (1992: 97). When it does take account of its audiences rather than of the internal workings of the organisation, the BBC has sometimes positioned them as objects of an almost anthropological interest and this is not without risk. The shift from unquestioned assumptions about the characteristics of a single audience to one informed by extensive research of 'others' can create in broadcasters' and producers' minds a number of relatively simplistic audience 'types' representing the different audience groups. These 'types' are memorable, easily grasped characterisations in which a few traits are foregrounded. Maxwell observes that psychographic and lifestyle research displays tendencies to naturalise how we move from statistical averages to visualising a real entity in a similar way to composite portraiture. He notes that political and ideological concerns can become inscribed in images constructed with the purpose of highlighting difference between groups (2000). The hazard of the individualising models of audience, then, is that through the search for understanding of the differences between the groups that previously were considered as a homogenous mass, the 'types' in circulation within the institution degenerate into 'stereotypes' where everything about those audiences is reduced to a few characteristics which are simplified and exaggerated (see Hall, 1997; Dyer 1977). For a public service broadcaster that aims to reflect an accurate picture of the society in which it operates, this is not desirable. However, it is worth remembering that without the level of research and differentiation of audience groups brought into the institution by the lifestyle model of the audience, the unfettered assumptions of the broadcasters and producers would have free reign. Given the ongoing power of the known audiences of relatives and friends to influence their ideas of audiences, it might be fair to assume that a largely white, middle class and London-based BBC staff would anyway be vulnerable to stereotyping or ignoring the needs and desires of other audiences. It was an anxiety to counteract this that underpinned attempts by the BBC to employ a more diverse workforce and, of course, was one of the reasons for adopting a more sophisticated and segmented research methodology in the first place. Curran points out also that public service broadcasting at its best is less likely to stereotype and demonise as it is less subordinate to market dictates (1998:194).

8.8 Conclusions

During the late 1990s and early 2000s the pressures and developments in the media industries identified in previous chapters have also made themselves felt in relation to the way that the BBC and its staff perceive their audiences. The public service notion of audiences as citizens had already been disrupted at an earlier date by the market model of audience. During the period in question, however, a lifestyle and consumption model of audience became discernible, a conceptualisation which showed clear links to the commodity model of audience and was more consistent with the marketing and branding culture that had begun to permeate the BBC. This model not only worked in relation to a fragmented rather than single mass audience, but also had a distinct tendency to characterise the audience and individualise them within a descriptive as well as statistical framework.

As the three models of audience existed in a different balance for each of the BBC's public service channels, the way that audiences were perceived for each channel, as well as the target audience itself, contributed to the channel identity. BBC1 remained in its essence the only completely traditional public service channel, in that it catered for a mass audience and focused on those programmes that could unite the national audience. This is not to say that the other channels did not fulfil a public service role, but it did indicate that it was becoming necessary to conceive of channels doing this differently to the classic mixed-genre channel with the universal target audience. These other channels, instead, began to be in a position to construct and represent images of audiences based on profiles created by broadcasters from audience research. These channels could therefore 'reflect' elements of society in a way not possible with the older models of channel. The questions raised by this for public service broadcasting are picked up in the conclusion of this thesis.

Notes

¹ Similar conditions have been observed in relation to Scandinavian broadcasters (see Ytreberg, 2002a) but whether the outcomes would be comparable to those at the BBC is debatable

² I use the term 'mental model' in the sense described by Van Dijk (1998: 79) meaning, in this context, the interface between the socially shared representations of audience at the BBC and the personal practices of the individual.

³ The duty log captures comments and complaints from viewers telephoning the BBC.

⁴ For definitions of the conceptualisation of the audience-as-public, -as-market and -as commodity see chapter 2.

⁵ It was in the nature of the interview process that responses to my questions (as an outsider in this context) would be couched in the language of public service. However, there were plenty of other examples as well.

⁶ 'Peaktime' was a display technology introduced in 2000 which showed graphically the flow of audiences from one programme to another superimposed onto the replay of the programmes themselves.

⁷ This term was used to indicate a level of social exclusion.

⁸ This speech caused a stir amongst opinion-formers and the press, perhaps caused by the use of a framework based on multiple audiences to those committed to the more established concept of a mass audience.

⁹ Ytreberg (2002a) notes that this strategy is often used at the cost of high ratings as it tends to disrupt inheritance effects

¹⁰ The prevalence of each model was not assessed through strict quantitative analysis and therefore I only offer a general sense of the dominance of a model in relation to each channel.

¹¹ Very occasionally producers extended this blurring of the 'fictional' and the 'real' in relation to the characters of a programme by creating 'lifestyle experiences' for audiences through interactions (generally online) between characters and audience members (see Brooker and Jermyn, 2003: 322-4)

Chapter 9: Developing identities for BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge

9.1 Overview

This chapter traces the development of BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge from their launch through their transition into BBC3 and BBC4 as part of the BBC public service television portfolio. It tells the story of the development of their identities as channels and illustrates how the developments in commissioning and scheduling, marketing and branding and the attitudes to audiences discussed in previous chapters have contributed to the creation of these channels' identities.

Both BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge went through a process of evolution during their transformations into BBC3 and BBC4. The transition for BBC Knowledge took place in two years, whereas the journey for BBC Choice took nearly twice that time. Both went through at least two incarnations under their original name, entering a third as part of the television portfolio. Certain themes common to both channels emerge, some of which would be applicable to any television channel, whether public service or not. These include the continuing refinement of the channel proposition and the changing relationship between the channel and the genres commissioned and shown on it. Factors such as the impact of programming budget on the channel identity fall into this category, as does the fit of the channels with the overall brand values for the broadcaster and the complementarity with other channels managed by the same broadcaster. However, there are a number of considerations that are particular to the public service environment. One of the most notable is the shift from the position of all channels catering for the 'universal' audience. Another is the impact of governmental regulation upon BBC3's identity.

By tracing the development of the two channels, this chapter illustrates how the different factors contributing to a channel's identity work together. Through this process it becomes clear that channels play an increasingly important role in organising broadcast output and confirms how they have become distinct cultural products in their own right.

9.2 BBC Choice to BBC3

BBC Choice launched in September 1998. It was the first BBC channel to be launched specifically as a digital channel¹. The story of BBC Choice is that of a channel which started with little clarity about its identity or purpose and foundered somewhat as a result. However, it is also the story of a channel which then evolved a distinct identity designed to rejuvenate both the BBC brand and its audience, an identity which not only drove content, scheduling and marketing, but which had also been created and refined under close regulatory scrutiny. Because of this, BBC Choice provides an excellent case study as to how channel identity can develop and operate for public service television.

In the mid 1990s, when the possibility of a new digital channel emerged there was considerable excitement amongst BBC executives at the idea of creating the first general public service channel since BBC2 had launched in 1964. The opportunity arose as the result of technological development, the availability of a 'spare' channel on the digital platforms:

Digital means the end of scarcity. For decades we only had two television channels. We're now moving into a world where there's a near infinite number of channels that can be delivered to consumers²
(John Birt quoted in *Ariel*, 22.09.1998)

What was not clear was which of these 'infinite channels' BBC Choice would be. The channel was not driven by a perceived gap in the BBC's service, nor from an identified audience need or desire but instead was seen primarily as a technological opportunity, and Alan Yentob was quoted in *Ariel* (22.09.1998) saying 'First and foremost it will be a pioneer, the R&D for a new era in telecommunications'. The brief for the channel, its purpose and proposition was vague; the BBC wanted to launch a new digital channel, but the role that this channel would play and who the audience might be was less clear.

Obviously we had to claim the ground, [but] nobody was really sure what the gap in the market was, what should a public service be delivering in a digital environment (Interviewee C).

Are we designing a channel for a market.....or finding a market to fit our channel? (BBC working document, July 1997))

A fundamental concern at this point was that the potential audience for a digital-only service would be limited to those who had the appropriate means of reception. This initially suggested one of two groups:

- “People like us” - journalists & peers who have their digital equipment paid for by employers
- Early adopters - Young C1/C2; male driven

(BBC working document, July 1997)

However, these ideas gave way to the longer-term question of what the audience for a new public service channel should be. The acceptable answer at that time was that BBC Choice should be a channel serving the universal audience:

BBC Choice is a new kind of TV channel celebrating the best of BBC television. It doesn't serve one niche audience – it serves the whole audience in its full diversity. And there's something for everyone on BBC Choice (Katharine Everett quoted in *Ariel*, 22.09.1998)

The only concession to audience segmentation was to recognise that most of the audience who could receive the channel were likely to be in the younger age group.

By the time of its launch, the channel proposition had been fleshed out to an extent and had been approved by regulators. In keeping with its role as a technological pioneer, BBC Choice would be interactive as far as possible, encouraging viewer participation. Also, to take advantage of the technology, different versions of the channel would be made available in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. After 10pm each evening, the nations would have their own programming. Whilst giving the channel a strong sense of focus on the different British nations, this undermined any unified sense of a single channel identity.

Most of all, however, BBC Choice was conceived as a complementary channel to BBC1 and BBC2. This meant that it would offer programming that somehow extended or added to those shown on BBC1 or BBC2. Programmes from the main channels were repeated to give another chance to view, for example, by showing *EastEnders* later in the evening. ‘Behind the scenes’ programming was commissioned about major BBC1 and BBC2 series. Archive material was scheduled where it was relevant to what was appearing on the main channels. BBC Choice was known as a ‘side channel’ rather than thought of as a channel in its own right.

This was compounded by two factors. Firstly, a block of children's programming was broadcast during daytime hours, a CBBC 'loop' that was not related to the evening schedule. This raised the question of what constituted a 'channel' with one working paper asking 'are we a proper channel without daytime hours' (July, 1997). Secondly, the channel was being commissioned on a very low budget for the number of hours of transmission. The traditional public service channels commissioned a high proportion of original material and BBC Choice followed suit, so money was spread very thinly with low cost programming³.

In the commissioning guide that appearing following its launch, BBC Choice was described in the following way:

BBC Choice is the BBC's first free-to-air general public service digital channel. Its long-term aim is to serve all licence payers. In the short-term, however, CHOICE must focus on being alert and responsive to the early digital audience, who will mostly be under 45. The objectives for the channel are to:

- support and enhance programmes on BBC ONE & TWO and radio services.
- offer all digital viewers a greater return for their licence fee

(BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000–2001)

In comparison with other BBC channels, this brief was extraordinarily nebulous. The lack of focus in its purpose and target audience was identified as a problem almost immediately after its launch:

It didn't have a focus demographic, a target demographic; it was just a general channel. Second thing was... that the key thing about any channel is you've got to have a strong channel attitude (Interviewee V).

We knew before we launched it wasn't going to work.... [It] got confused in the initial thing, driven by the universality principle, i.e. in digital we've got to do something everybody will want. Driven by that principle we made a mess of it because ... it was more channels and less focus (Interviewee E).

Choice... you're not entirely sure what its *raison d'être* is (Interviewee S).

BBC Choice suffered from too diffuse an identity. It had no defining target audience, no defining genre, little purpose and the technological possibilities that were supposed to be part of its distinct offering had not advanced far enough to be successful. In other words it had little to recommend it. After less than a year of existence and insufficient audience data to inform the judgement, it was agreed that the strategy for BBC Choice should be completely revised.

A second incarnation of BBC Choice was developed and from the outset it was clear that this new BBC Choice would have a distinct channel identity:

The channel has to feel distinctive and not only among digital channels, but also among BBC channels (Interviewee V).

The intention to relaunch BBC Choice coincided with the outcome of the programme strategy review that had been examining the BBC's provision (or lack of it) for young audiences. The shaping of the channel seemed to be a good opportunity to put some of the results of this into practice and BBC Choice therefore became a channel decisively targeted at a young or attitudinally young audience (see chapter 8), with commissioning strategy to match. It was agreed that BBC Choice would continue to be mixed-genre, but with a heavy emphasis on entertainment. Its youth focus would drive the channel attitude. This extract from the BBC Commissioning Guide in 2000 can be contrasted with the earlier extract about the original BBC Choice:

BBC CHOICE is the BBC's digital entertainment Channel. It will be the home for left-field, well-made, innovative entertainment. It is aimed at 25-44 year olds, though think of the audience as the characters in "Cold Feet" - people who feel 10 years younger than their body. All shows on BBC CHOICE have to feel inventive, unusual, refreshing. They should also be suited to the digital environment in which BBC CHOICE competes, either in terms of a much faster pace, in terms of a far more compelling story... or in terms of the creative riskiness factor. The Channel aims to do one of two things, and every pitch should try to fit into one of these schools of thought. Either:

1. Big People in New Landscapes. Massive stars doing odd things you wouldn't expect them to do, or,
 2. New People in Big Landscapes. Risking big projects on new talent
- (BBC Commissioning Guide 2001-2)

BBC Choice had moved away from being a mixed-genre channel aimed at the universal audience and in the process had created for itself a much clearer identity. It now had a channel attitude from which the tone and style of the programming to be commissioned was much more apparent. This paved the way for the channel to be a fully developed brand with coherence across programme content. BBC Choice was marketed as 'Refreshing TV' in recognition not only of its intended place in the television marketplace but also its role in relation to the main BBC brand:

We were saying Choice should position itself as the brand rejuvenator, the kind of space where you do something different And that there is something about the institutional nature of the BBC, the way the brand is perceived, the way this generation consumes culture and media, which runs counter to all the kind of complacent instincts of the corporation and we need to be much bolder about re-inventing ourselves to reach them (Interviewee T).

Another development for BBC Choice was to rectify problems associated with the low-budget programming commissioned and shown on the original BBC Choice:

Broadcast's digital channels BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge will ... embark on a process of significant change in 2000, aiming to reverse negative perceptions of both channels as under-resourced and lacking focus, and positioning them in the light of BBC TV's long-term portfolio strategy (BBC internal communication, Jan 2000).

The impact of the low budgets and resulting low production standards were now understood as a significant problem in that unintentionally they contributed to the overall perception of the channel. It had also become clear that lots of repeats were not necessarily as much of an issue on a digital channel as on terrestrial ones, and that this option represented the lesser of two evils:

In order to put proper money behind a show, you obviously need to fund something properly and because we had a limited budget of 23 million, there were two ways of doing it; either you commission lots of cheap shows and one or two expensive shows or you repeat the fuck out of any show you make, so you've got less hours to fill. And because you've got less hours to fill, you can spend a lot more money on the hours you do have.... a repeat rate in a digital environment is not relevant (Interviewee V).

In this way, a budgetary issue became a scheduling practice. BBC Choice became more like other digital and satellite channel in this respect and in its rapid adoption of other scheduling tactics such as theme nights and weekends (see chapter 6). That the channel was only available in the evenings and the daytime hours were still a CBBC zone had ceased to be a problem in recognising BBC Choice as a 'proper' channel; by this time it was clear that many non-terrestrial channels were not broadcasting full time.

BBC Choice was now a fully-fledged channel with a clear role in relation to the overall BBC brand and a distinct identity in commissioning and marketing terms. Unlike the original BBC Choice, its programmes' style and tone were an embodiment of the channel's identity. Programming was commissioned in accordance with this identity and the perceived preferences of the target audience drawn from a detailed profile of their lifestyle and consumption habits (see chapter 8). Initially, the main news programme on the channel was *Liquid News* (2000-), which dealt primarily with entertainment news. This was in keeping with the channel's entertainment focus:

Celebrity and the treatment of celebrities is key... And what we've done is not just do a show on celebrity but done it live, five week nights called Liquid News. So it's doubly risky because a live show anyway is going to have to be at the forefront of the channel's values and reflect how the channel... reacts to some news that happens.... if it's a live show they're going to have to decide there and then whether they take the piss or whether they go straight (Interviewee V)

Commissioning programmes in line with the channel values and target audience did not end the practice of complementary programming with BBC1 and BBC2. However, the choice of programming to be repeated or supported was guided by the channel identity; *EastEnders*, for example, was known to attract the target age group and therefore was still repeated on the channel.

