

**A Guide for Commissioning
Editors, Buyers, Marketers
and Producers**

The Art of Sourcing Content

A Handbook for Content Professionals



Published by the SABC Ltd as a service to the broadcast sector

“Art is animated by invisible forces that rule the universe.”

Léopold Sédar Senghor. President of Senegal. 1956

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In this series

Content is Queen
The Art of Pitching
The Art of Co-production

A Guide for Commissioning Editors,
Buyers, Marketers and Producers

The Art of Sourcing Content

By
Howard Thomas

Commissioned by
SABC Content Enterprises
Innovation and Editorial



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1 A little context

Broadcasting's context

Broadcasting is not about the glamour of producing programming, or of saying, "I work in television." Although it appears glamorous to the audience, there's not much glamour in television production or in broadcasting. But it is one of the most satisfying branches of hard work in all media.

At its most basic, the business of broadcasting is no more than the elements and tasks involved in achieving corporate objectives. In line with its business objectives, a broadcaster is primarily concerned with keeping costs down and revenue up. To do this, the broadcaster must attract the audience that the advertisers want to pay for, and the audiences required by the mandate in the case of public broadcasting.

The right content attracts the right audience.

*Before you can source the right content, you have a lot of work to do.
That is what this book is all about.*

The corporate objectives of public broadcasting are detailed in its mandate. To fulfil the mandate, the broadcaster has to deliver specified public service programming to a specific audience. For instance, if the mandate states that programming must increase numeracy skills to persons over the age of 35, then it's clear that the audience does not include those who are numerate, but will include older persons in urban areas, and more people in the rural areas. This mandate also makes it clear that the target group is limited to this age group, and clearly does not apply to children or youth.

The corporate objectives of commercial broadcasting are the needs of the stakeholders, especially the shareholders. Commercial broadcasters will achieve their objectives when their income substantially exceeds costs. It focuses on an audience available at a specific time, and selects the particular programming that will yield the most revenue, from a wide variety of sources.

However, for public and commercial broadcasters, this is not an "either/or" situation. All broadcasters operate with a license from the regulator, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA). All licenses include certain obligations, such as minimum quotas for local programming. Commercial broadcasters are not as highly regulated as the Public Broadcasters (SABC), but they still have certain mandates that they have to fulfil.

Finally, all broadcasting (public, commercial, subscription and community) face new and unprecedented opportunities. Digital terrestrial is here. It opens doors that we did not even know existed. There are no precedents or experiences from which to learn. Television is on the brink of its greatest age of innovation.

Where the SABC fits in

The SABC is in a unique position. It has a detailed and difficult public mandate to fulfil, and at the same time it has to largely support itself through commercial revenue.

The SABC is governed by its Charter, which although detailed, may be summarised as “entertainment, information and education to serve society, especially those who have no voice through commercial broadcasters”.¹

In a way then, all South African broadcasters are similar in that they are commercial broadcasters with mandated conditions as well. The SABC fits into this, only much more so. As the SABC’s shareholder is government, it has to be, not just a good citizen, but a leader among citizens. The SABC has to be the catalyst that brings people together; to help develop that feeling of “South African-ness”, that is so hard to pin down and define.

Television business objectives

We all have to set objectives so that we have something towards which to work. In business we set objectives; work towards them and then evaluate how well we have done in achieving our objectives.

A broadcaster is a business, whether it is public, community, commercial or subscription.

Many managers have difficulty setting objectives, because they only seem to be achievable only if they are deliberately written vaguely. That’s kidding yourself. Objectives are never vague – they are precise and they define the standards by which you can tell how well you have done.

For instance, let’s look at two completely different kinds of objectives:

Commercial objective:

To achieve net revenue of R180 000 in the thirty minute slot beginning at 19:00 through achieving at least a 16% share and no less than 90% audience flow through.

Public objective

To deliver relevant information on the rights of women abused by their partners; targeted to women between 25 and 49 (Nguni speaking); achieving a reach in this target of at least 80 000 per episode on Sunday mornings; and raising commercial revenue of at least 25% of the cost of the programme, marketing and its overheads.

Notice that these objectives are precise – you can tell immediately if they have been achieved or not.

Standards

Notice that each objective has defined standards that have to be achieved.

There are only four types of standards. Objectives should be aligned to as many of them as possible. They are:

¹The SABC has total access to the TV license revenue, but at the same time it has to bear the costs of collecting this revenue. TV License revenue only accounts for a very small part of its revenue needs.

1 Quality

How well should it be done? Does the quality have to be just enough to please the target audience, or does it have to appeal to a wider audience through programme sales as well? Does the programme have potential for rebroadcast years in the future, and have to be produced in High Definition? Will the programme be used for future repurposing and versioning? In which case, does it need a separate International Track (IT)?

2 Quantity

This could refer to whether the programme has to be contained as a once-off; or planned for a potential series. It may also refer to the specific audience targeted and the specific number of people within that target who should watch it for it to be regarded as successful. It, however, usually refers to the gross revenue and net profit the programme should achieve.

3 Time

By when must the programme be fully complete? There always has to be enough time between the final mastering and the broadcast so that the programme can be checked and promoted. If a programme is live, the planning must be ready soon enough before going live so that nothing can go wrong.

4 Cost

What is the maximum budget allowed? This is tricky. You don't always have to acquire programmes at lower than budget. The overall channel budget will have made provision for that. The buyers will be given a maximum budget. However, sometimes there is just not enough money allowed to ensure that the programme is a success. If this particular programme needs a higher budget, then some other programmes will have their budgets cut.

Summary

In South Africa all broadcasters have to fulfil both commercial and public mandate objectives.