When the portfolio strategy was adopted it was felt that BBC Choice could evolve still further into BBC3. There was also thought to be an opportunity to increase the audience; viewing figures for the channel, whilst not considered disastrous, were not particularly impressive either⁴:

I believe that both CHOICE and KNOWLEDGE were launched with rather confused objectives and as a result have had less impact than they should have done: a great deal of work has been done to clarify

them and that's beginning to bear fruit, but there's much more to do (Mark Thompson, speech at Banff, 12.06.2000).

Consequently work began to define how BBC Choice could make this transition.

The strategy for the transition emerged in relation to the BBC's overall digital strategy and as part of the development of the portfolio of public service channels. The BBC held a major public consultation in the autumn of 2000, prior to seeking regulatory approval for a package of seven public service digital television channels (including the change of BBC Choice and Knowledge to BBC3 and BBC4) and five new digital radio services⁵. BBC3 was characterised as a service which 'would look at the world through young eyes' and would be 'delivered in a way which is aimed to attract a younger audience' (BBC, 2000). In its continued focus on a young target audience it was retaining one of the most important elements of BBC Choice. The BBC3 audience was still profiled by lifestyle and consumption habits:

- Although still very much 'young people' with a youthful mindset, this is the age at which most of them face increasing financial, career, family, and health responsibilities
- They're clubbing less than they used to – once a month on average vs twice in the case of 15-24s
- They are the group most at home with the internet and are happy to purchase, book or bank online

(BBC internal communication, Feb 2003)

The genre focus was also intended to be similar to that of BBC Choice, concentrating on entertainment genres such as comedy and drama, with some news, arts and educational programming. Like BBC Choice, it would feature celebrity as a major attraction for this audience group:

It appeals to its own heartland which is younger, a place where you can do youth hip things. But youth hip things with a sort of irony I think, and sense of fun... What's quite interesting about Choice is that isn't niche.... Celebrity is a big factor, access to celebrity... you want to be with Elton John and discover how much he's spending on flowers, you know, and you tell the Elton John story (Interviewee L)

I mean by that it'll be about celebrity, it'll be about big names, it won't be niche. Its ambition is to be embracing and not to be such an exclusive club that you can't enter (Interviewee M)

However, the channel was not intended to become too limited in its appeal and therefore open to accusations of narrowcasting. Although continuing to rely on celebrity focused programming, BBC3 would have more stringent reach and share targets than BBC Choice, through which its role as a justified member of the public service portfolio could be demonstrated:

You know, you may choose to watch some bits and not other bits, but it's not going to be so niche that we'll end with a tiny share. We want to be successful in other words... We have got... share and reach targets which are ambitious (Interviewee M)

Demonstrating the success of BBC3 would also be more critical because of the relatively high level of investment in the channel. As Greg Dyke put it 'BBC3 will emerge out of BBC CHOICE but will have a significantly higher budget' (MacTaggart Lecture, 25.08.2000). As a fully fledged member of the television portfolio, it was hoped that BBC3 could leave behind the criticisms about quality and production values that had dogged BBC Choice since its earliest days.

Another way in which BBC3 would develop from BBC Choice was in the channel attitude. BBC3 was to be positioned as a whole lot riskier, naughtier and more prickly than BBC Choice. The frequency with which these descriptors occurred in discussions about BBC3 indicated just how much of a departure this was for the BBC from its normal approach:

BBC3 becomes the naughty kid where it's sort of great entertainment that might shock you but usually will just have you falling about laughing (Interviewee V)

We did [want] a space where we could be more experimental and more risky and edgy to really shift perception of the BBC than we could do on BBC1... But it will do risky television, edgy, maybe sometime shocking, it'll be the naughty channel within the portfolio, that we may have to make apologies for or... be slightly embarrassed (Interviewee M)

With repositioning Choice as BBC3, which is what we want to do, that allows that to be the home of that prickly sharper edged stuff
(Interviewee J)

Through BBC3, a far more adventurous channel than anything the BBC had tried before, the BBC was attempting to cast off some of its institutional conservatism:

I suspect in developing BBC THREE we will need to break a lot more rules before we're through. In preparing for this lecture I read that at the time of the BBC's fiftieth birthday someone scrawled across the wall in the gents toilets at Television Centre "The BBC has always been 50". Well on BBC THREE we've got to learn to be 20 (Greg Dyke, MacTaggart Lecture 25.08.2000)

They've done a mood tape for BBC3 which would have been unthinkable as a kind of mood tape for a channel under the BBC brand, even two years ago, just in terms of its gleeful sort of hedonistic sexuality (Interviewee T)

This was entirely consistent with a broadcaster aiming to move away from its paternalist and bureaucratic roots towards a more avant-garde approach (see Ytreberg, 2002b). Like BBC Choice, BBC3 was positioned to refresh the BBC brand both through its relationship with its target audience and its 'dangerous' approach to programming:

So part of the point of [BBC]3 is to ultimately, constantly actually, challenge and rejuvenate the core BBC brand, but you've got to have the core brand involved in it. And the channel should be constantly undermining it or questioning it or taking the piss out of it (Interviewee T)

One of the things BBC3 has got to have as a core value is a sense of risk and rejuvenation and constantly shedding its skin and having balls
(Interviewee V)

Given that in many respects BBC3 was visualised as an evolution from BBC Choice rather than a revolution, there were debates as to whether the transition from one to the other should reflect this. With an evolution there was a greater chance of carrying the BBC Choice audience through to BBC3, but with a completely differentiated launch it would be possible to emphasise the changed or developed

nature of the channel's identity. Assumptions about the consumer literacy of the target audience tended to favour the former:

So there's that philosophy that says we need to do a big jump up when it goes to BBC3 and I partly agree with that, we definitely need to have a step up, but... there are certain habits that we want viewers to take on BBC Choice that will continue on BBC3... there are reasons why people need to keep going to the channel button Choice. Second thing I thought is philosophically this audience not only accept brands changing but actually delight in having sophisticated brand literacy, I think.... I think it's right that this audience will perfectly understand that Choice is turning into BBC3 and actually even make a joke about that (Interviewee V)

However, it transpired that a relatively untroubled evolution from BBC Choice to BBC3 was out of the question, as BBC3 was the only digital proposal that was not initially approved by the DCMS. It was rejected on the basis that the proposition for the channel (in other words the channel identity) was not distinct enough from other commercial channels serving the same target audience:

It was not made clear that the BBC's proposals were truly distinctive in an already crowded market, so I have asked the corporation to rethink its plans in this area (Tessa Jowell quoted in *The Guardian*, 13.09.2001)

The original proposals for BBC3 did not persuade the Secretary of State that the channel would be sufficiently 'public service' to distinguish it from channels such as E4 or Sky One. This was the first time ever that a proposal for a new service from the BBC had been turned back by government regulators, and the grounds were in relation to the proposed channel's identity. This in itself is a major indicator of how important channel identity had become early in the 21st century and an examination of the changes to the proposal that secured approval and the conditions that it would have to fulfil for the channel to continue to broadcast indicates factors which are highly informative about how the public service role of channels was perceived by both regulators and broadcasters.

Certain elements of the original identity proposed for BBC3 were likely to conflict with a more traditional view of public service television. The first of these was for BBC3 to be a channel largely centred on entertainment and drama programming.

This came into direct conflict with one of the major regulatory tenets of government regulation that public service television channels should reflect a wide and diverse range of genres within their schedules (see chapter 5). Problematically, the genres that BBC3 was to focus on were those genres accorded the least 'public service value'. Genres with strong public service credentials such as news, current affairs and factual programmes were not major features of the proposed schedules.

BBC3, again it's going to be a classic mixed BBC channel in the sense that it's going have news on the hour, it's going to have some factual programming but the factual programming will be *Liquid News* ... The news on BBC3 will actually last no longer than 60 seconds (Interviewee J)

The news service on BBC3 was visualised this way to suit the young target audience. In the eyes of the regulators, however, the tailoring of the genre to the audience did not outweigh its requirement for a greater presence. The channel was also felt to lack sufficient arts, science, education and business programming. The revised proposals for BBC3 considerably increased the profile of these genres, and the genre mix subsequently became part of the explicit conditions from the DCMS for the approval of the channel:

The service must deliver a mixed schedule of programmes embracing drama, entertainment, news, current affairs, education, music, the arts, science and including coverage of international issues....[and] including the BBC's further commitment to other factual programming including 15 hours covering science/religion/ethics and business. The normal evening viewing on BBC3, including peak viewing hours, will reflect a mixed schedule throughout the year (DCMS conditions for approval of BBC3 quoted in *The Guardian*, 17.09.2002)

To be seen as an authentic public service channel it appeared that BBC3 had to be seen as a truly mixed-genre channel.

Another element of the BBC3 identity emphasised in the revised proposals also appeared as part of the conditions of approval. This was the identification of BBC3 as a channel showing British programming, both in its production and its content:

In terms of content, the main differentiator will be that we're about British originated output and the key driver of E4 is American (Interviewee M)

On approval of the channel, the DCMS required a quota of 90% of all programming to be made in the European Union which, given the preference for broadcasting English-language programming, meant in practice that it would be made in the UK. Public service broadcasting had to be British broadcasting. Following on from this, the revised submission also made a commitment to the channel as a multicultural space:

Reflecting not only every nation and region of the UK but also the multicultural, multiethnic society of modern Britain (Caroline Thomson, BBC Director of Public Policy⁶)

In this commitment, the BBC returned to its metaphor of reflecting the nation like a mirror, reintroducing the recognisable language of public service broadcasting.

Other revisions to the original submission included a greater level of online and interactivity for the channel and support for the development of new talent. It also reiterated the commitment for the channel to drive the take-up of digital reception in the UK, a government priority (see Chalaby and Segall, 1999:363), whilst continuing to serve the audience which relied on analogue reception:

The specific commitments....must not be met at the expense of programmes on BBC1 and BBC2 catering for the 25-34 age group and new programmes made for BBC3 must also be made available to enhance the provision of programming which will appeal to young adults on BBC1 and BBC2 (DCMS conditions for the approval of BBC3, *The Guardian*, 17.09.2002)

Once approval had been granted, the BBC had the challenge of putting this into practice without threatening the integrity of the identity of any channel within its new channel portfolio:

There's this transition from analogue to digital so... channels need to almost overlap for a few years (Interviewee V))

You'll have a zone which feels like you're in BBC3-land, even if it hasn't got BBC3 at the top (Interviewee G)

As soon as BBC3 launched in March 2003, a clearly demarcated and branded BBC3 zone was created on BBC1. This worked as a 'taster' of the new channel, potentially driving digital take-up, and fulfilled the obligation to show BBC3 content on the analogue channels. It both emphasised the identity of the new channel and protected the identity of the older one.

Primarily, branding was achieved through the on-air identity created for the new channel. For each incarnation of the channel, an on-air identity had been developed to express the channel's characteristics. With the original BBC Choice, the on-air identity featured technological aspects of the channel and had, for example, computer mice alongside real mice. In its second incarnation, the on-air identity focused on the 'Refreshing TV' strapline, with upbeat dance music accompanying it (Brownrigg and Meech, 2002: 351). When BBC3 was launched, the on-air identity had two main elements. The first of these were animated figures, known as 'blobs' (see fig. 9.1). These were designed to represent the channel attitude:

The blobs are clever, mischievous, impulsive and confident - everything that defines BBC Three (BBC internal communication, Feb 2003)

The second element was a graphic of 'BBC Three' in slanting text (see fig. 9.2). This was a deliberate strategy to make BBC3 stand out from the other BBC channels as different and naughty; all of the others used logos with upright text⁷. The on-air channel branding contributed to the identity of the channel throughout its evolution by emphasising the channel attributes that informed the commissioning and scheduling processes and associating the channel content with these meanings.

All in all, BBC Choice had travelled a long way from its initial conception as a 'side channel' to BBC1 and BBC2 and, as BBC3, had become a fully-fledged channel in its own right with a distinct, deliberate and regulated identity.

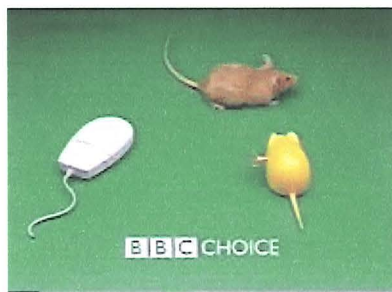


Figure 9.1 BBC Choice ident, 1999

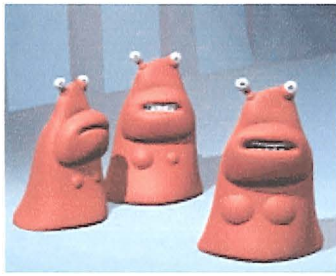


Figure 9.2 The BBC3 'Blobs', 2003



Figure 9.3 BBC3 logo

9.3 BBC Knowledge to BBC4

The development of BBC Knowledge and its transition to BBC4 share a number of parallels with the development of BBC3, although without the regulatory complexity. Like BBC Choice, BBC Knowledge moved away from serving a diffuse audience towards catering for a more targeted one. Similarly it had to develop its identity in order to support BBC brand values and to contribute to the portfolio. Launched a little later and making its transition to BBC4 in a shorter timespan, the evolution of BBC Knowledge appears less extreme, but is nonetheless a useful example of how a channel's identity must be clear and focused in order to survive.

BBC Knowledge was launched in summer 1999. When the proposal was made that as part of its digital proposition the BBC should run an educational television service, this suggestion was approved speedily; education was at the heart of the public service and Reithian values and all concerned agreed that this was an appropriate way for the BBC to continue with its digital mission. However, the agreement to run an educational channel was really only the start of the process of creating a channel identity:

Everyone involved had two questions... how does it distinguish itself from a factual channel? What it is that makes it educational?
(Interviewee T)

The channel that emerged was based around a strong sense of educational value rather than just factual content:

Why is it called BBC KNOWLEDGE? The service contains a wealth of knowledge, available through both the television and the PC. Our viewers crave knowledge. It was thus a very logical name for the service. It tells our audiences exactly what we are about - descriptive but also distinctive (BBC internal communication, Sept 1999)

The new channel was to be used as a conduit to put the BBC's educational strategy into practice. This strategy was designed to serve all the BBC's audience groups with an interest in learning and as it took into account different learning circumstances, the BBC Knowledge audience was to some extent already thought about as segmented, with children being understood to have different educational needs to adults, and adults having differing needs according to their lifestage. However, this did not detract from the assumption that the new channel should reach as broad an audience as possible and the channel went on air targeting all potential audience segments:

And the Knowledge... proposition that emergedwas quite a complex proposition because at a stroke within those different plans of the education strategy you were trying to reach many different sectors of the population, many different age groups (Interviewee T)

BBC Knowledge will appeal to anyone who wants to acquire a new skill or to anyone who has a particular passion they wish to know more about. The audiences will vary from children looking for additional support in gaining their GCSE qualifications to adults who want to know more about computing or are looking to attain a new or better job. The appeal of BBC Knowledge will be very wide (BBC internal communication, Sept 1999)

In the early days of the channel, the only limitation to this approach was considered to be in terms of who would have access to digital transmissions:

Our primary target audience is the 'wired community' - people who are interested in what new technology offers, and are therefore likely to be younger, at least in the early years. There is an ambition to attract groups currently under served by the BBC like the less well off young (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000–2001)

However, even in the earliest days of the channel there was a growing belief amongst BBC executives that this approach to the audience might not be the most effective. By this time UKTV, the BBC's joint venture with Flextech, was more established and there were those who brought knowledge and experience of developing new channels to the broader BBC. Concepts for commercial channels were developed from a perceived market gap relating to a target audience and their likely interests. The development of BBC Knowledge was happening in reverse, with the educational remit fixed first and the audience considered as a secondary issue:

[From] what's left of my old commercial instincts... this is a horrifyingly wrong way to go about it because, you know, certainly the... market gang there will always say Identify the audience needs, where will this fit in the marketplace, who are you trying to reach or serve?