The SABC's objectives are especially hard to achieve as it is a public broadcaster that is obligated to finance itself through commercial and other activities.

The basis of the broadcaster's core business is its objectives, all of which must have standards of quality, quantity, time and cost.

2 *The business of broadcasting*

Broadcasting is just like any other business. It has products to sell, and people buy those products. But contrary to what most people assume, broadcasters do not buy and sell programmes, although at first sight it may appear to do so.

Broadcasters buy programmes to attract an audience. Then they sell that audience to advertisers.

At least that's how commercial broadcasting works.

In South Africa, we have all four types of broadcasters:

1. Public broadcasting
2. Commercial broadcasting
3. Pay or subscription broadcasting
4. Community Broadcasting

Public broadcasting

Public broadcasting is a subsidised service that brings all the benefits of broadcasting to the audiences at the lowest possible cost.

Most public broadcasters are funded through public money that either comes direct from government, or through TV licences. In the USA it is funded by private and corporate donations.

Public broadcasters have a mandate from the funders (usually the state) that tells them what services they have to provide.

Public broadcasters attract audiences with specific needs at specific times of the day. During the day they offer specialised programming, for instance children's and educational programmes. In the evening they supply audiences with more popular and broader based programmes.

Commercial broadcasting

Commercial broadcasters are in it for the profit. They get a license from the regulator to use a frequency. They buy in programmes to attract an audience that they in turn sell to the advertisers.

Commercial broadcasters want numbers of viewers. They buy in programmes that will bring in the largest possible audience 24 hours a day.

Like any other business, they keep their costs low (buy programmes at the lowest possible price), and then sell the advertising time at the highest possible rate. This maximises their profits.

Both public and commercial broadcasters offer their products free of charge to any one who has a TV set and aerial and who pays the TV license fee (which is really a government tax on a TV set).

We call public and commercial broadcasting "free-to-air" TV in order to distinguish it from pay-TV.

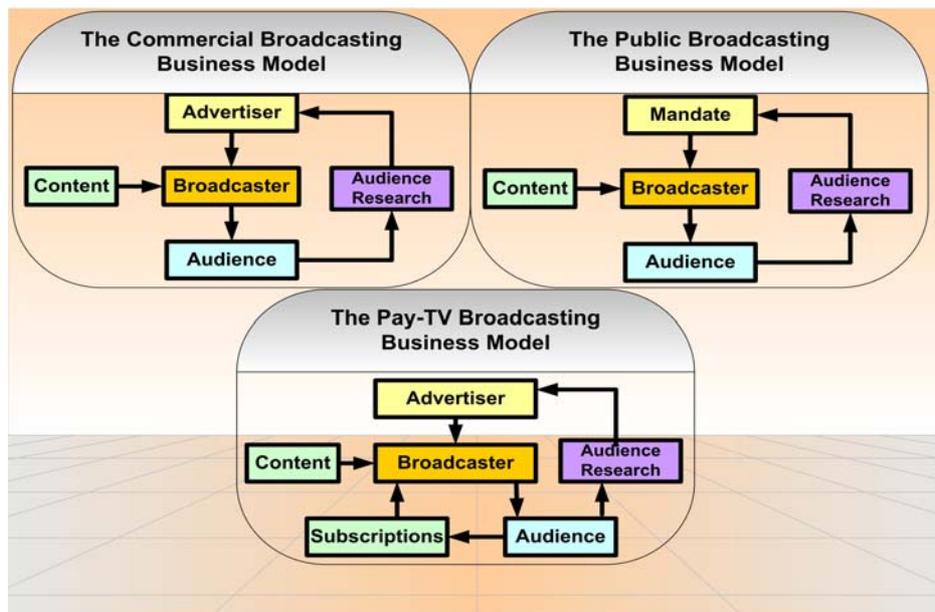
Pay-TV

Pay-TV is a business that sells subscriptions. Only subscribers who pay a monthly subscription can receive the programming, and then only through a decoder (set-top box or STB).

The pay-TV broadcasters obtain a licence to use a certain bandwidth, and then, by means of a digital decoder, allow people to receive that signal provided they pay their monthly subscription.

Pay-TV broadcasters offer a wide range of specialised channels that are directly targeted to people within specific interest groups. In many parts of the world, pay-TV is delivered via cable, and simply referred to as “Cable TV”. In Africa we deliver through satellite. This is because Africa does not have the densely populated areas that are cost efficient when it comes to laying cable.

Pay-TV broadcasters make their money through subscriptions, and also through advertising.



Community Broadcasting

Community television licenses are usually restricted to a defined community, and run by that community through companies that are non-profit. They work on shoe-string budgets and most of the staff work on a voluntary basis. The programmes are directed towards community development and participation.

Commissioning, Scheduling and Distribution

Commissioning, scheduling and distribution in pay-TV are completely different from commercial and public free-to-air TV.

Free-to-air TV is like a supermarket. You get everything in one place. Pay-TV is rather like a shopping mall of boutique shops. You have to go from shop to shop to find exactly what you like.

As in a supermarket, there is little emphasis on individual customer service. All customers are treated the same. On pay-TV customers are treated in the same way as boutique shops treat their customers – they know their customers individually and intimately. They go out of the way to meet their personal needs.

Free-to-air TV is mass communication. Pay-TV is niche communication.

With free-to-air TV, you can tune in or not as you choose. It's costing you nothing anyway. With Pay-TV you are paying a lot, and you expect to have something to watch that you really want.

With free-to-air TV, the mass needs are all important, and what is good for the mass is good for all individuals. With pay-TV the niche audience of special interest individuals is what is important.

Free-to-air TV is like a daily national newspaper: affordable every day and general. Pay-TV is different: it's like a niche magazine, costly for subscribers only and meets very personal needs.