(Interviewee T)

Nonetheless the channel was launched with different parts of the schedule targeted at different types of learners, aiming for the channel to reach as broad an audience as possible.

The BBC was keen to take advantage of the technological possibilities that the new channel presented, as it had been with BBC Choice. One feature of the early identity of BBC Knowledge was that it was visualised as a service which was not only the television channel but also an online proposition:

BBC KNOWLEDGE is a completely new kind of service using for the first time the potential of the digital technology and building into its core the way in which programming will develop in the digital future (BBC internal communication, Sept 1999)

[BBC Knowledge] will use the interactive capabilities of the PC and the developing capabilities of the set top box to create a seamless learning experience across a range of different media (BBC1 Commissioning Guide, 2000–2001)

The URL appeared on screen all the time instead of a normal channel DOG, ... a signifier on its online-ness (Interviewee T)

BBC Knowledge, like BBC Choice, was intended to be complementary to BBC1 and BBC2 and commission special or extended versions of programmes transmitted on those channels. This was not only to offer educational opportunities for the BBC1 and BBC2 audiences but also because the cost of commissions could be reduced this way by sharing with BBC1 or BBC2. The early BBC Knowledge commissioned programming at a very low cost per hour and concerns about programme quality soon began to surface. In addition, it became clear that the strategy of targeting different audiences through different parts of the schedule was not working. This was thought to be in no small part because it was not clear enough who the channel was really for; the different tone of programming at different times made BBC Knowledge a very complex proposition to market:

[The] on air identity.... in retrospect was a brilliant attempt to fuse this very complex set of objectives. ... it was an animation based thing of people climbing ladders so ... the idea was ... an aspiration to kind of get higher up your kind of learning ladder.... (Interviewee T)

The visual identity was carefully unified across media, but the underlying feel of the channel itself was inconsistent. It could not disguise the possibility that instead of showing something for everybody, the channel was not catering effectively for anyone. And whereas a channel such as BBC2 might be able to get away with elements of this same strategy because of its easy accessibility and long-established reputation, BBC Knowledge could not do the same with the digital television audience. There was also a concern that the channel was undermining the main BBC brand because of the low production values. At the same time that BBC Choice going through its first major transformation, BBC Knowledge did the same.



Figure 9.4 BBC Knowledge ident, 1999

The second incarnation of BBC Knowledge was less of an educational channel and more of a factual channel. It was also more clearly targeted at an older audience with an interest in factual and documentary programming. This refocusing of the channel allowed a much more extensive use of programming repeated from BBC1 and BBC2, which took some of the pressure from the commissioning budgets whilst ensuring that the programmes on the channel appeared to be high quality:

Over the coming year KNOWLEDGE will focus on the BBC's key factual genres; history, science and technology, nature, arts and business. Targeted at anyone with an appetite for factual programming the Channel will develop less of a 'youth' feel and more of a tone befitting expectations of a BBC factual service - intelligent, stimulating, compelling and inspiring. ... The Channel will offer anyone with an appetite for engrossing factual TV the very best of the BBC twenty-four hours a day. (BBC Commissioning Guide 2001-2)

Knowledge will greatly increase its use of narrative repeats from the main networks, and reduce its reliance on original commissions. Those that remain will have higher budgets.... The... changes are designed to ensure that Knowledge passes the 'surf test' - i.e. if someone samples the channel they will encounter material that fits their expectations of a BBC factual service (BBC internal communication, Jan 2000).

We moved quickly to change the programme mix, change where we spent the money and greatly increased the volume of documentary catch-up repeats from BBC2, re-focused the commissions ... spent on fewer higher value pieces and started, in a sense, playing to strengths of the core BBC brand (Interviewee T)

In doing this, BBC Knowledge had taken two major steps towards a more clearly defined identity. It focused on a particular section of the audience and therefore unified the feel of the channel across its hours of transmission. It also clarified its identity in genre terms, moving away from the looser definition of 'educational', which could be applied across genres, to one of factual, making it clearer what audiences might expect to receive. In the process it had also ensured that the programme production values were consistent with the overall BBC values.

The new version of BBC Knowledge adopted a number of scheduling practices which helped it to stand out amongst BBC channels whilst being consistent with the digital television environment. Although transmitting 24 hours per day, the programming on BBC Knowledge was a three hour 'daily block' which was looped, a practice that was used by other digital and satellite broadcasters. Two hours of the block was part of a specialist factual zone with a daily focus on one of science, history, arts, business or languages. As the channel had not entirely moved away from its educational objectives this was followed by an hour of skills based programming. BBC Knowledge also made extensive use of themed nights and weekends, often focusing on specific literary or historical figures, such as Shakespeare or Oscar Wilde. Consequently, the channel became much more highly consistent in tone. Branding the channel became easier and creating shared meanings across channel and programming became more achievable. Although the on-air identity was not changed significantly at this point, new zone idents were used extensively to signal the changes in the channel and to communicate the new channel tone, and the orchestral accompaniment 'may have been subliminally used to talk up the high culture status of the channel' (Brownrigg and Meech, 2002: 351).

Although this incarnation of BBC Knowledge was effectively already in transition towards what would become BBC4, once the plans for the public service television channel portfolio were well underway it was clear that the channel would need to make an even more defined contribution to the delivery of the overall public service objectives:

Persistent hammering home of a simpler message, targeted quite decisively at, let's say, an over 35s audience has helped. Inevitably its identity has... sat somewhere between its educational roots on the one hand and a more high brow documentary based cultural service on the other (Interviewee T)

BBC4, launched early in 2002, retained some of the features of BBC Knowledge in that its main genre focus was on factual programming and it retained some vestigial educational objectives:

This service would have a special commitment to challenging specialist factual programmes in science, history, the arts and religion, and would support factual and learning output on our other channels, taking the BBC's coverage further and deeper than has been possible before (BBC, 2000)

In particular, it had the space to show performance pieces and long-form documentary, which were proving more and more difficult to schedule on the terrestrial analogue channels with their newer and more carefully delineated scheduling practices. It also had more of an international agenda than other domestic BBC channels.

Performance is difficult to schedule - it doesn't sit comfortably on all the junctions that you need to run a competitive kind of channel, and it doesn't get huge audiences but it is widely appreciated by the audiences that do watch it, and it is something that the market has difficulty in providing. That will mainly fit on 4. So BBC4 is going to be a channel of performance and ideas, the more difficult stuff than BBC2 (Interviewee J)

BBC Four would be the home of culture, the arts, ideas and serious debate. The channel would aim to capture the energy of creative life in the UK today. It would bring live performances and world cinema to viewers' homes, and allow viewers to get in close to the thinkers, performers and writers driving today's cultural society. It would also provide thought provoking documentaries and in-depth debate around the key issues of the day (BBC, 2000)

Although the centre of gravity was factual programming, like BBC3 it had a more mixed approach to genre than BBC Knowledge or BBC Choice. For example, a specially tailored daily news programme was introduced to the schedule. The BBC4 news was characterised by its international coverage and in-depth debate, in keeping with the channel's emerging identity.

Of all the channels, BBC4 was the one which was most often compared to the BBC's radio services to describe its character:

Just as BBC Radio 3 has guaranteed a place for serious and challenging music and BBC Radio 4 has become the home of intelligent speech in the radio market, so BBC Four would create a secure space for the arts and ideas in the digital television world (BBC, 2000)

BBC FOUR will be ... a mixture of Radios 3 and 4 on television (Greg Dyke, MacTaggart Lecture 25.08.2000)

This appears to be in part because its proposition had more in common with these radio networks than with the other television channels and also because it was targeted at a similar audience; BBC4's target audience was to be the older, more upmarket viewers on which BBC Knowledge had begun to focus and who were also characteristic of Radios 3 and 4. This group was clearly characterised as the BBC's 'heartland' audience:

And it's where a lot of our heartland already audience interest lies. So in pursuit of trying to re-balance the value for money we give to all our audiences, we mustn't forget our heartland (Interviewee M)

It was assumed that the potential audience for the new channel was not necessarily particularly large:

This is a channel that's going to get a tiny share and reach... We'll try and make it as absolutely accessible as we can, but it's a fine balance between making something accessible and dumbing down Elgar (Interviewee M)

However small, this audience was nonetheless publicised as potentially being of sufficient numbers to justify the focus of the channel, as indicated by Greg Dyke's reference to the numbers visiting the Tate Modern.

One of the aims that the channel had in common with BBC3 was that it should drive the take up of digital television, but unlike BBC3, the audience for this channel was considered a group that would not adopt the digital technology unless given a reason:

Some of them are early adopters, but a very small proportion, the rest are in the group that watch probably the least amount of television and they're very discerning when they do watch it and they feel ...they need a special incentive to do it (Interviewee M)

Providing a channel that would encourage this group to switch to digital was one public service element of the channel's purpose and an incentive for regulators to give their approval to the channel.

Indeed, BBC4's purpose was deeply infused with public service mission in a way that not only reflected its educational roots but that went deeper to the heart of the BBC's public service tradition:

[BBC]4 is really about the area of BBC strength. Quite frankly if the BBC were not producing high brow, intellectual, specialist factual arts, science, history, documentary output, if the BBC didn't do it, where are you going to get it? I mean if public service broadcasting is not about that then what is it about? (Interviewee M)

And then 4 is a response to... increasingly embattled constituencies who precisely because of the inexorable 'youthing up' and entertainment focus of mainstream television are increasingly indicating that there is less and less that is for them on the BBC [or]... on television of any kind (Interviewee T)

BBC4 was designed to provide a diet of programming that was unquestionably traditional public service in purpose and tone. It focused on those genres which had the greatest currency in the public service context. It was therefore unsurprising that BBC4 was approved by the regulators without any of the rumpus that accompanied the approval for BBC3. BBC4 was an antidote to arguments and debates about 'dumbing down'⁸

It was becoming common currency a year or 18 months ago that the BBC was reneging on serious culture, had lost faith in arts, music, serious debate, a kind of non parochial global perspective on world affairs and so on. And that was a partly damaging thing to be said about the BBC because it runs counter to part, just part, but to part of BBC's public mission. But also was probably felt particularly damaging because it was beginning perhaps to feel slightly true, you know, in the sense with only 1 and 2 to play with, it was getting tougher actually to be really secure in our commitment to some of those things. So the idea was to establish a space that was a secure haven of those values, but not so that it sucked them all off 1 and 2, but so that it sort of became a force in the land in its own right (Interviewee T)

In keeping with this high public service role, one of the ways that BBC4 differed from BBC Knowledge was in the intellectual tone of the channel. The strapline to promote BBC4 was 'Everybody needs a place to think', a phrase that was incorporated into the newly designed on-and off-air promotional material. The phrase 'unashamedly intellectual' was commonly used to describe the new channel:

It's unashamedly intellectual, it's performance, it's arts, it's a place where you expect to see people's visions, where you expect to see presenters explain their, perhaps, their counter intuitive view of the world, take you on a journey that you just wouldn't go on because it's not mainstream enough for BBC1 or BBC2 (Interviewee L)

It would always be intelligent in intent and unashamedly intellectual, but unstuffy and contemporary in flavour and tone (BBC internal communication, Jan 2000).

The use of the 'unashamed' suggests, conversely, that there might be something to be ashamed about in providing such intellectual programming. In a context where the BBC had spent some time analysing which audiences were receiving a high level of service and which audiences were 'underserved', this may reflect a certain level of discomfort at providing a whole channel for a relatively small and upmarket target audience who had traditionally been well served. This audience group, which also tended to be vocal and influential, would, through BBC4, continue to have a proportion of licence fee revenue spent on them which appeared to exceed their representation in the population as a whole.

9.4 Conclusions

Both BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge travelled a long way in a short time. Having started as channels which were diffuse and poorly defined in their purpose and target audience, they migrated into BBC3 and BBC4, channels which fulfilled distinct roles as part of the BBC's public service channel portfolios and which had, for public service channels, quite sharply focused target audiences and a well-developed tone and style for their respective programming. As part of their development, both BBC Choice/3 and BBC Knowledge/4 had shifted away from the idea that all public service channels had to serve the entire, universal, public audience, and, in adopting a more segmented approach, both had also embraced elements of the new individualised model of audience, the lifestyle and consumption model discussed in chapter 8. Another similarity between the two channels was that both had moved from functioning as adjuncts to BBC1 and BBC2 into a position of providing research and development opportunities for the BBC's television programming as a whole (see Born, 2002a: 16).

However, there were some significant differences that emerged from the evolution of the two channels. Whereas BBC4 had a smooth ride with the regulators, BBC3 represented both the importance of regulation to the development of channel identity (in that its character had clearly been affected by DCMS conditions for approval) and of the importance of channel identity to regulators (in that public service channels now clearly had to offer a demonstrably different proposition to commercial channels). In particular, the issue of genre diversity came to the fore in regulatory terms; public service channels, it seemed, could only become genre-specific when the genre was one with an unquestionable public service credentials, such as BBC News 24.

The two channels also demonstrated different approaches as to how channels could deliver the public service broadcasting mission. BBC3 had been designed to do this by targeting an audience that was felt to be underserved by the BBC. Its approach was all about speaking to its target audience in a language unlike the traditional BBC tone and style, using particularly those genres that traditionally were seen to have relatively low public service value. BBC4, on the other hand, delivered its public service purpose in a way which could easily be recognised by public service broadcasting's most established constituency:

If [BBC]3 is there to constantly question or challenge the core brand, BBC4 is there is a defiant, reassuring statement that the BBC is absolutely and non-negotiably committed to some of the things it's always been known for in terms of the support of minority cultures and high culture and the heritage of the arts and so on. And serious debate and sometimes real market failure areas which you do see less and less of. ... (Interview T)

BBC4, aimed at the BBC's most traditional supporters, was in many respects the incarnation of the 'market failure' interpretation of public service broadcasting. What the two new channels shared in common, however, was that the channels' identities were at the heart of the expression of the public service proposition.

Notes

¹ All previous BBC channels had been intended for distribution initially on analogue platforms.

² This quotation strongly evokes Ellis' idea of the 'age of plenty' (2000)

³ Budgets of £16,000 per hour were typical.

⁴ Until BARB revised its samples in early 2002, audience figures were considered extremely unreliable for digital channels

⁵ These proposals were submitted under new procedures for approval of public services by the BBC, introduced in 2000 and revised in 2001 (see Born and Prosser, 2001:665-6)

⁶ From a letter to Andrew Ramsey, DCMS, 03.12.2001

⁷ The BBC logo and all associated logos had been straightened from slanting text in 1996 and the slanted logo for BBC3 caused some amusement amongst industry commentators (see *The Guardian*, 17.10.2002)

⁸ 'Dumbing down' was, arguably, the most common axis of debate about public service broadcasting in the press during the research period. For examples of the tone of this debate, to which I return in the conclusion of this thesis, see *The Guardian*, 09.07.2002 or 26.08.2001

10.1 Overview

Before reviewing some of the findings of this research and considering some conclusions, it is worth revisiting the context in which this study took place and looking at how the outcomes fit into the broader television environment. All the conclusions of this study have been based on the example provided by television channels at the BBC, and therefore the role of channels identified is particular to the organisation of broadcasting in Britain and the findings are grounded in practices relevant to the UK. Comparisons with the US and Scandinavian broadcasting environments during the thesis, however, illustrate that some conclusions may nonetheless be pertinent to broadcasters more generally. The study is also shaped by the fact that it was based on a single public service broadcasting organisation. As the BBC runs more public service channels and has the 'purist' public service remit of all the British television broadcasters, focusing on this organisation facilitated an examination of the impact of channel identity on a truly public service system. A number of conclusions, however, are applicable to channels more generally and have been flagged as such during the thesis. And because the BBC is such a major player in UK broadcasting on any terms, the outcomes of this research have a considerable relevance to the British broadcasting industry as a whole.

The timing of this research also has an impact on its relevance; although the main research period encompassed many of the fundamental changes in the media industry that raised the profile of broadcasting (rather than production) functions and therefore highlighted the development of channels, these changes did not suddenly cease once the research had taken place. This conclusion therefore looks forward to what might come next as well as back at how channel identity came into being and some of the observations, particularly those concerning how this research may be developed, relate more to events and developments from the latter part of the research period as the role of television channels in UK continued to unfold.

10.2 Reviewing the arguments of the thesis

A central matter established by this thesis is that television channels form a critical part of the organisation of broadcasting and are in themselves cultural products. They play an important role in the creation of what is shown on television, both in terms of its selection and the detail of its formation. Fundamental to this is the notion of channel identity, the meanings accumulated by the channel and its attributes in relation to its target audience.

The thesis traced the development of a multichannel television system in the UK and illustrated that as soon as multiple channels existed within the system, each channel started to develop basic identity traits. In the earliest days, even when channels were not clearly separable from broadcaster identity, it was already possible to associate characteristics of the broadcaster with the content shown on the channels; with the arrival of ITV, for example, the differences between the BBC's public service approach and ITV's more 'popular' output was soon embedded into expectations about what the channels would show. Once the BBC was granted a second channel it became clear that, deliberately or not, channels would develop identity traits which informed their commissioning and scheduling practices. Thus, BBC2 became a 'serious' channel, carrying a significant proportion of heavyweight documentary, performance and 'minority' viewing for a relatively highbrow audience. BBC1, the more mainstream channel, concerned itself with programming that took a relatively entertaining and accessible approach. By the time Channel 4 launched, the way that a channel could be used to determine content and the approach to audiences had been institutionalised through a Broadcasting Act which enshrined many of the channel's attributes in law. So, by the 1980s when the number of channels in the UK began to increase significantly, channels were already a very important, albeit often unacknowledged, means of organising audiences and content within the broadcasting system.

The advent of truly multichannel broadcasting through the 1980s and 1990s on terrestrial, satellite and cable platforms, both analogue and digital, brought considerable reorganisation of the media industry, responding both to shifts within the industry itself and other more general social, cultural and economic changes. Vertical disintegration separated many functions that had previously been seen as a seamless whole and larger media organisations, including the BBC, began to adopt strategies of internal vertical disintegration, splitting the production and broadcasting functions for television and designing an internal market in which the broadcasters

held the buying power. This promoted and emphasised specific elements within the media system that were part of the broadcasting rather than programme production process. During the late 1990s, the BBC commissioning system underwent a fundamental transition from strongly supply-led to being significantly demand-driven; it was far less the case that producers 'offered' programmes to channel controllers and, instead, channels developed a deliberate channel strategy and commissioned programmes in line with this strategy to specific slots in the channel schedule. The channel strategy defined the type of audience towards which the channel was targeted, clarified the channel's genre focus and set the tone and attitude wanted for programming to be shown on the channel. Programmes were commissioned to generate this tone and style and to attract and serve the channel's target audience.

In a further step towards channel-defined television, the BBC began to consider its channels as a combined way of delivering its public service obligations and so, in 2000, created a portfolio of channels, the strategy, target audiences and genre mix of which were specifically intended to complement each other. Each channel was positioned to address a particular audience. In the case of BBC1 this was the universal audience and for the other channels, specific audience segments. As part of this initiative, a number of channels became more aligned to a narrower range of genres than had previously been the case for public service television channels. Consequently, these public service channels developed a higher degree of specialisation, gaining some similarity with the highly specialised commercial channels that had begun to dominate the multichannel market. Although the trend towards genre specialisation decreased towards the end of the research period, audience specialisation became, if anything, more pronounced. The effects of this will be discussed in section 10.4.

Whilst channels were becoming more specialised in their focus with a much more consistent feel and tone to their programming, concurrent developments in scheduling served to emphasise the unity of channel content and to share meanings across the channels' output across time. Scheduling continued to rely on the idea of audience 'flow' in order to maintain viewers for a channel and also continued to inscribe the channels with assumptions about how audiences lived their lives through the day, the month or the year. However, where channels were targeted at specific audiences, there was no longer a default assumption that the audience was a family audience and instead expectations of the everyday lives of the target audience for that channel were taken into account. Other aspects of scheduling practice also developed significantly in this period. Whereas traditionally scheduling

involved practices such as 'hammocking', the emphasis changed towards scheduling clusters of content together with shared messages and meanings. Thus, 'zoning' and 'theming' became more common and these highlighted the channel's identity in relation to specific genres and audience groups targeted by the zone or theme. This began to erode the traditional public service idea that audiences could be encouraged to watch edifying programming through its proximity to popular programming. Instead, zones with public service programming or themed content relating to notable events were used to promote the channels' public service credentials.

The move to promote channels through the association of aspects of channel content with the channel in general was part of a growing trend towards metonymic promotion. Zones, themes, and landmark programming were all increasingly used to give the channel and its content consistent meanings intended to attract and communicate with the appropriate target audience. By the start of the research period, branding and marketing practices had begun to permeate the media industry and the BBC also adopted these, albeit later than some commercial broadcasters. Vertical disintegration of the media industry in the 1980s and 1990s had encouraged the creation of strong media brands around sites of ownership of iterated intellectual property and, for television, channels were constructs that could fulfil this role, becoming increasingly important during the research period as branded products. This manifested itself not only through metonymic promotion but also through increasingly integrated visual identities on air and off air, designed to bestow the brand values of the channel onto everything shown on and associated with the channel.

Alongside the development of marketing and branding practices, the models that broadcasters commonly invoked of their audience were also developing. A newer audience model began to appear in addition to the established public service model of the audience-as-public and the model of audience-as-market that had become entrenched with the advent of commercial broadcasting. The new model, a lifestyle and consumption model, was based in the practice of segmentation drawn from marketing culture and was closely associated with a commodity model of audience drawn from the commercial sector. It demonstrated a tendency towards individualisation and descriptive conceptualisation rather than the statistical constructs which had become the norm for previous audience models. This new model worked well with the breakdown of the idea of a universal, mass audience

and therefore was particularly applicable to channels with a well-defined target audience such as the new digital channels.

It was becoming clear that the three different models of audience in common parlance were invoked in a different balance according to the channel under consideration. BBC1 was the only channel to retain the remit to serve a universal mass audience from the audience-as-public perspective, and alongside this it strove to be the popular and populist channel in respect of the audience-as-market. As one might expect for channels which targeted specific audience segments, the other channels in the public service portfolio manifested some evidence of the lifestyle and consumption audience model developed from the concept of the commodity audience. BBC Choice/BBC3 was probably the channel with the most pronounced adoption of this audience framework, highlighting the fact that its approach to delivering the BBC's public service remit had departed furthest from the established norms that broadcasters and regulators recognised and accepted.

The move away from mass audience towards a more segmented and individualised model also facilitated a change in some of the terms of debate that had informed the delivery of public service television. With the single mass audience, it appeared to be assumed by both broadcasters and regulators that high viewing figures and genre mix would automatically cater for the varied interests and needs of the audience as a whole. With a segmented and individualised audience it became possible to conceptualise and articulate the relative use that different audience groups made of the BBC, its channels and its programming; the notion that certain parts of the audience could be 'underserved' or 'overserved' by public service television could only really thrive in a world of segmented audiences. In this environment, the BBC began to approach the delivery of its public service obligations from this new perspective.

Some of these considerations were clearest in relation to the newer digital channels. On close examination of the transition of BBC Choice to BBC3 and BBC Knowledge to BBC4, it became increasingly clear that a channel identity which comprised all the elements discussed thus far was central to a channel's sustainability both within the portfolio and more generally; channels operating in the digital sphere were competing in a truly multichannel environment where the possibility of the universal mass audience no longer applied in the same way as for terrestrial television. BBC3 and BBC4, however, were illustrations of two different responses to what it might mean to be a public service broadcaster in this new

world. BBC4 adopted what might at first sight appear to be a market-failure based approach to public service television provision. It catered for the BBC's 'heartland' audience, considered by many to be an audience group already potentially 'overserved'. BBC3, on the other hand, headed towards a much more lifestyle and consumption based notion of programme provision for what was, for a public service broadcaster, a sharply defined audience segment that the BBC had identified as 'underserved'. The two channels nevertheless shared a factor in common, and that was the privileging and sustaining the public service tradition of the mixed-genre channel over and above the public service idea of using a channel to create a shared or universal public televisual 'space', a public sphere that could be shared by the nation. This role was left to BBC1 alone to uphold on behalf of BBC television as a whole. The issue of whether one channel could actually deliver this for the BBC or for the nation in the developing television environment was not publicly questioned. Section 10.4 looks at how and whether these alternative public service visions could be sustained.

10.3 A coming of age, or the death of the channel?

From the discussion above, it is fair to say that channels have indeed emerged as an organising force in television, products of the broadcasting process in their own right, with their own meanings and identities and an important factor in what constitutes public service broadcasting at this time. It could be argued that channels have finally come of age as an integral part of the television form. However, before taking this as read I must first tackle an issue that arose again and again in the course of this research. This was an assumption from interviewees and others that channels were not long for this world, that the idea of the channel would die as part of the transition to digital television. Assuming that television would replicate the high levels of personalisation being developed on the internet¹, this debate tended to centre on discussion about the future of scheduling in relation to the development of PVRs. PVRs, based on hard disk technology, were newly available to consumers during the research period and made it possible for people to download their choice of viewing, watch it in any order and at any time and even pause or delay 'live' programming. For a number of interviewees this raised the question of whether scheduling was a dying art, soon to be replaced by personal schedules created from programmes 'recommended' to people by the PVR software².

There are a number of reasons why this may not be the case. Similar questions about the future of scheduling arose when VCRs were first introduced, and although viewing habits changed, scheduling lost none of its importance, as this thesis illustrates. The situation with PVRs may well be similar. Firstly, there is some doubt about whether PVRs were greeted in the UK with as much enthusiasm as VCRs had been. In 2003, TiVo, one of the two main providers of PVRs, withdrew from the UK on the basis that it was not cost-effective to sustain a service with the limited take-up of the technology in Britain. At the time of writing, Sky had renewed their marketing efforts in relation to their PVR, SKY+, with much greater success. However, digital television was not and still is not accessible to many UK viewers³. A 'digital divide' between those with technologies such as digital television and the internet and those without has been noted by broadcasters, regulators and other observers (see, for example, BBC, 1998; Rheingold, 2000: 377). Until the number of viewers with access to digital television increases significantly across all sectors of British society, the schedule will remain crucial in reaching large sections of the audience and therefore will continue to be central also to public service broadcasters. As a tool for regulators to assess the provision of generic range, production quotas and regional proportionality, schedules are also likely to have some longevity. So, scheduling may well continue to be a fundamental part of broadcasting well beyond that time, especially if people continue to enjoy just watching 'what's on'.

These issues relate to the schedule as the heart of the channel. Another reason not to predict the death of the channel in the immediate future is that channels are not only about schedules; they are also about audiences and brands and regulating those relationships through commissioning and marketing. It is possible that as digital and multichannel television continues to develop, channels will become less synonymous with the schedule and more closely identified with their relationship to their target audience and brand values. As such they could become much more 'a bundle of expectations of mood and content' (Interviewee J) than a traditional channel tied to a particular frequency in the spectrum or time in the schedule. They would become more like free-floating channel brands associating different strands of content for different target audiences.

To sum up, I would argue that channels have been important organising mechanisms for content and meanings in television for the majority of its history and are likely to continue to be so in some recognisable form for at least a decade. Starting to think about channels as having texts that can be interrogated for

meaning will continue to reveal broadcasters' perceptions of their audiences; whether those texts takes the form of tightly scheduled programming or branded and clustered content, they will continue to be part of the organisation of television and public service broadcasting for some time. In the words of one BBC executive:

Linear channels were one of the great media inventions of the 20th century, they're a great, great medium and they're most unlikely to die... They are likely to remain a pretty damned efficient to harvest quite large numbers of eyeballs, particularly mainstream channels. I think it's tougher when you get to... the real margins of the digital marketplace where it's unclear whether something is a sort of broadband distribution loop or whether it's actually a channel ... But in the top dozen channel brands, I'm pretty convinced they'll still be with us in 20 years time, 30 years time (Interviewee T).

Further research about the future development of channels, their impact on programming and about the channel text and audience, may well be a fruitful way to continue to develop deeper understanding about the television medium.

10.4 Some implications for public service broadcasting

This section deals with two ongoing and energetic debates in the world of television on which channels have a bearing. The first relates to the quality of television, its relationship to genre diversity and the dispute about whether it is 'dumbing down'. The second deals with less vociferously expressed concerns about the fragmentation of television audiences, the transition from broadcasting to narrowcasting and the impact of this on ideas of universality and the public sphere. In short, it deals with the UK perspective on 'the unsettling of both the public service broadcaster's mandate to unite the nation and the task to provide a generic range of television programmes' (Ytreberg, 2002a: 301). When examining the implications of the development of channel identity, even within the public service context, it is useful to think in terms of the digital television environment as this is the indicator of the future, rather than concentrating on the analogue terrestrial past. Bearing this in mind and the fact that analogue services are likely to be switched off within the decade, my observations from this point on are based on the idea of a truly multichannel public service broadcasting system where all of the public service

channels can be accessed universally, something that is still part of the public service ambition.

10.4.1 *Quality and issues of genre diversity*

Quality television has long been a concern of regulators and broadcasters alike, and some of the difficulties that BBC3 experienced in securing approval from regulators were, at heart, symptoms of the debate about the quality of public service broadcasting. It is true that one of the factors under consideration was the channel's differentiation from its commercial competitors (a strong argument in itself that channel identity has become an important factor in broadcasting) but approval was also tied to the question of whether BBC3 would be of a suitable quality for a public service channel, and, in its difference from commercial television, whether the programming would be not only nationally originated but also of a higher quality than some on other youth-oriented commercial channels. Indeed, all the BBC's television channels (and its radio output too) were constantly under scrutiny during this period for any evidence of 'dumbing down'. The 'dumbing down' debate centred on an assertion that the quality of programmes had dropped, was continuing to drop and that public service broadcasting was just not as good as it used to be (see chapter 9). The BBC tended to refute that programme quality or range had dropped or diminished, and it took the trouble to publish a special booklet which was issued to all staff and a selection of 'opinion formers' to prove its case⁴:

The BBC is sometimes criticised for failing to produce programmes of range and distinction. We would like you to make up your own mind (BBC, 2003).

A number of considerations have emerged during this thesis about the nature and expectations of public service broadcasting that have a bearing on this debate. They do not resolve whether it is 'true' that there has been a decline in the quality of public service programming or television in general, nor do they cover all angles of the debate, but they do reveal some of the assumptions about what quality consists of in this context. The first of these is the assumption that generic range is at the heart of television quality. The regulatory requirements discussed at various points in this thesis (in particular, chapters 5 and 9) have indicated that the provision of programmes of generic range forms an important and explicit part of the BBC's public service obligations. However, in general the regulation of the BBC requires that the BBC provide a diverse range of programming across its various channels

and services. In radio, for example, there seems to be little problem with a number of networks being dedicated to specific genres, such music on Radio's 1, 2 & 3 and news, current affairs and sport on Radio 5 Live. The generic scope of Radio 4 seems to provide enough variety on radio to ensure that, as a whole, the generic range on radio is considered sufficient.