In free-to-air-TV, income is derived from advertising revenue. In public TV, the advertising revenue comes from a mixture of license revenue (about 20%) and advertising (about 80%). In pay-TV almost 90% of revenue comes from subscriptions.

If you look at your family's budget, you will see that you have sources of income, and costs. The money you save (when your income exceeds your expenditure), you use to improve your life.

It's exactly the same with the public broadcaster. The broadcaster has sources of income and costs. The money that is saved (its profit) is used to upgrade its infrastructure and improve its public service.

The differences between free-to-air TV and pay-TV are important. Digital terrestrial multi-channel TV will be much like niche TV.

What is the business of public TV?

Very few public broadcasters subsist only on public funding. Even the BBC has substantial income from commercial activities.

Most public broadcasters in the world receive subsidies from the state, and income from licenses, all of which are not enough. So they sell air-time to advertisers as well in order to make up the difference.

However, public broadcasters cannot afford to buy in programming that has mass appeal like the commercial broadcasters. They also have a mandate to fulfil. This needs costly local programming; for which they receive funding.

This means that first and foremost they have to fulfil their mandate to offer public service programming. Once they have done that, they can broadcast programming with more mass appeal and sell advertising around the programmes.

Public service broadcasters have to walk a tightrope between fulfilling the public mandate (reporting to parliament), and satisfying the needs of advertisers.

"Satisfying advertiser needs" does not mean buying programming that advertisers like. It means being able to deliver accurate market research that shows which viewers are watching, and when they are watching.

Summary

Here is a table of the fundamental differences between free-to-air television and subscription or Pay-TV.

| | Free to- air- TV | Pay-TV |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Cost to the viewer | Free (maybe a TV license) | A costly monthly subscription |
| Threat of closure | None | Non payment of monthly subscription |
| Scheduling | Driven by day part | Driven by time coverage |
| Broadcaster focus | Numbers | Loyal subscribers |
| Primary fears | Drop in ratings | Churn |
| Programming | Generally available | Exclusive to subscribers |
| Repeats | Only the high demand programmes | All programmes |
| Customer service | Very little | All important |
| Competitions and special offers | Available to anyone | Exclusive to subscribers |
| Programme focus | Focused on the day part | Focused only on subscriber interests. |
| Atmosphere | Freely available service | Exclusive club |

3 *The 7 steps to targeting an audience*

Before acquiring content

You cannot simply “acquire content”. There have to be: reasons, a targeted audience and a budget. There’s a sequence flow involved in acquiring content. And, it doesn’t start with a commissioning brief, or a shopping list at MIPCOM.

The beginnings of acquisition come way before buying. Unless you follow the path from the very beginning, you are bound to fail.

The broadcaster’s corporate strategy is an extremely important document that provides the framework for acquiring content. The strategy:

- Analyses the current television (and other media) business environment.
- Defines the target audience and objectives for the broadcaster.
- Describes the best way to achieve objectives according to:
- What we expect competitors to do
- What particular tastes audiences will have over the next year or two
- What changes there may be in the media landscape, mostly in technology

The standards of objectives

The formula for standards (Quality, Quantity, Time and Cost) applies equally to what is required in both mandate and commercial programmes.

Let's look at them in greater detail.

Quality

The word "quality" is senseless unless it applies to a measurable standard. If quality is so ethereal and subjective, how can it be measured? Well it depends on "quality of what?"

First of all there is **technical quality**, which we shall see is not negotiable. The conditions of technical quality are detailed in the requirements for programme acceptance, and copies of these conditions are freely available.

Production values are mostly a budgetary issue and not a quality issue.

The best measure of quality is the meaning and memories experienced by the audience. This can only be done through qualitative research. This is costly and money is available only for high cost programmes. It is best to avoid this issue altogether. Rather say that if the programme achieves its objectives, then it is quality.

Quantity

Quantity of what? It could be any of these: audience (number of viewers in the target audience or ratings, or even share), income, SMS reactions, website hits, DVD's sold, people attending a function and using their on-air discount vouchers. As long as you have specified the NUMBER you aim for, then you have stipulated a standard of quantity. The only way to do this is to set targets that are expressed as specific numbers.

Time

What time? Are we talking about the deadline for delivery, the first broadcast, the duration of the run, or the duration of the effects? Or are we talking about all of those? You decide. But remember to specify the DATES, otherwise you don't have a standard.

Cost

Every project will have costs in different areas. Some costs may be contingent. For instance you may agree to increase a marketing budget providing a specific audience rating or share is achieved.

Every aspect of costs must be stipulated in the business plan. Even if you are allowing 10% for contingencies, this must be a line item in the budget.

You will always fail to achieve your objectives if they are unrealistic. To do your best, make sure your objectives and their standards are:

- Specific
- Measureable
- Achievable

- Realistic
- Challenging

Writing Objectives:

The “To ...” expression

You should always start off writing an objective with the word “To” followed by an action word. However, this action word (verb) must be capable of being measured, seen, heard, or interpreted in figures.

The wrong way to write an objective:

This is NOT an objective

“To contribute to the mandate of the SABC through literacy programmes.”

There is no commitment to actually perform. It does not state any standards of how well it is to be done, how much will be done, by when it will be done, nor how much it will cost.

In fact it is complete rubbish. It says nothing. It is a waste of time, paper and effort.

The right way to write an objective:

“To adhere to the mandate of the SABC by broadcasting 13 quarter hours of literacy programming for adults denied a formal education, and delivering reading ability of common road and commercial signs. The programmes will be broadcast on SABC2 from October 2011. The effects will be evaluated by inviting people to enter a simple test that doubles as a competition, and will be distributed through general dealers, supermarkets and spasa shops.”