However, the same principle does not appear to hold good for television. On television, a broad generic range within a single channel schedule seems to be required for the channel to be permissible as a quality public service channel; generic range was key to the approvals for BBC3 and BBC4. Prior to this, one factor in the dismissal of BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge as public service channels of real quality was another indicator of the importance of genre diversity within a single channel schedule. Only news and current affairs appeared to be an exception to this rule. BBC News 24 and BBC Parliament secured approval on the basis of coverage of this genre. Nonetheless, there were ongoing rumblings in Parliament as to whether News 24 was an appropriate use of licence-fee payers' money when there were commercial broadcasters already providing twenty-four hour news channels, and News 24 was also subject to post-approval review by regulators. The importance of news to public service television, then, could secure single genre channels, although not comfortably, and all other channels had to be mixed genre to be real, quality public service channels. This was not only the case for the regulators but also to some extent to the BBC itself. Despite Mark Thompson's speech at Banff, greater genre specialisation of the main channels for the final channel portfolio was never pushed far and considerable generic diversity was maintained within each channel.

The value accorded to genre diversity has its roots firmly in the Reithian notions of public service broadcasting and those that followed, such as the 'cultural pyramid'. It rests on the idea that public service broadcasting involves the improvement of the masses, and that people's horizons can be broadened by encouraging them to watch and listen to enlightening programming that might not initially capture their interest. Reith suggested, metaphorically, that people should be brought into the 'church' or steered on the 'ship' that was the public service broadcaster, and given a diet of programming to lift them to share the intellectual preferences and tastes of the British middle classes. The cultural pyramid suggested that people could be culturally improved by capturing their interest with entertaining and popular programmes and moving them through to higher-brow educational or informational content through its relative proximity in the schedule

(see chapter 4). In terms of genre diversity, the idea that range should be available on a single channel is based firmly on this tradition and much public service scheduling practice was based on this idea, from the balancing of genres in the schedules when forward planning to 'hammocking' and 'tentpoling' more popular programmes with less popular ones (see chapter 6).

One has to ask at this stage whether such a vision of genre diversity still has any validity or whether it is just a vestige of public service broadcasting history. It rests on the assumption that proximity still works as a means to lure audiences to flow from a more popular programme to a less popular one. When there was channel scarcity this was perhaps a valid assumption; without much choice between channels, maybe viewers became engaged in a programme before or after the one they tuned in for. However, with a much greater variety of synchronous programmes available on a range of channels and with a remote control and an EPG, it could equally be assumed that people change channel rather than try a programme of a genre or subject that does not immediately take their fancy. Indeed it is the development of this alternative supposition about audience behaviour that underpinned the new scheduling practices described in this thesis (see chapter 6). The associated reconsideration of whether generic range within a single channel has any value in broadening the viewing of audiences, however, has not been thought through by those with a traditional view of public service broadcasting and, in particular, those involved in its regulation. Once all audiences have easy access to multiple channels, logic dictates that system diversity must be at least as important as channel diversity (chapter 5), and yet this appears not to be regulated with the same enthusiasm across the full public service or entire television system.

Neither has the assumption that audiences should aspire to middle class tastes and preferences been explicitly challenged or questioned. The emphasis on genre diversity is related to the comparative value accorded to different genres within the public service paradigm. News and current affairs is close to the top of the list of public service genres, closely followed by documentary, whereas certain forms of entertainment, such as quizzes and game shows sit closer to the bottom of the list. However, this view takes no account of how a genre may be inflected to meet the needs or desires of its target audience. It is, for example, no longer safe (if it ever was) to assume that all documentary has more of an educational or informational value than an entertainment programme (see Tracey, 1998:271). A documentary targeted at a late night, post-pub audience (an example might be Channel 5's *Sex and Shopping* (1998-)) might have less perceived public service

value than an entertainment programme, if that programme is successful in educating or informing its audience whilst entertaining them (in the way that, for example, *Celebdaq* (2003-), a programme about betting on celebrity, can teach its audience about the stock market). The fragmentation and targeting of audiences means it is no longer advisable to generalise about the value of different genres. Where a mass audience is assumed, genre may continue to be some use as a guide as to the value of a programme in a public service context, but where different target audience attitudes are taken into account in developing programme propositions, different approaches to traditional public service objectives are likely to make genre unreliable. 'Heartland' audiences may be best served through documentary, whereas the 'attitudinally young' may learn via entertainment and celebrity programming. With more channels with distinct target audiences developing different tones and styles of programming, considerations about the target audience and the scheduled slot can outweigh value judgements based on genre alone.

Another factor in the 'dumbing down' debate not often acknowledged is that often the terms of the debate set the two more established models of audience against each other in something of a false opposition. By this I mean that it is assumed that if something satisfies the criteria for it to be of value under one model, it is automatically deemed to be of no value under the other model. Thus, if under the audience-as-market model a programme achieves success in that it is popular, it cannot be of value under the audience-as-public model and is therefore not a worthy public service programme (see Tracey, 1998: 272; Frith, 2000: 40). During the research period, very few programmes appeared to transcend this opposition by being clearly popular and clearly of public service value to a range of observers. One of these was *Walking with Dinosaurs*, which therefore immediately became something of a holy grail for the BBC, spawning a number of spin-off *Walking with...* programmes. In its pamphlet challenging its critics, *BBC Television – a Chance to Make up your Own Mind* (2003) the BBC did nothing to challenge this opposition, listing many programmes with a good public service pedigree and low viewing figures, such as *Panorama* (1953-), or irrefutable public purpose, such as the funeral of the Queen Mother. It did not suggest any explicit criteria for their selection or explain the potential value of broadcasting programmes which were both popular and able to fulfil a public purpose. It seemed, therefore, tacitly to accept the terms of the debate as presented. Looking to the future, however, I would contend that unless this opposition is challenged and new terms are framed

for the debate, there will be no reason for the debate to move on and there can be no constructive thought about how popularity and public service principles can ensure that public service broadcasting continues to be relevant as the media industry and technology continue to develop. This will mean revisiting some of the debates about how success and popularity can be measured for public service broadcasters⁵. Failure to do this will also block any effective discussion of how the newer model of audience emerging, the lifestyle and consumption model, might offer opportunities to review what is of value in public service television.

10.4.2 *Universality, community and reality*

A second area where the development of channels throws the role of public service broadcasting into sharp relief relates to the continued creation and maintenance of a shared public sphere for the communication and debate of issues affecting the nation and its citizens (see chapter 2). Prior to the development of a multichannel television system, the majority of audiences could be expected to watch one of a limited number of terrestrial television channels. This supported the notion that television played a crucial part in the creation of a sense of nation. However, once there were multiple channels for people to choose between, a noticeable fragmentation of the audience took place and even programmes that had previously gained high ratings were less likely to find a large audience⁶. The development of a number of new BBC channels during the research period and the creation of the BBC's channel portfolio was a response to a relaxation of channel scarcity, but this also had the effect of leaving BBC1 as the only channel designed to cater for a mass audience and to deliver the universality inherent in the BBC's public service obligations; it was the channel which upheld the fundamental principle that public service broadcasting should have universal appeal in the sense of providing 'something for everyone' (see chapter 8) and the simultaneity that created a shared experience. BBC1 was, therefore, the channel which aimed to show programmes with a mass appeal that drew in a wide audience of people from different audience groups at the same time. As such, it had also become the only public service channel with the potential to maintain the public sphere for television in the way it had existed prior to the proliferation of channels in the UK.

However, at the same time, BBC1 was also subject to the same pressures towards audience fragmentation as other channels. Although it was commonly the audience-as-market model which emphasised the importance of large ratings, in the

context of the creation of a public sphere (and therefore the audience-as-public model) BBC1 could only do its job with continued success in ratings, share and reach, something that was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve. And if BBC1 would have difficulty in fulfilling this role, it was unlikely that any other single channel would be in a position to do so either. In terms of the BBC, the other channels were targeted at specific audience segments or had such low share (BBC News 24 or BBC Parliament) that whether or not they were likely to feature content focused towards the development of public information and debate, they could not provide the popular forum necessary to achieve a shared experience for the nation. And what was true for the BBC channels was also the case for other public service television providers in the UK. ITV, the other channel which might expect a significant proportion of available viewers, was also suffering from a decline in audience share due to the proliferation of viewing alternatives. When considering the future of public service broadcasting, it seems that the shared sense of nation and a united public sphere, underpinned by the limited number of channels available for most of the twentieth century, will continue to erode in the twenty-first century as more viewers take advantage of digital reception and the audience continues to fragment. It remains to be seen whether BBC1 can hold its own as the channel that unites the nation as a whole.

However, the potential for channels to create multiple spheres for debate and discussion, public 'sphericules' as Gitlin (1998) called them is something that merits further thought. One possibility centred on the move from the mass audience to more fragmented construction of audiences involves ideas about identity formation and the creation of community. Although a mass audience may no longer commonly experience the same programming at the same time on the same mass channel, it is possible that an audience group enjoying the programming on a particular channel and habitually viewing that channel could develop 'shared frames of reference' and 'common knowledge' referred to by Dahlgren (1995) in relation to that channel's content. A potential of the lifestyle and consumption model of audience is that channels with clearly defined identities and target audiences have the potential to 'construct' audiences. Channel content, informed by detailed research and elaborate audience profiles, may create 'typical' representations of that audience on screen, forming subject positions for a channel that comply with the audience profile. It is possible to conceive of a situation where channels create and support shared experiences and frames of reference amongst groups composed of those identifying with the representations of audience offered to them.

Common interests and concerns as well as shared experience and identification amongst dedicated channel viewers might form the basis of community in the broadest sense. Rather than the 'virtual communities' often discussed in relation to the internet (see Dyson, 1998:45; Rheingold, 2000), this would be an instance of television acting as a means through which 'imagined communities' are constructed. The most fundamental 'imagined community' has traditionally been the nation-state and television's role in constructing the national community has been based on the mass audience's universal access to radio and television and the shared experience of 'national' events as the audience-as-public. The proliferation of channels in the later twentieth century may have begun to undermine the capacity of television to provide this shared experience and the BBC's decision to use its channels, with the exception of BBC1, to target audience segments rather than the mass audience, may have continued to restrict opportunities for the construction of the nation as community, but there are potentially other imagined communities. If the characteristics of a common community include a shared experience at the same time, a common interest and sense of belonging, and an awareness of boundaries and difference from other communities (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998:116-7) then channels could contribute to the creation and maintenance of communities, real or imagined. And if a fundamental feature of community is their symbolically constructed character, dependent on a cultural production of meaning (Moore, 1996:25) channels are cultural products well placed to construct them. Although the issue of how audiences use channels is outside the scope of this thesis, there are studies indicating that channels targeted at specific audiences may be important in the maintenance of actual communities (see, for example, Strelitz, 2002; Georgiou, 2001; Liebes and Peri, 1998; Dayan, 1999) but it follows that niche channels with strong channel identities and well defined target audiences could also create imagined communities; the identification of an 'MTV generation' is an indication of this (see Juluri, 2002). This is one of the possibilities for public service broadcasting resulting from the adoption of the consumption and lifestyle model of audience which, in creating new subject positions and representing individualised audiences back to themselves, also creates opportunities to generate communities around target audience groups. The creation and maintenance of actual and virtual communities by television channels merits further investigation by anyone interested in the developing potential and relevance of public service broadcasting in twenty-first century. The potential also exists for the channels for these communities to act as multiple public spheres (see chapter 2). A debate remains as to how far these

separate spheres would need to interact to sustain some of the function of the older unitary public sphere and how far this would be either possible or realistic in the more pluralistic society that has developed since the later twentieth century. However, it may be reasonable to assume that this interaction may happen through people's membership of multiple imagined communities and their associated spheres.

The importance of the developments relating to the consumption and lifestyle model of audience can be taken one step further. Channels, through their targeting towards segmented and individualised audiences also, arguably, have the capacity to represent alternative realities. One strand of media studies has concerned itself with television's capacity to reflect, represent or distort reality through its choices of what is shown and how these things are shown (see, for example, Alasuutari, 1999:89; Anastasio et al, 1999; Fleras & Kunz, 2001: 48-53). Channels, targeted at different segmented and profiled audiences, are constantly making choices about what should be shown to that target audience and the tone and style that should inflect it. At various stages in this thesis I have indicated that programming within different genres varies greatly according to the target audience, with, for example, news programmes aimed at the viewers of BBC1 and BBC2 being significantly different from each other and different again from those on BBC3, on BBC4, or BBC News 24. Each news programme has its own news agenda and priorities, reflecting what broadcasters feel to be of interest the target audience. Programmes may produce separate reports of the same events, highlighting different aspects of the same news story. Alasuutari identifies two models of the role of the media in relation to a broader reality, one in which the media is equated directly with the 'outside world', the other in which media is a channel to the world which may present a transparent or distorting representation of the world (1999:89). The existence of multiple versions of news on different channels suggests that each channel is in the business of reflecting and/or representing its own version of reality to its particular target audience. They could also potentially be developing their own televisual languages for doing so (see Price, 1995:53-4). Imagining for a moment a more extreme situation than the one that exists currently in the UK, one where different groups are catered for by different channels and where there is little or no common territory, it is possible to suppose that different audiences would experience very different but internally consistent realities in relation to their perception of news and current affairs (and other genres). As audiences continue to fragment across all media and consumers become more segmented, defined, and rigorously profiled

and the resulting media content more and more tailored, the effects of television joining this trend might be of some consequence to the experiences of 'reality' available to different audience groups. This adds a new dimension to Born's comments that broadcasters' projections about audience expectations, habits and tastes can restructure not only the reality of the broadcasting industry in which they operate but also delimit the alternatives available to media audiences (2003b: 794); arguably, it can also structure their perceptions of their worlds.

10.5 Some final thoughts

To sum up, the development of channels in the late twentieth century, with their deliberately manufactured identities associated with specific, targeted audience segments, has significant implications for the role of a public service broadcaster and how this can be fulfilled. These implications have yet to be fully addressed either by the BBC or by those who regulate public service broadcasting, and there is no sign that these issues have been taken up from either point of view as part of the Communications Act 2003 or by the new regulator that it set up, Ofcom. If both the BBC and the regulators continue along their current trajectory, it seems that the principle of universality in terms of encouraging national unity, and the idea of a comprehensive public sphere will diminish in favour of the principle of genre diversity based on assumptions which relate to public broadcasting in an 'age of scarcity' which has now passed (Ellis, 2000). Although structural factors might make the maintenance of the public sphere in its current form impossible, there nonetheless needs to be some debate around the privileging of the idea of genre diversity in debates about public service television to challenge the assumptions about (middle class) cultural values, to examine the potential public purposes of popularity for public service programming and to adapt to changes in the structure and organisation of television and viewing practice.

Another challenge for the BBC and the regulators emerging from developments in the organisation of television during this period is how to harness the opportunities offered by changing models of audience. On the one hand there is the possibility for the BBC of freeing itself, at least to some extent, from the constant burden of the 'dumbing down' debate by challenging some of the underlying presuppositions about the compatibility of the audience-as-public and audience-as-market paradigms. On the other hand, there is an opportunity for all to begin to articulate a response to the lifestyle and consumption model of audience and to

harness the possibilities that this model presents to enhance or enrich public service broadcasting without falling into the most obvious pitfall that accompanies it, that of generating or perpetuating pointless or damaging stereotypes.

For academics and commentators on television and public service broadcasting, the implications of this research are a little different. There has been a tendency, especially in the UK, to ignore some of the organising structures of television such as channels, perhaps because their existence seems so familiar and unproblematic. However, having established through this thesis that channels exist as cultural products which have a significant impact on the organisation and provision of television, there are opportunities to take this work in a number of directions, pursuing their role in public service delivery, examining the development of channel brands as part of digital television, and interrogating the relationship between channels, their texts and their audiences, to name but a few.

Notes

¹ See, for example, Negroponte (1995:153-4) on personalisation and the internet and, in particular, his example of the *Daily Me*, illustrating its possibilities in relation to news.

² This argument tended to equate the viewer with 'the empowered consumer' (Ytreberg, 2002:285).

³ Access to digital television on any platform was estimated at just under 50% at the end of 2003 (DCMS, 2003).

⁴ There was a suspicion that this attitude rested primarily with the 'heartland' audience.

⁵ See Picard, 2002; Dahlgren, 1995:30; Steemers, 1998:104; Born 2003a for discussion of ratings and measures of success.

⁶ The BBC's overall television share was down from 45% in 1996 to 35% in 2003 (DCMS, 2003)

References

- ABERCROMBIE, Nicholas and LONGHURST, Brian (1998) *Audiences: a Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*, London: Sage
- ADAMS, William J (1997) "Scheduling practices based on audience flow: what are the effects on new programme success?", *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 74, no. 4, pp 839 - 858
- ADAMS, William J (1993) "TV Program Scheduling Strategies and their relationship to New Program Renewal rates and Rating Changes", *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp 465 - 474
- AHLKVIST, Jarl A (2001) "Programming Philosophies and the Rationalisation of Music Radio", *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 23, no.3, pp 339 - 358
- ALASUUTARI, Pertti (1999) "Cultural images of the media" in *The Media Audience*, ALASUUTARI, Pertti (ed.) pp 86-104, London: Sage
- ALASUUTARI, Pertti (1995) *Researching Culture: qualitative methods and cultural studies*, London: Sage
- ANASTASIO, Phyllis, ROSE, Karen C and CHAPMAN, Judith (1999) "Can the media create public opinion? A social identity approach" *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, vol. 8, no. 5, pp 152 - 155
- ANDERSEN, Robin (1995) *Consumer Culture and TV Programming*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press
- ANDERSON, Benedict (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (revised edition) London: Verso
- ANDERSON, Keith (1990) "The management and organisation of BBC Television's programme-making process" in *Organising for Change*, PATERSON, Richard (ed.) London: BFI
- ANG, Ien (1991) *Desperately Seeking the Audience*, New York: Routledge
- AVERY, Robert K and OWEN, Suzann Mitten (2002) "Promotion in public television and radio" in *Promotion and Marketing for Broadcasting, Cable and the Web*, EASTMAN, Susan Tyler; FERGUSON, Douglas A; KLEIN, Robert A (eds) pp 153 - 174 Boston: Focal Press
- BAKER, C Edwin (2002) *Media, Markets and Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- BARB (2000) *Establishment Survey of Homes: June 2000*, London: BARB/RSMB
- BARNETT, Steven and CURRY, Andrew (1994) *The Battle for the BBC*, London: Aurum Press
- BBC (2003) *BBC Television – a Chance to Make Up Your Own Mind*, London: BBC
- BBC (2001) *One Year On*, London: BBC
- BBC (2000) *New Services from the BBC*, London: BBC

References

- BBC (1998) *The BBC Beyond 2000*, London: BBC
- BBC (1996) *Extending Choice in the Digital Age*, London: BBC
- BBC (1969) *Broadcasting in the Seventies*, London: BBC
- BENNETT, Tony (1996) "Figuring audiences and readers" in *The Audience and its Landscape* HAY, James, GROSSBERG, Lawrence and WARTELLA, Ellen (eds) Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press
- BERGER, Arthur Asa (1982) *Media Analysis Techniques*, Beverley Hills: Sage
- BLUMLER, Jay G (1996) "Recasting the audience in the new television marketplace" in *The Audience and its Landscape*, HAY, James, GROSSBERG, Lawrence and WARTELLA, Ellen (eds) Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press
- BLUMLER, Jay G (1991) "Vulnerable values at stake" in *Television and the Public Interest: Vulnerable Values in West European Broadcasting*, BLUMLER, Jay G (ed.) pp 22 – 42, London: Sage
- BORN, Georgina (2003a) "Uncertain futures: public service television and the transition to digital - a comparative analysis of the digital television strategies of the BBC and Channel 4", *Media@LSE Electronic Working Papers* No. 3, pp 1 - 41
- BORN, Georgina (2003b) Strategy, positioning and projection in digital television: Channel Four and the commercialisation of public service broadcasting in the UK, *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 25, no. 6, pp 773 - 799
- BORN, Georgina (2000) "Inside television: television studies and the sociology of culture" *Screen*, vol 41, no. 4, pp 404 - 424
- BORN, Georgina and PROSSER, Tony (2001) "Culture and Consumerism: Public Service Broadcasting and the BBC's Fair Trading Obligations", *The Modern Law Review*, vol. 64, no. 5, pp 657 - 687
- BRIGGS, Asa (1995) *The History of Broadcasting in the UK, Volume V: Competition*, Oxford: OUP
- BRIGGS, Asa (1985) *The BBC: The First Fifty Years*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- BROOKER, Will (2003) "Conclusion" in *The Audience Studies Reader*, BROOKER, Will and JERMYN, DEBORAH (eds) pp 322 – 334, London: Routledge
- BROWNE, Nick (1987) "The political economy of the television (super) text" in *Television: the critical view*, NEWCOMB, Horace (ed.) pp 585 – 599, New York: OUP
- BROWNRIGG, Mark and MEECH, Peter (2002) "From fanfare to funfair: the changing sound world of UK television idents", *Popular Music*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp 345 - 355
- BRUNSDON, Charlotte (1982) "Crossroads: notes on soap opera" *Screen*, vol.22, no. 4
- BRUNSDON, Charlotte; JOHNSTONE, Catherine; MOSELEY, Rachel and WHEATLEY, Helen (2001) "Factual entertainment on British television", *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp 29 -62
- BUCKINGHAM, David, DAVIES, Hannah, JONES, Ken and KELLEY, Peter (1999) *Children's Television in Britain*, London: BFI
- BURNS, Tom (1977) *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World*, London: MacMillan

References

- BUTLER, Jeremy G (1994) *Television: Critical Methods and Applications*, Belmont, CA: International Thomson Publishing
- CANTOR, Muriel and CANTOR, Joel (1992) *Prime Time Television: content and control*, Newbury Park: Sage
- CHALABY, Jean K and SEGELL, Glen (1999) "The broadcast media in the age of risk", *New Media and Society*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp 351 -368
- CHRIS, Cynthia (2002) "All documentary, all the time?", *Television and New Media*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp 7 - 28
- COLLINS, Richard (1998) "Supper with the Devil - a case study in private/public collaboration in Broadcasting: the genesis of Eurosport", *Media, Culture & Society*, vol.20, no. 4, pp 653 - 663
- CONNELL, Ian and MILLS, Adam (1985) "Text, discourse and mass communication" in *Discourse and Communication*, VAN DIJK, Tuen (ed.) Berlin: Walter de Gruyter
- COOPER, R (1996) "The status and future of audience duplication research: an assessment of ratings based theories of audience behaviour", *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, vol. 40, pp 96 - 111
- COTTLE, Simon (1997) *Television and Ethnic Minorities: Producers' Perspectives*, Aldershot, UK: Avebury
- COTTLE, Simon (1995) "Producer-driven television?", *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp 169 - 176
- CRISELL, Andrew (2001) *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, London: Routledge
- CRISELL, Andrew (1986) *Understanding Radio*, London: Methuen
- CURRAN, James (1998) "Crisis of public communication" in *Media, Ritual and Identity*, LIEBES, Tamar and CURRAN, James (eds), pp 175 – 202, London: Routledge
- CURRAN, James (1991) "Rethinking the media as a public sphere" in *Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere in the New Media Age*, DAHLGREN, Peter and SPARKS, Colin (eds), London: Routledge
- CURRAN, James and SEATON, Jean (1997) *Power without responsibility. the press and broadcasting in Britain*, London: Routledge
- DAHLGREN, Peter (1995) *Television and the Public Sphere*, London: Sage
- DAYAN, Daniel (2001) "The peculiar public of television", *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 23, no. 6, pp 743 - 765
- DAYAN, Daniel (1999) "Media and diasporas" in *Television and Common Knowledge* GRIPSRUD, Jostein (ed.), pp 22 – 33, London: Routledge
- DAYAN, Daniel (1998) "Particularistic media and diasporic communications" in *Media, Ritual and Identity* LIEBES, Tamar and CURRAN, James (eds), pp 103 – 113, London: Routledge
- DEPT of CULTURE, MEDIA and SPORT (2003) *Review of the BBC's Royal Charter*, London: DCMS
- DEACON, David, PICKERING, Michael, GOLDING, Peter and MURDOCK, Graham (1999) *Researching Communications*, London: Arnold

References

- DEAKIN, Simon and PRATTEN, Stephen (2000) "Quasi Markets, transaction costs, and trust", *Television and New Media*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp 321 -354
- DELL, Edmund (1999) "Controversies in the early history of Channel Four" in *The Making of Channel 4*, CATERALL, Peter (ed.), pp 60 - 78 London: Frank Cass
- DOCHERTY, David (1995) "Confessions of a justified scheduler" in *The Scheduling Game*, HARGRAVE, Andrea Millward (ed.), pp 121 - 127 London: John Libbey
- DOCHERTY, David, MORRISON, David & TRACEY, Micheal (1988) *Keeping Faith: Channel Four and its Audience*, London: John Libbey
- DU GAY, P., HALL, S., JANES, L. and NEGUS, K. (1997) *Doing Cultural Studies: the case of the Sony Walkman*, London: Sage
- DYER, Richard (1977) *Gays and Film*, London: BFI
- DYSON, Esther (1998) *Release 2.1: A Design for Living in a Digital Age*, London: Penguin
- EASTMAN, Susan Tyler, NEWTON, Gregory D, RIGGS, Karen E, and NEAL-LUNSFORD, Jeffrey (1997) "Accelerating the flow: a transition effect in programming theory?", *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, vol. 41, no. 2, pp 265 - 283
- EASTMAN, Susan Tyler; FERGUSON, Douglas A ; KLEIN, Robert A (2002) "Marketing the media: scope and goals" in *Promotion and Marketing for Broadcasting, Cable and the Web*, EASTMAN, Susan Tyler; FERGUSON, Douglas A; KLEIN, Robert A (eds), pp1 – 28, Boston: Focal Press
- ELLIS, John (2000) *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty*, London: IB Tauris
- ELLIS, John (1982) *Visible Fictions: Cinema, television, video*, London: Routledge
- ELSTEIN, David (1995) "Scheduling for a multichannel service" in *The Scheduling Game* HARGRAVE, Andrea Millward (ed.), London: John Libbey
- FANTHOME, Christine (2003) *Channel 5: The Early Years*, Luton: University of Luton Press
- FERGUSON, Douglas A (2002) "Network television promotion" in *Promotion and Marketing for Broadcasting, Cable and the Web*, EASTMAN, Susan Tyler; FERGUSON, Douglas A; KLEIN, Robert A (eds), pp 79 – 96, Boston: Focal Press
- FERGUSON, Marjorie (1983) *Forever Feminine: Women's magazines and the Cult of Femininity*, London: Heinemann
- FISKE, John (1987) *Television Culture*, London: Routledge
- FLERAS, Augie and KUNZ, Jean Lock (2001) *Representing Diversity in a Multicultural Canada*, Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing
- FOX, Paul (1969) *This is BBC1*, London: BBC
- FRITH, Simon (2000) "The black box: the value of television and the future of television research", *Screen*, vol. 41, no. 1
- FRITH, Simon (1988) *Music for Pleasure: Essays in the Sociology of Pop*, Cambridge: Polity in association with Blackwell
- GANS, Herbert J (1979) *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBS Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*, New York: Pantheon Books

References

- GARNHAM, N (1990) *Capitalism and Communications*, London: Sage
- GEERTZ, C (1988) *Works and Lives: the Anthropologist as Author*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- GEORGIU, Myria (2001) "Crossing the boundaries of the ethnic home", *Gazette*, vol. 63, no. 4, pp 311 - 329
- GILLESPIE, Marie (1995) *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*, London: Routledge
- GITLIN, Todd (1998) "Public sphere or public sphericles?", in *Media, Ritual and Identity*, LIEBES, Tamar and CURRAN, James (eds), pp 168 – 174, London: Routledge
- GLEDHILL, Christine (1997) "Genre and gender: the case of soap opera" in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, HALL, Stuart (ed.), pp 337 – 386, London: Sage
- GOLDING, P and MURDOCK, G (1991) "Culture, communication and political economy" in *Mass Media and Society*, CURRAN, J and GUREVITCH, M (eds), London: Edward Arnold
- GOODWIN, Peter (1998) *Television under the Tories: Broadcasting Policy 1979 – 1997*, London: BFI
- GRIPSRUD, Jostein (1999) "Scholars, journalism, television" in *Television and Common Sense*, GRIPSRUD, Jostein (ed.), pp 34 – 52, London: Routledge
- GROSS, Larry (1998) "Minorities, majorities and the media" in *Media, Ritual and Identity*, LIEBES, Tamar and CURRAN, James (eds), pp 87 – 102, London: Routledge
- HAGEN, Ingunn (1999) "Slaves of the ratings tyranny? media images of the audience" in *Rethinking the Media Audience*, ALASUUTARI, Pertti (ed.), pp 130 – 150, London: Sage
- HALL, Stuart (1997) "The spectacle of the 'other'" in *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, HALL, Stuart (ed.), pp 223 – 290, London: Sage
- HALL, Stuart (1996) "Who needs identity?" in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, HALL, Stuart and DU GAY, Paul (eds.), pp 1 – 17, London: Sage
- HAMMERSLEY, Martyn (1992) *What's Wrong with Ethnography*, London: Routledge
- HAMMERSLEY, Martyn and ATKINSON, Paul (1983) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, London: Routledge
- HARVEY, Sylvia (1996) "Channel Four Television: from Annan to Grade" in *British Television: A Reader*, BUSCOMBE, Edward (ed.), pp 92 – 117, Oxford: OUP
- HELLMAN, Heike (2001) "Diversity - an End in Itself?", *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp 181 - 208
- HILLVE, Peter, MAJANEN, Peter and ROSENGREN, Karl Erik (1997) "Aspects of quality in TV programming: structural diversity compared over time and space", *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp 291 - 318
- HMSO (1988) *Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality*, London: HMSO
- HMSO (1980) *Broadcasting Act*, London: HMSO
- HOOD, Stuart and TABARY-PETERSEN, Thalia (1997) *On Television*, London: Pluto Press

References

- HOYNES, William (1994) *Public Television for Sale: Media, the Market and the Public Sphere*, Oxford: Westview Press
- INDEPENDENT TELEVISION COMMISSION (2001) *Developments in the UK Television Market*, London: ITC
- JANSSON, Andre (2002) "The mediatization of consumption", *Journal of Consumer Culture*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp 5 - 31
- JENSEN, Klaus Bruhn (1996) "Reception as flow" in *Television Times: A Reader CORNER*, John and HARVEY, Sylvia (eds), London: Arnold
- JHALLY, Sut (1990) *The Codes of Advertising*, London: Routledge
- JULURI, Vamsee (2002) "Music television and the invention of youth culture in India", *Television and New Media*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp 367 - 386
- KEANE, J (1991) *The Media and Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity
- KILBORN, Richard and IZOD, John (1997) *An Introduction to Television Documentary: Confronting Reality*, Manchester: Manchester University Press
- KUMAR, Krishan (1986) "Public service broadcasting and the public interest" in *The BBC and Public Service Broadcasting*, McCABE, C and STEWART, O (eds), Manchester: Manchester University Press
- KUMAR, Krishan (1977) "Holding the middle ground: the BBC, the public and the professional broadcaster" in *Mass Communication and Society*, CURRAN, J, GUREVITCH, M and WOOLLACOTT (eds), pp 231 – 248, London: Edward Arnold
- KUSTOW, Michael (1987) *One in Four: A Year in the Life of a Channel Four Commissioning Editor*, London: Chatto and Windus
- LAMBERT, Stephen (1982) *Channel Four: Television with a Difference*, London: BFI
- LAMBIE-NAIRN, Martin (1998) *Brand identity for Television: With Knobs On*, London: Phaidon
- LASH, Scott (2002) *Critique of Information*, London: Sage
- LASH, Scott and URRY, John (1994) *Economies of Signs and Space*, London: Sage
- LESHNER, G, REEVES, B and NASS, C (1998) "Switching channels: the effects of television channels on mental representations of television news", *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, vol. 42, no. 1, pp 21 - 33
- LIEBES, Tamar and PERI, Yoram (1998) "Electronic journalism in segmented societies: lessons from the 1996 Israeli elections", *Political Communication*, vol. 15, pp 27 - 43
- LIGHT, Julie (1994) "Cooperation and compromise: coproduction and public service broadcasting", *Screen*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp 78 - 90
- LURY, Celia (1993) *Cultural Rights: Technology, Legality and Personality*, London: Routledge
- MACKAY, Hugh (1997) "Introduction" and "Consuming communication technologies at home" in *Consumption and Everyday Life*, MACKAY, Hugh (ed.), London: Sage
- MADGE, Tim (1989) *Beyond the BBC*, London: MacMillan