This is a firm commitment of delivery, and fulfils the requirements of the four standards: quality, quantity, time and cost.

The outcome

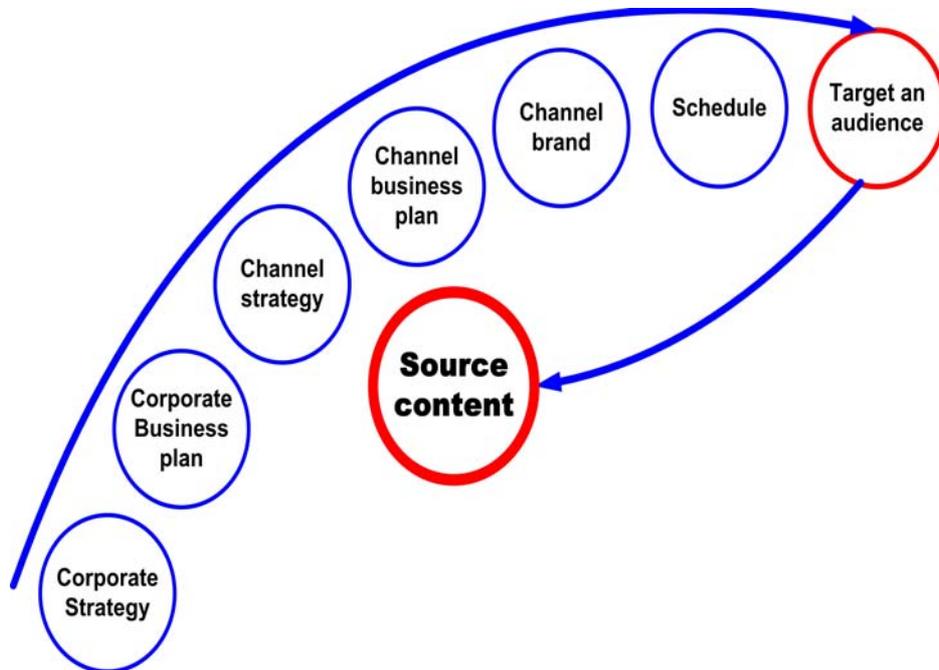
The alternative to the “To ...” expression is the outcome. This must also state quality, quantity, time and cost. However, it is different from the previous expression in that it starts with the action word (verb).

Following the same example, an outcome is written like this:

“Broadcast 13 quarter hours of literacy programming for adults on SABC2 from October 2011. The target is those adults denied a formal education, and needing reading ability of common road and commercial signs. The programmes will be evaluated by inviting people to enter a simple test that doubles as a competition, and will be distributed through general dealers, supermarkets and spasa shops. The programmes will be classified as part of the SABC public mandate on literacy”

Notes

There is an argument that an objective has to be so short that it can appear on one line of a PowerPoint presentation. That’s fine, if you want the objective to say nothing, and you don’t have to make any commitment.



Here's the process charted above in detail.

1. **Corporate Strategy**

The broadcaster's strategy is the document that shows which way the broadcaster is going to manage the road or two ahead and why.

The reasons for the actions that the strategy defines are based on a number of questions:

- a. What is the media landscape like now?
- b. What is the size of the audience?
- c. What share of that audience do the competitor's command?
- d. What new developments lie ahead?
 - Technological developments
 - Regulatory developments
 - Market tastes
 - Revenue

These are main elements that make up the strategy. It isn't necessary for you to refer to the *whole* strategy plan before acquiring content. The strategy document will have a summary, which is articulated in perhaps four or five points. These are the points to which you refer when you justify your decision of what content to acquire.

2. Corporate Business Plan

The business plan takes the strategic plan, and sets detail and objectives and fits them into a tight budget, with precise deadlines and costs.

The corporate business plan is a lengthy document that follows the format of all business plans in the broadcaster. The only points you have to know are:

- ◇ What is the target to increase revenue?
- ◇ What is the target for content costs to decrease? (They may be maintained, or they may increase.)

3. Channel strategy

The SABC has a corporate strategic plan that has to be carried out by 15 radio stations and three television channels.²

Each of the three TV channels will have a strategic plan, in such a way that when examined together, add to the conditions of the corporate strategy

The channel strategy defines how the channel will target its own defined share of the audience.

It will also distinguish between mandated programmes, and mandated objectives. (Sometimes the ICASA states that certain programmes must be made for a specific purpose. It may specify children's or educational programmes. Sometimes it mandates a communication or objective and leaves it to the content acquirers to decide how they will do it. It may specify that programmes must reinforce specific themes such as HIV prevention or climate change.)

The channel strategy will also make sure that the channel does not target audiences away from its sister channels. It is hard enough programming against other competitor broadcasters, without competing against your own channels. It will also define how the channel will approach all the anticipated changes described in the corporate strategy.

The channel strategy should also carefully define how it plans to schedule against the other broadcasters in the landscape.

4. Channel Business Plan

The channel business plan takes the strategy and corporate business plan, and converts them into specific actions and figures.

The channel has objectives *because of* the strategy, and they will be implemented *through* the brand, *by means of* the business plan. If all the business plans of the channels are added together, they add up to the broadcaster's business plan.

A simple way of looking at the business plan is that it adds the standards for quality, quantity, time and cost to the strategy.

The plan will also clearly state how the channel intends to increase revenue, and decrease costs.

² At this stage we have little indication of the final effects of digital terrestrial transmission. In fact the true impact will only become clear two to three years after all the digital channels are launched.

5. Channel Brand

An important influence on how the channel will implement its strategy is the brand. As we will see later, the shorter the description of the brand, the easier it is to implement. A channel has a brand so that it can satisfy the specific needs of its target audience.