References

- MATELSKI, Maralyn J (1991) *Daytime Television Programming*, Boston: Focal Press
- McDONNELL, James (1991) *Public Service Broadcasting: A Reader*, London: Broadcasting Research Unit
- McDOWELL, Walter and SUTHERLAND, John (2000) "Choice versus chance: using brand equity theory to explore TV audience lead-in effects, a case study", *Journal of Media Economics*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp 233 - 247
- McQUAIL, Denis (1997) *Audience Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- McQUAIL, Denis (1992) *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest*, London: Sage
- MEECH, Peter (1999) "Television clutter - the British experience", *Corporate Communications*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp 37 - 42
- MEEHAN, Eileen R (1990) "The commodity audience" in *Logics of Television* MELLENCAMP, Patricia (ed.), London: BFI Publishing
- MEIER, Henk Eric (2003) "Beyond convergence: understanding programme strategies of public service broadcasters in competitive environments", *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp 337 - 365
- MILLER, Toby (2001) "Cultural citizenship", *Television and New Media*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp 183 - 186
- MODLESKI, Tania (1983) "The rhythms of reception: daytime television and women's work" in *Regarding Television*, KAPLAN, E Ann (ed.), pp 67 - 75, Los Angeles: AFI
- MOORES, Shaun (2001) *Media and Everyday Life in Modern Society*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- MOORES, Shaun (1997) "Broadcasting and its audiences" in *Consumption and Everyday Life*, MACKAY, Hugh (ed.), pp 259 - 308, London: Sage
- MOORES, Shaun (1996) *Satellite Television and Everyday Life*, Luton: Luton University Press
- MORLEY, David (1997) "Theoretical Orthodoxies: textualism, constructivism and the 'new ethnography' in cultural studies" in *Cultural Studies in Question*, FERGUSON, Marjorie and GOLDING, Peter (eds), London: Sage
- MORLEY, David (1990) "Behind the ratings: the politics of audience research" in *The Neglected Audience* WILLIS, Janet and WOLLEN, Tana (eds), London: BFI
- MORLEY, David and SILVERSTONE, Roger (1991) "Communication and context: ethnographic perspectives on the media audience" in *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies*, JENSEN, Klaus Bruhn & JANKOWSKI, Nicholas W (eds), London: Routledge
- MOSS, Nicholas (1991) *The Network Television Story*, London: BBC
- MULLAN, Bob (1997) *Consuming Television*, London: Blackwell
- MURDOCK, Graham (2000) "Money talks: finance and public culture" in *British Television: A Reader*, BUSCOMBE, Edward (ed.), pp 118 - 141, Oxford: OUP

References

- MURDOCK, Graham (1999) "Rights and representations: public discourse and cultural citizenship" in *Television and Common Sense*, GRIPSRUD, Jostein (ed.), pp 5 - 17 London: Routledge
- MURDOCK, Graham (1990) "Television and citizenship: in defence of public service broadcasting" in *Consumption, identity and style: marketing meanings and the packaging of pleasure*, TOMLINSON, Alan (ed.), London: Routledge
- MURSCHETZ, Peter (2002) "Public service television at the digital crossroads - the case of Austria", *The International Journal on Media Management*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp 85 - 94
- MYERS, Greg (1999) *Ad Worlds: Brands, Media, Audiences*, London: Arnold
- NEGROPONTE, Nicholas (1995) *Being Digital*, Chatham, Kent: Hodder and Stoughton
- NICHOLYCHUK, Lynne A (2002) "The evolution of make/buy contracting for UK independent television (ITV)", *The International Journal on Media Management*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp 118 - 122
- PACHAURI, Moneesha (2002) "Consumer behaviour: a literature review", *The Marketing Review*, vol. 2, pp 319 - 355
- PATERSON, Richard (1993) "Planning the family: the art of the television schedule" in *The Screen Education Reader*, ALVARADO, Manuel, BUSCOMBE, Edward and COLLINS, Richard (eds), London: MacMillan
- PATERSON, Richard (1990) "A suitable schedule for the family" in *Understanding Television*, GOODWIN, Andrew and WHANNEL, Gary (eds), London: Routledge
- PERSE, Elizabeth M (1998) "Implications of cognitive and affective involvement for channel changing", *Journal of Communication*, vol. 48, no. 3, pp 49 - 68
- PETERSON, Richard A (1994) "Culture study through the production perspective: progress and prospects" in *The Sociology of Culture* CRANE, Diana (ed.), pp 163 - 189 Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell
- PICARD, Robert, G (2002) "Research note: assessing audience performance of public service broadcasters", *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp 227 - 235
- PRICE, Monroe E (1995) *Television: the Public Sphere and National Identity*, Oxford: Clarendon Press
- REITH, John (1949) *Into the Wind*, London: Hodder and Stoughton
- RHEINGOLD, Howard (2000) *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT
- ROBINS, Kevin and CORNFORD, James (1992) "What is 'flexible' about independent producers?", *Screen*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp 190 - 200
- ROSENFELD, Louise and MORVILLE, Peter (2002) *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web*, Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly
- SALAMAN, Graeme (1997) "Culturing production" in *Production of Culture/Cultures of Production*, DU GAY, Paul (ed.), London: Sage
- SCANNELL, Paddy (2000) "For-anyone-as-someone structures", *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 22, no.1, pp 5 - 24
- SCANNELL, Paddy (1996) *Radio, television and modern life*, Oxford: Blackwell

References

- SCANNELL, Paddy (1990) "Public service broadcasting: the history of a concept" in *Understanding Television*, GOODWIN, Andrew and WHANNEL, Gary (eds), London: Routledge
- SCANNELL, Paddy (1988) "Radio Times: The temporal arrangements of broadcasting in the modern world" in *Television and its Audience: International Research Perspectives*, DRUMMOND, Phillip and PATERSON, Richard (eds), London: BFI
- SCHLESINGER, Philip (1987) *Putting Reality Together*, London: Methuen
- SCHLESINGER, Philip (1980) "Between sociology and journalism" in *The Sociology of Journalism and the Press*, CHRISTIAN, H (ed.), Keele: Sociological Review Monograph 29
- SCHWARTZMAN, Helen (1993) *Ethnography in Organisations*, London: Sage
- SEITER, Ellen (1993) *Sold Separately: Children and Parents in Consumer Culture*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press
- SENDALL, B (1982) *Independent Television in Britain: Volume 1 - Origin and Foundation 1946 – 1962*, London: MacMillan
- SILVERMAN, David (1993) *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*, London: Sage
- SILVERMAN, David (1985) *Qualitative Methodology and Sociology*, Aldershot, UK: Gower
- SILVERSTONE, Roger (1994) *Television and Everyday Life*, London: Routledge
- SILVERSTONE, Roger (1985) *Framing Science*, London: BFI
- SILVEY, R (1974) *Who's Listening: the Story of BBC Audience Research*, London: George Allen & Unwin
- SMITH, Anthony (1985) *Licences and Liberty*, London: Acton Society Trust
- SOLOMON, Michael R (2002) *Consumer Behaviour: Buying, Having and Being*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall
- STEEMERS, Janette (1998) "On the threshold of the 'digital age': prospects for public service broadcasting" in *Changing Channels: The Prospects for Television in a Digital World* STEEMERS, Janette (ed.), pp 97 – 124, Luton: John Libbey
- STRELITZ, Larry Nathan (2002) "Media consumption and identity formation: the case of the 'homeland' viewers", *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 24, no. 4, pp 459 - 480
- STUBBS, Michael (1983) *Discourse Analysis*, Oxford: Blackwell
- TODREAS, Timothy M (1999) *Value Creation and Branding in Television's Digital Age*, Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books
- TRACEY, Michael (1998) *The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting*, Oxford: OUP
- TRACEY, Michael (1978) *The Production of Political Television*, London: Routledge
- TUNSTALL, Jeremy (1993) *Television Producers*, London: Routledge
- VAN CUILENBURG, Jan and MCQUAIL, Denis (2003) "Media policy paradigm shifts: towards a new communications policy paradigm", *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp 181 - 207

References

- VAN DIJK, Teun (1998) *Ideology: an Multidisciplinary Approach*, London: Sage
- VAN DIJK, Teun (1988) *News as Discourse*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
- WEBSTER, James and PHALEN, Patricia (1994) "Victim, consumer or commodity? audience models in communication policy" in *Audience-making: How the Media Create the Audience*, ETTEMA, James S and WHITNEY, D Charles (eds), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- WEBSTER, James G (1998) "The audience", *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, vol. 42, no. 2, pp 190 - 207
- WERNICK, Andrew (1991) *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression*, London: Sage
- WILLIAMS, F, RICE, R and ROGERS, E (1988) *Research Methods and the New Media*, London: The Free Press
- WILLIAMS, Raymond (1989) *Raymond Williams on Television*, O'CONNOR, Alan (ed.), London: Routledge
- WILLIAMS, Raymond (1974) *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, London: Fontana
- WILLIS, Paul (1980) "Notes on method" in *Culture, Media, Language*, HALL, Stuart, HOBSON, Dorothy, LOWE, Andrew and WILLIS, Paul (eds), London: Unwin Hyman
- YTREBERG, Espen (2002a) "Continuity in environments", *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 17, no. 3, pp 283-304
- YTREBERG, Espen (2002b) "Ideal types in public service television: paternalists and bureaucrats, charismatic and avant-gardists", *Media, Culture and Society*, vol.24, no. 6, pp 759 - 774

Newspapers and magazines

- Ariel* (22.09.1998) "A channel for the new age"
- Ariel* (26.03.1997) "BBC Broadcast - opening the channels"
- The Guardian* (17.10.2002) "BBC3 strays from the straight and narrow"
- The Guardian* (17.09.2002) "BBC3 schedule of conditions: conditions set out for launch of BBC3 by culture secretary Tessa Jowell"
- The Guardian* (09.07.2002) "MPs attack 'dumbed down' BBC"
- The Guardian* (07.01.2002) "Behind the screens"
- The Guardian* (13.09.2001) "Jowell's block shocks BBC", Jason Deans
- The Guardian* (26.08.2001) "BBC boss blasts reality TV"
- The Independent* (28.11.2000) "It's enough to make you switch off"

Appendices

Appendix I: Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Term	Explanation
Animation	Used in the context of channel animation, an identity sequence shown with voice-over in a junction.
BARB	Broadcasters' Audience Research Board
BRU	Broadcasting Research Unit
Continuity	Announcements and materials between programmes on a channel
DBS	Direct broadcasting by satellite.
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
DTT	Digital terrestrial transmission.
EPG	Electronic programme guide.
Hammocking	Scheduling technique of placing a less popular programme between two popular ones.
Ident	An identity sequence identifying a channel on air.
Interstitial	Materials between programmes, such as idents, animations and trails.
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
ICG	Independent Commissioning Group
ITA	Independent Television Authority
ITC	Independent Television Commission
Junction	Point in the schedule between two programmes, often at a common time on two or more channels .
Off air	Published neither on television or radio.
On air	Transmitted on television or radio.
Presentation	The function of putting a channel on air, including continuity and authorising materials for transmission.
Promotion	See trail
PSR	Programme strategy review
PVR	Personal video recorder

Appendices

Ratings	Viewing measurement usually expressed as numbers of viewers (often in millions).
Reach	Percentage of viewing audience accessing a broadcast service in a given week.
Share	Percentage of the total viewing audience watching a given channel or service at a given time.
Tentpoling	Scheduling tactic of placing a popular programme between two less popular ones
TiVo	Brand name of the first PVRs marketed in the UK.
Trail	Short promotional film for genres, service or forthcoming programmes, usually shown in junctions.
TVR	Television rating, a measurement used in the placement of trails and promotions.
VCR	Video cassette recorder

Appendix II: Chronology

Date	Event
1922	Formation of the British Broadcasting Company with John Reith as General Manager
1927	British Broadcasting Company becomes British Broadcasting Corporation and Reith is appointed as Director General
1935	Selsden report recommends that television is funded by BBC licence fee
1936	Launch of BBC television service following outcomes of the Ullswater report
1939	Suspension of television service. Radio networks combined as Home Service
1942	Launch of Forces Service
1945	Launch of Light Programme
1946	Television service resumed. Launch of Third Programme
1951	Beveridge report
1955	Launch of ITV
1962	Pilkington report
1964	Launch of BBC2 with UHF/ 625 line transmission. Existing television service renamed BBC1
1967	Colour transmission begins on BBC2 . Radio 1 is launched and other networks renamed Radio 2, Radio 3 and Radio 4.
1969	Colour television extended to BBC1 and ITV . <i>Broadcasting in the Seventies</i> published
1972	ITA becomes IBA
1977	Annan report
1982	Launch of Channel 4
1984	Cable and Broadcasting Act places cable television under the control of Cable Authority
1986	Peacock report
1989	Sky launches DBS television service
1990	BSB launches DBS service. Broadcasting Act replaces the IBA with the ITC
1991	BBC World is launched as a worldwide television news service. Sky relaunches as BSkyB and launches CNN

1992	UK Gold is launched as a commercial channel exploiting the BBC archive
1995	BBC Prime is launched in Europe
1996	BBC publishes <i>Extending Choice in the Digital Age</i> explaining its vision for digital services. Broadcasting Act requires BBC and ITV to sell their transmission facilities. First review of commissioning commences
1997	BBC News 24 is launched. New organisational structure is implemented, known as the 'Broadcast / Production split'. BBC launches UKTV channels in commercial partnership with Flextech. Second review of commissioning commences
1998	BBC Choice starts digital transmission as a public service channel and BBC Parliament is also launched. BBC America starts broadcasting in the USA in commercial partnership with Discovery. ONdigital launch first British DTT service.
1999	BBC Knowledge is launched.
2000	'One BBC' reorganisation announced. Channel portfolio proposition launched. Third review of commissioning commences
2002	BBC Knowledge is relaunched as BBC4 , and CBeebies and CBBC are launched. DCMS turn down original application for approval for BBC3 and later approve revised application.
2003	BBC Choice is relaunched as BBC3

Appendix III: Themes for semi-structured interviews

Introduction

Overview of research

Confirm interview duration and form.

Get permission to use tape recorder.

Explain timing and publication of the PhD

Get permission to use quotations and check about anonymity and attribution.