The channel brand is a simple explanation of why the target audience of the channel will regard the channel as its “friend”. Marketing jargon calls this the “promise”.

Why a “friend”? Because, you can trust your friends. You can also rely on your friends to support you. They make you laugh, and they make you feel good about yourself. They lift you up when you feel low.

A channel brand is not a legal document. It is a simple emotional statement that describes why the channel and the viewer are friends,

If it contains such elements as “Editorial Line”, “Differentiator”, “Promise”, “Values” – then these should only be a line or two, and the total should still only fit into a page. But ask yourself if your branding document *really needs* anything more than why the channel is the target audience’s *friend*.

Branding could also have a detrimental effect – you can squeeze yourself out of markets on the fringe. That’s why your branding should be concise enough to be flexible.

6. Channel Schedule

The channel schedule should not change drastically from year to year because the audience viewing patterns as a whole do not change.

The same people watch at the same time for their own reasons – not yours. The diagram below shows you how people watch TV and listen to radio on an average weekday. Radio is the red line and TV the black line. Notice how they complement each other?

Different people watch TV, and listen to radio at different times of the day. That’s because radio and TV offer different things:

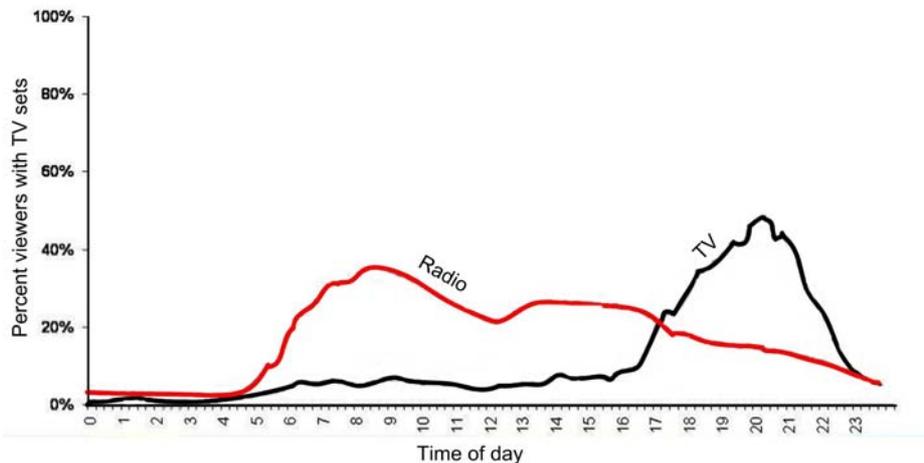
- Radio is portable, TV is not (for now anyway)
- Radio offers music and talk, TV offers the full range.
- Radio is immediate and up to date. TV is usually pre-recorded a long time ago.

In the following table, the x axis shows the percentage of households with TV sets. The y axis shows the hours of the day or night, starting and ending with midnight.

The total number of people with TV sets is called the “Universe”. 100% is about 12-million households, or about 32-million people. We call this 100 AR (Audience Rating).

Therefore 1 AR is about 320 000 people of all ages. But look at the graph: on an average weekday at the peak of primetime, there are no more than 50% of the people watching. That means a total of 50 AR, over all the TV channels – including SABC, e.tv, M-net and all the satellite channels.

It is therefore almost impossible to increase an audience, unless you have a monopoly over events such as the 2010 World Soccer Cup. People get up after



sleeping at more or less the same time, and come home and watch TV at the same time. They go to bed and get up regularly at the same time.

People are creatures of habit.

Similarly people get used to the same *type* or genre of programming on each channel at the same time.

A large part of any schedule is defined by the customary audience on that channel and at that time.

Audiences:

- Are creatures of habit
- Like certain on-screen personalities and celebrities
- Enjoy a channel when it delivers what they want, and at the time they want.

7. Target the audience

Finally, when we have the schedule with the durations of each programme, the type of programming and the available audience (after squeezing the last likely audiences from competitor channels), we can start to target our audience.

Targeting an audience is the tricky bit. You cannot target an audience until you know the audience in many ways:

- You must know their demographics: how many they are; where they live; what sort of income they earn; what language they speak; their lifestyles and which age groups are in your target.
- You must know their level of education so that you can speak to them in their language, and not speak down to them.
- You have to know their culture: why they do the things they do; their traditions, customs, and why they like some things and dislike others.

-
- You have to know their overall attitudes to each other, their neighbours, and their fellow South Africans. You also have to know their attitudes toward things they aspire to; how they view their own country; and how they view the world.

Finally, you have to be able to feel what and how they feel. This is really hard, and doing it well needs years of experience. You can't learn this from textbooks, or statistics. You can only know this by experiencing them in person. You can't make programmes for parents of teenagers unless you are a parent of teenagers. You may think this is unreasonable, and that you are perfectly qualified because your sister has teenage children. But it's not. Just because your sister has teenage children, it doesn't mean that you know how they feel. Emotions are inside people – you can never see them. You can only see the effects of emotions in what people say and do – what we call “behaviour”.

You can never be arrogant about how well you know your audience, or the audience will find you arrogant. You go to a lot of trouble and expense to give them the programmes you think they want.

All they have to do to destroy all your work is put their thumb on a button of the remote, and switch to another channel.

4 The schedule – the guiding light

Scheduling is the result of many different processes and skills that do not strictly belong here. But it is worth while looking at the principles of scheduling so that when you come to acquiring content, you will have a better understanding of what is expected of you.

Let's start by looking at programming before we get to the schedule. “Programming” refers to the actual content on the channel. “Scheduling” refers to the order in which the programmes are broadcast

What affects scheduling and programming?