Commissioning

Relationship between programmes and channels

Relationship between genres and channels

What 'works' for specific channels

Passing programmes and ideas between channels

Channel strategy

Main competition for each channel

Main influences on development of current commissioning patterns for each channel

Development and current status of commissioning process

Audiences

Target audiences for BBC channels

100 Tribes and other research initiatives

Impact of audience information on decision-making

How channel audiences are visualised

Scheduling

Schedules as a continuous flow

How much scheduling is determined by competitor schedules

Scheduling tools and tactics

Theme nights and weekends and relationship with channels

Zoning the schedule

Other developments in scheduling practice

How target audiences vary across day/week/year

Marketing and On-Screen Identity

Channels as brands

Channel positioning

Appendices

Relationship between on-screen identity and channels

Development of on-screen identity

Trails and promotion

Portrayal of channel values in trails and continuity announcements

Portrayal of audiences in trails

Public service broadcasting

The BBC's public service mission

How channels contribute to the fulfilment of the public service mission

The purpose of the channel portfolio

The BBC Context

How the BBC's organisation affects channels

Close

Thanks

Check permission again

Appendix IV: Coding framework used with NVivo

Node	Documents coded	Paragraphs coded
BBC Organisation	10	222
History	9	102
Regulation	9	195
Rights	6	36
Audiences	33	415
Audiences/ Segmentation	10	146
Audiences/Segmentation/ Demographic	11	71
Audiences/Segmentation/ Tribe	17	357
Audiences/Segmentation/Tribe/ Lifestage tribes	2	61
Audiences/Segmentation/Tribe/ Community	1	6
Audiences/Segmentation/Tribe/ Passion	5	55
Audiences/Segmentation/ Target Audience	23	231
Audiences/Segmentation/ Groups	1	5
Audiences/Segmentation/Groups/ Older People	6	50
Audiences/Segmentation/Groups/ Families	6	73
Audiences/Segmentation/Groups/ Families/Young Mums	2	42
Audiences/Segmentation/Groups/ Children	10	304
Audiences/Segmentation/Groups/ The Less Well Off	5	56
Audiences/Segmentation/Groups/ Adults	2	19
Audiences/Segmentation/Groups/ The Young	21	277
Audiences/Segmentation/Groups/ The Upmarket	9	40
Audiences/Segmentation/Groups/ Male	5	52
Audiences/Segmentation/Groups/ Female	3	61
Audiences/Segmentation/Groups/ Ethnic	3	46
Audiences/Segmentation/ Attitudinal	15	118
Audiences/Segmentation/Attitudinal/ Mainstream	4	16
Audiences/Segmentation/Attitudinal/ Attitudinally young	6	76
Audiences/Segmentation/Attitudinal/ Heartland	10	63
Audiences/ Behaviour	7	49
Audiences/ Specific	3	12
Audiences/Specific/ Own family	11	64
Audiences/Specific/ Correspondent	1	3
Audiences/Specific/ Duty log	5	14
Audiences/ Research	23	219

Audiences/Research/ Measures	25	113
Audiences/Research/ Specific Reports	11	109
Audiences/ Freedom from	1	9
Audiences/ Choice or competition for	19	194
Audiences/ Licence fee payers	11	58
Audiences/ Mass	10	43
Audiences/Mass/ Cult	3	10
Public Service Broadcasting	50	844
PSB/ Reithian	17	148
PSB/ Metaphors	6	166
PSB/ Licence Fee	16	177
PSB/Licence Fee/ Accountability	4	26
PSB/ Uniting nation	6	58
PSB/Uniting nation/ British	13	172
PSB/ Citizenship	7	84
PSB/ Under or over-served	17	95
PSB/ BBC Values	13	102
PSB/ Quality	17	180
PSB/ Universality	19	241
PSB/ Trusted Guide	7	65
Media	1	17
Media/ Multichannel	16	149
Media/ Multimedia	6	67
Media/ Non linear	4	58
Media/ Analogue	4	38
Media/ Digital	30	563
Media/Digital/ Interactive	7	120
Media/Digital/ EPG	12	53
Media/ Radio	6	42
Media/ Internet	3	62
Media/Internet/ BBC Online	2	39
Media/ Terrestrial	1	7
Media/ Convergence	4	34
Programmes	9	80
Programmes/ Characteristics	3	15
Programmes/Characteristics/ Narrative	9	66
Programmes/Characteristics/ Human story	9	97
Programmes/Characteristics/ Talent led	7	55
Programmes/Characteristics/ Distinctive	9	75
Programmes/Characteristics/ Compelling	10	87
Programmes/Characteristics/ Contemporary	5	50

Appendices

Programmes/Characteristics/ Accessible	1	13
Programmes/Characteristics/ Aspirational	3	20
Programmes/Characteristics/ Landmark	18	305
Programmes/ Genre	29	317
Programmes/Genre/ Arts and music	7	76
Programmes/Genre/ Factual	12	601
Programmes/Genre/ Entertainment	10	400
Programmes/Genre/ Drama	14	440
Programmes/Genre/ News and current affairs	16	333
Programmes/Genre/ Sport	6	32
Programmes/Genre/ Childrens	10	272
Programmes/Genre/ Education	10	161
Programmes/ Producer	3	33
Programmes/Producer/ Independent	6	116
Programmes/Producer/ Acquired	3	14
Programmes/Producer/ Coproduction	5	33
Programmes/Producer/ JV	3	18
Programmes/ Format	4	36
Programmes/ Innovation	23	378
Schedules	31	313
Schedules/ Tactics	14	115
Schedules/Tactics/ Zoning	16	160
Schedules/Tactics/ Theming	13	47
Schedules/Tactics/ Stripping	9	69
Schedules/Tactics/ Complementary	2	19
Schedules/Tactics/ Flow	3	19
Schedules/ Dayparts	4	10
Schedules/Dayparts/ Daytime	7	73
Schedules/Dayparts/ Peak	3	26
Schedules/Dayparts/ Postpeak	3	140
Schedules/ Episodic	6	27
Schedules/Episodic/ Repeats and loops	8	41
Schedules/ Effectiveness	2	50
Schedules/Effectiveness/ Right day or time	7	28
Schedules/Effectiveness/ Wrong day or time	6	23
Schedules/ Channel surfing	4	9
Schedules/ Specific Slot	9	551
Schedules/ Target Slot	3	19
Schedules/ Timeshift or PPV	0	0
Schedules/Timeshift or PPV/ TiVo or PVR	8	81
Schedules/ Signposting and navigation	3	16

Appendices

Marketing	21	182
Marketing/Brand	40	472
Marketing/Brand/Positioning	9	92
Marketing/Trail or promotion	17	78
Marketing/Junctions	5	17
Marketing/On air identity	9	47
Marketing/On air identity/The Balloon	4	15
Marketing/On air identity/The Two	4	9
Marketing/On air identity/DOGs	3	12
Marketing/Press and publicity	4	12
Marketing/Advertising	1	23
Marketing/Messages	6	39
Channels	36	454
Channels/Portfolio and supporting	26	329
Channels/Purpose	22	551
Channels/Transition between channels	12	66
Channels/Programme comparisons	6	43
Channels/Suitability for channel	18	106
Broadcasting	5	157
Broadcasting/Commissioning process	36	822
Broadcasting/Finance	8	161
Broadcasting/Diversity	9	109
Broadcasting/Diversity/NRB & proportionality	16	193
.BBC CHANNELS	2	26
.BBC CHANNELS.ANALOGUE	0	0
.BBC CHANNELS.ANALOGUE:BBC ONE	47	873
.BBC CHANNELS.ANALOGUE:BBC TWO	36	829
.BBC CHANNELS.DIGITAL	1	30
.BBC CHANNELS.DIGITAL:BBC CHOICE	30	419
.BBC CHANNELS.DIGITAL:BBC FOUR	7	91
.BBC CHANNELS.DIGITAL:BBC KNOWLEDGE	20	398
.BBC CHANNELS.DIGITAL:BBC NEWS 24	15	135
.BBC CHANNELS.DIGITAL:BBC Parliament	4	17
.BBC CHANNELS.DIGITAL:BBC THREE	9	88
.BBC CHANNELS.DIGITAL: Children's Services	7	126
.BBC CHANNELS.UKTV	11	148
.BBC CHANNELS.UKTV:UK ARENA	2	11
.BBC CHANNELS.UKTV:UK GOLD	2	14
.BBC CHANNELS.UKTV:UK HORIZONS	4	18
.BBC CHANNELS.UKTV:UK PLAY	2	21
.BBC CHANNELS.UKTV:UK STYLE	2	12

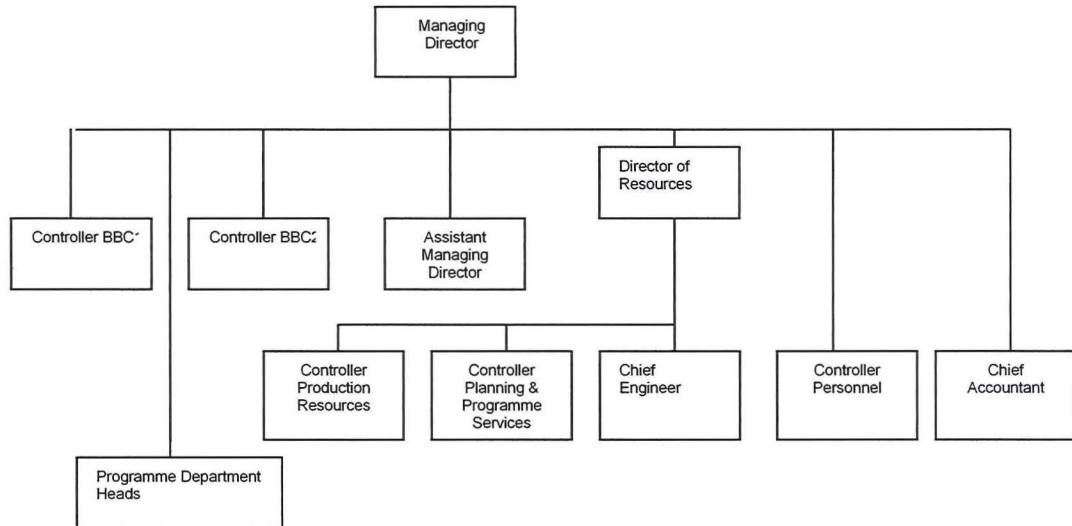
Appendices

.BBC CHANNELS: BBC WORLD	4	21
. CHANNEL 4	0	0
.CHANNEL 4: C4	10	31
.CHANNEL 4: E4	4	6
. ITV	1	4
.ITV: ITV	10	118
.ITV: ITV2	0	0
. SKY	1	1
.SKY: Sky One	3	10

Appendix V: BBC organisational structures 1990 – 2003

Network Television in 1991

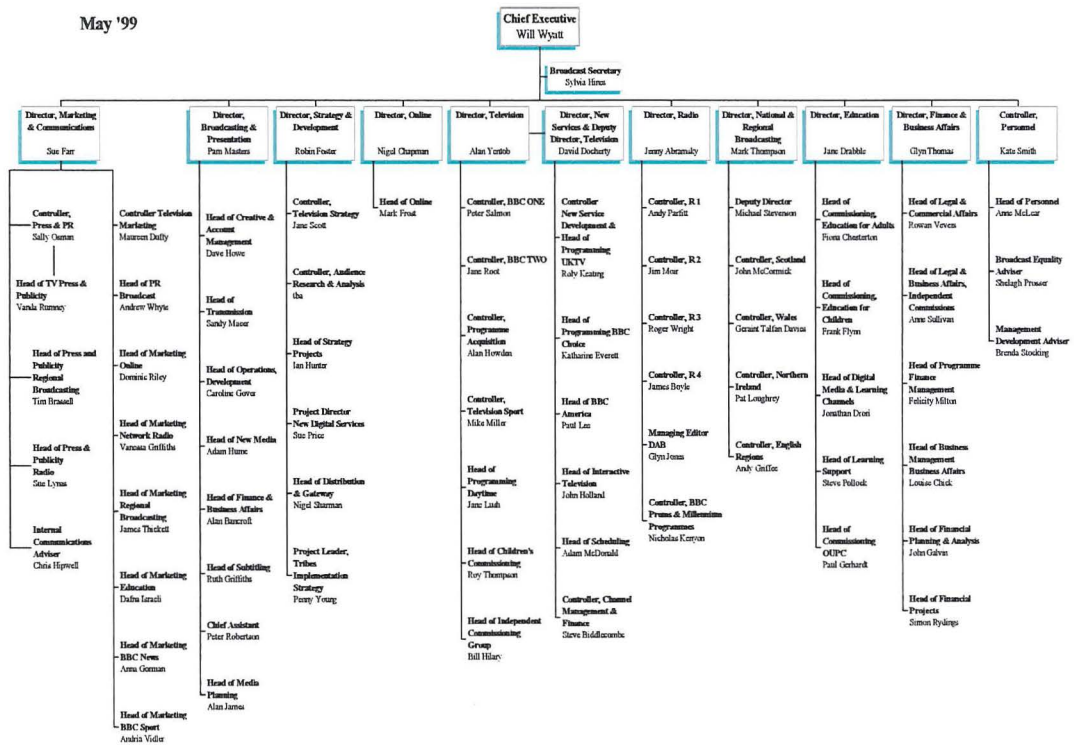
Source Moss, 1991: 36



BBC Broadcast in May 1999

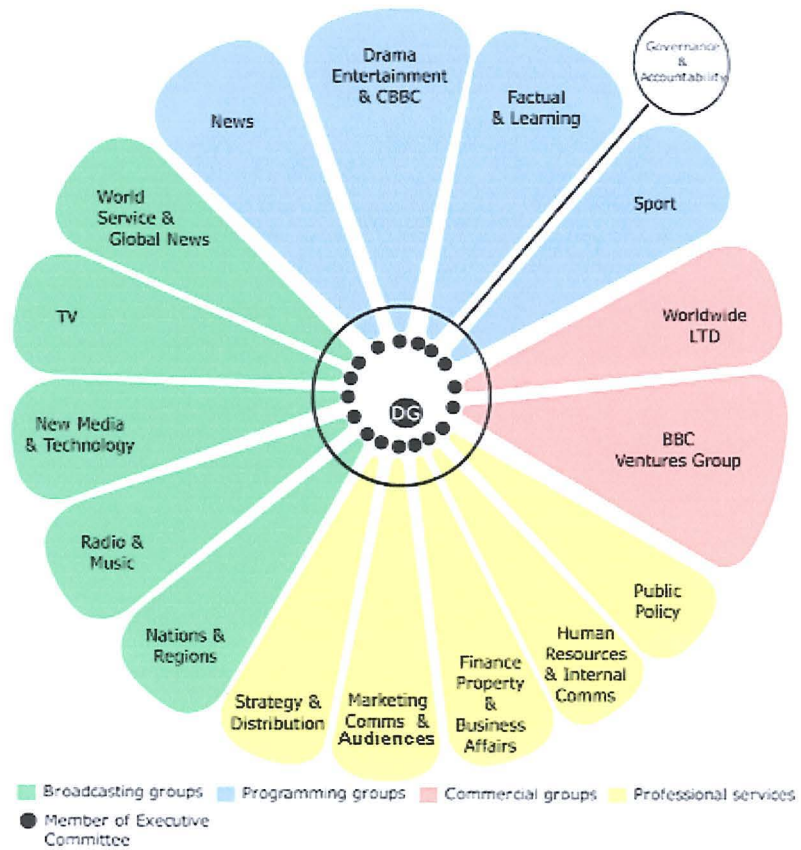
Source BBC Broadcast Human Resources

May '99



'One BBC' structure in 2001

Source: http://onebbc.gateway.bbc.co.uk/mih/divisional_map.htm, 20.11.2003



Appendix VI: Expenditure, share and reach for BBC Channels in 2003¹

Service	Expenditure (£m)	Audience share (%)	Audience Reach (%)
BBC1	858.9	25.5 (all homes) 19.7 (multichannel homes)	81.0 (all homes) 76.5 (multichannel homes)
BBC2	367.4	10.8 (all homes) 6.9 (multichannel homes)	64.5 (all homes) 54.2 (multichannel homes)
BBC3	75.5	0.7	12.5 (multichannel homes)
BBC4	41.2	0.2	3.1 (multichannel homes)
Cbeebies	39.9	1.3	8.0 (multichannel homes)
CBBC		0.3	3.8 (multichannel homes)
BBC News 24	23.8	0.5	6.2 (multichannel homes)
BBC Parliament	2.7	Not available	Not available

¹ Figures are extracted from DCMS 2003, annex A