There are two basic aspects to broadcast programming: the elements and the influences.

The Elements of Programming

Compatibility

All programming must be compatible with what the audience feels and does. It has to fit in with peoples' daily routines. We will see later that there are times when people who own TV sets, are simply just not at home.

There are other times when they can watch, but they also have many other choices at the same time.³

³ Adapted for local conditions from Eastman, Susan Tyler and Douglas Ferguson. Media Programming. Strategies and Practices. Thomson Wadsworth. Boston 2009

Other aspects of compatibility are:

- The **channel brand** must be compatible with the culture, attitudes and lifestyle of the target audience.
- The **distribution** must be compatible with the technology by which the audience receives the signal.
- The **cost of programming** must be compatible with the expected revenue.



Fitting in with audience habits

All people are creatures of habit. We like routine. But we live in a changing world and we mostly fear change. Routine makes us feel secure.

Broadcasting must appeal to the audience's desire for regularity and predictability. For this reason, broadcasters always hesitate before rescheduling long-running programmes, or the genre of a slot.

Controlling audience flow

The audience is viewing a programme that is on a channel. As we saw earlier, that channel has a brand that describes why the channel is their "friend". If the branding is accurate and pinpoints the attitudes and the feelings of the audience, then it should be natural for the targeted audience to want to stay tuned to that channel.

Audiences may feel a certain loyalty to a channel and its brand.

BUT, they watch programmes, not channels.

It takes one movement of their thumb to change a channel, and switch to the programme they really want to watch.

In order to make your brand work, you must be one step ahead of the audience, and follow each programme with another one they will want and like.

Realistically, this will only work to a certain extent. So you are always on the hunt for audiences, even if they are slightly outside of your brand.

For this reason, broadcasters study audience flow.

Audience Flow

Flow through

Broadcasters try to keep people on your channel. You want to schedule in such a way that the people who are viewing your channel during the current programme, also stay for the following programme on your channel.

Flow in

Since people often (because of the wide range of choice of channels) move to other channels, you want to make sure that the people who leave the other channels, come in to yours.

Flow out

An extension of flow in, is that you want to minimise flow away (or flow out) from your channel (which of course means flow into another channel)

Audience Flow results from certain audience habits:

Grazing

Using the remote to search up and down the channels until you find one that catches your attention.

Flipping

If a viewer has found two channels that she likes, she may cross from one to the other, flipping between them

Zapping

Changing to another channel just to avoid a commercial break. This is hardly a service to the broadcaster's advertisers. This is why you try to schedule commercial breaks at the same time as other channels do. This is called "road blocking".

Ziping

You can only zip if you have taped a programme or recorded it on a Personal Video Recorder (PVR). You will "zip" ahead to fast forward through the commercial break, or to look for a scene that attracts your attention more.

The Influences on Programming

Variables

There are a number of variable factors involved in selecting programmes for broadcast. These factors can be independent from or dependent on each other. They are also not predictable.

These are:

- **High cost.** The cost of programming is high. Theoretically the more spent on production values and marketing reduces the risk, but the higher cost actually increases risk.
- **Novelty.** Audiences go for things that are new, but at the same time, they have been known to be highly accepting of “the same old thing”.
- **Trendiness.** Audiences are as fickle as fashion. What may be fashionable at the time you negotiate the programme, may be two years out of fashion by the time it is broadcast.
- **Scarcity.** Good writers, performers and directors are always scarce. Good ones are costly, and the audiences are wary of new and unknown talent.
- **Cross subsidising.** Some programmes have to be broadcast that will just not make money. The schedule accommodates some programmes that make enough money to pay for those programmes that lose money. We call this ‘cross subsidisation’.

Scheduling

Scheduling has so many variables that motivate it, that in itself, the schedule becomes a variable.

The design of schedules carefully aligns to the audience’s physical habits, the times at which they consume media, the places where they consume media, the competition, highlights, and any of the other tactics and strategies in scheduling. Keep in mind that different audiences have different habits.

Promotion

There’s an old saying in entertainment, “I cannot use anything I cannot market”. Of course you can make this mean a lot of things, but it does show that the marketability to maximise audiences (and consequently commercial revenue) does affect broadcasting. Perhaps the programme cannot be marketed, but still has to be broadcast for regulatory reasons. Perhaps it is worth investing far more than usual into marketing the product. On the other hand, the programme may have cross media appeal, and many aspects of broadcasting media are brought into the strategy.

Regulation

All broadcasting is regulated. The electromagnetic spectrum is a scarce resource, and countries control it for many reasons. All countries have a regulator, like South Africa’s Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA). Spectrum is

regarded as a national asset, and the use of it is licensed. For that reason, even channels that are licensed as commercial have restrictions placed on them – usually local content quotas. Regulations frequently change.

Evaluation

There is no fixed way to evaluate the success of broadcasting. You evaluate programmes the way you want to.

If you are a commercial channel, then you will weigh up the costs and the income and evaluate it on the profitability.

If the programme is regulated as a public service programme, then you will evaluate it according to the reach in the target audience, or even the outcome actions that you set.

If the programme is public service that can also earn an income, your evaluation will be weighted one way or the other.

If your programme is meant to cross-subsidise, then the evaluation may exist across a number of programmes or products.

Fairness

Broadcasting is extremely powerful. The more you try to make a programme inoffensive to the broadcast audience, the more you sanitise it and water it down. You can't please all the people all the time. You can be fairly sure that something in every programme will offend someone. You somehow have to please these people, or give a right to reply. Their reply can only come after the fact, and certainly not with the same impact as the original broadcast. All broadcasting thus is confined by media ethics, and the terms and conditions of the constitution.

These factors have a radical impact, even on music and game shows.

Copyright

Copyright comes into just about every broadcasting decision. It is otherwise referred to as intellectual property protection. Whether you are going to play a piece of music, read a letter, film in a street, broadcast from a place you do not own – all these carry with them copyright implications.

Since copyright affects almost all decisions, no broadcaster can have a situation where every decision must be referred to a copyright lawyer. It's just an unnecessary cost. It's far better that every decision maker has to have enough knowledge of copyright law to be able to make decisions quickly and wisely.⁴

Indecency

Broadcasting is directed to a geographical area as a whole, without discrimination to those who can pick it up. This brings in the sensitivities and sensibilities of culture. Culture tends to look at content in black and white terms – either it is acceptable or it is indecent. The trouble is that for as many cultures as you may broadcast to, you will have as many divergent definitions as to what is indecent and what is not.

⁴ There is a very useful book you can download free from www.hsrc.ac.za

Libel

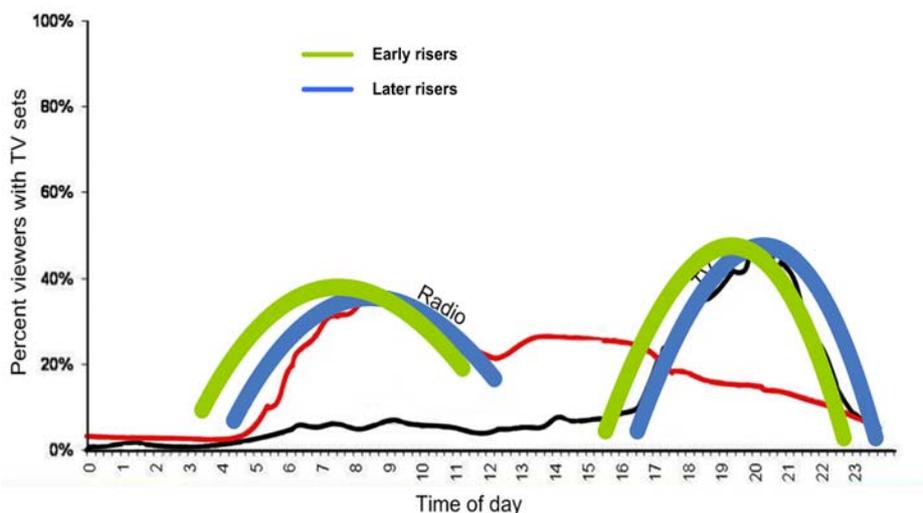
As much as intellectual property law is necessary to most decisions, so many decisions have to be made as to whether content will offend, or cause damage to a person's reputation. These decisions have to be made at the very first level of programme acquisition, the radio interviewer and the TV camera operator.

Forecasting for scheduling

There are three drivers that cause scheduling patterns:

1 Hours of the day

The main landmark of the TV daily weekday schedule is the peak of primetime. The end of primetime basically marks the time children go to bed. This is set by the time the family is expected to get up in the morning. This in turn depends on the average time that work starts, added to the time it takes to get to work.



That is why primetime is the peak of the bell curve, with the edges of the bell giving you the smallest audience. Primetime in South Africa starts at about 17:00 and ends at 22:00.⁵ This manifests itself in an upmarket audience (that travels by car), which gets up at 06:00 to 06:30. The down market audience travels for sometimes as much as two hours to get to work and will rise between 04:00 and 05:30.

Thus primetime bounces backwards from the time specific audiences get up in the morning. The start of primetime will also change depending on how long people have had to travel to get home. In short, we are scheduling for each and every LSM group based on their transport habits.

⁵ In the USA it is taken as 20:00 to 23:00. In the UK, 18:00 to 22:30.

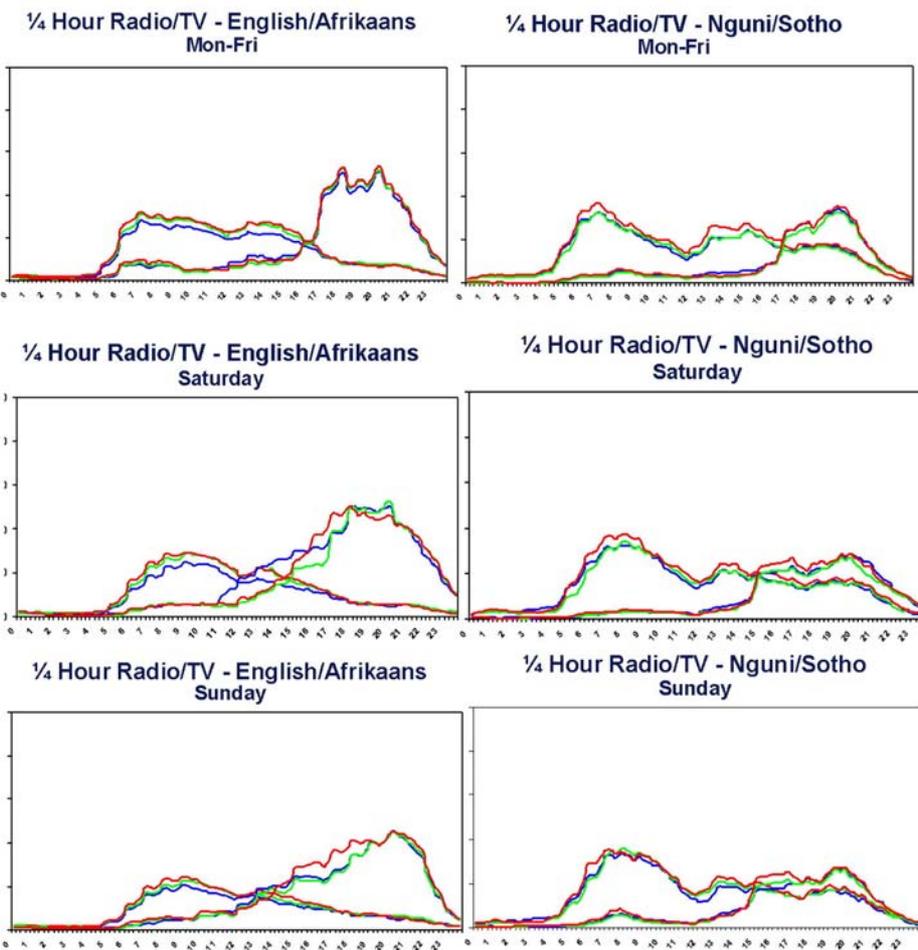
2 Day of the week

Each day of the week displays characteristics that indicate audience habits. Weekdays, for obvious reasons are very different from Saturdays and Sundays.

Before starting to schedule, the scheduler must have demographic data on all channels going back about two years. This data should guide the scheduler to examine the actual audience attracted by each channel (and whether this does in fact coincide with each channel's target audience). This data will clearly show different patterns of viewership on different days of the week.

Then the scheduler needs to examine the patterns of each group in the audience. These groups are usually categorised in terms of age groups, LSM groups and race groups. The patterns looked for are:

- when they come home,



Source: SAARF. AMPS Presentation

- when they go to sleep,
- whether they watch in the morning, and
- what programmes they like to watch over the weekend.

For instance, lower income people, especially those who live in townships travel a lot. Township dwellers usually live a long way from the workplace. They leave home very early and often get home very late. They can't watch TV when they are not at home. Other township dwellers may have their own transport, and therefore have different viewing habits.

3 Seasons

TV has definite seasonal patterns. Spring and autumn seem to have similar patterns, but there are noticeable differences between those two and the patterns in summer and winter. There are also the commercial seasonal patterns, with commercial opportunities in all the religious, secular and traditional festivities.

The weather does have an effect on viewing patterns; people are more inclined to stay in early in winter than in summer.

The weather also gives rise to sports seasons, which also affect the schedule. Finally there are holidays and festivities (the traditional ones like Mothers Day and Christmas as well as the religious seasons such as Ramadan). Especially with religious programmes, you have to provide alternatives for those people for whom the religious programme has no interest. This is only possible if you have alternative channels.

Broadcasters make the most of these. They capitalise on the Christmas; Ramadan; Valentine; and the Back to School season.

Multi-channel makes it attractive to consider special programming for minority activities.

Free-to-air multichannel scheduling

The traditional way of programming TV, is by day-parting. The TV schedule follows the general activities of people throughout the day, and targets those people who are at home at that time. For instance, pre-school programming is in the morning, followed by primary school after primary school learners come out of school. Youth, secondary school, programming only starts when the high school kids get home. At 21:00 the broadcaster expects kids to be in bed, and that starts the "watershed" time when the broadcaster can air more serious and mature programmes.

But that's all changing. You can now record programmes and replay them when convenient, and a significant number of people are either unemployed or working from home. Day-parting is no longer as rigid as it used to be. Mobile TV will simply strengthen the trend.

Day-parting offers no choice when it comes to multi-channel. Who wants nine channels where all you can see is pre-school programmes all at the same time?

Scheduling in a multi-channel environment means offering variety. Out of any nine channels, only one need be day-parted

There are any number of scheduling patterns and strategies. Among them are:

Day-Parting

The traditional TV schedule: you start off with the morning show, follow with soap repeats or infomercials, and followed by pre-school programmes. Lunchtime programmes are followed by primary school programmes. This is followed by youth, prime time (until 21:00), and then the watershed programmes until midnight. Programmes between midnight and morning are often called “graveyard”.

Day part time shift

For added convenience, you can broadcast your entire day part schedule shifted one hour. In other words, it is the same schedule except that what was shown at 17:00 on the original channel is now shown at 18:00 on the new channel. This helps people to see the programmes they only just missed.

Six hour blocks

You make up programmes into a six-hour block. You can start the new block any time you like (it usually starts in the evening), and then you simply loop the block for the next three six hour blocks.

Twelve hour blocks

This is similar to the six hour blocks except that you only repeat twice a day in stead of four times a day as you do with six hour blocks.

Strips

With this scheduling, you broadcast the same type of programme, or another one of the series, at the same time every day. Your strips can last as long as you like, from half an hour to many hours.

Zones

Zones are like mini-channels. Each channel has its own identity, they just happen to share a frequency and they are broadcast at different times of the day. Thus one frequency can be shared with a religious channel, a medical channel, a school channel and an oldie movie channel.

Lifestyles zones

Whereas zoned programming appears to come from different broadcasters, you can schedule programming targeted to different lifestyles. It looks similar to day parting, but it's not as specific.

Planned random

This is common for movie channels. The movies appear to be scheduled randomly when in fact they are scheduled very carefully. There are two objectives. The first is to make sure that every viewer has a chance to see the movie of his choice at least twice or three times every month at a time convenient to them. The second is to repeat the movies as often as possible. The schedule also pays careful attention to when niche interest films are best shown. The scheduling looks random, but it's in fact intricately planned.

Other strategies

Within these categories are a wide range of strategies that include:

- Roadblocking – scheduling advertising breaks at the same time on all channels so that no amount of pressing the remote gets the viewers away from ads.
- Marathons – continuous programmes of the same series. This aims to entice the fans of these programmes away from all the other channels.

| 6-hour blocks | Daypart | Time shift | 12-hour blocks | Strips | Zones | Lifestyle | Movies | Zones |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Six hour block looped | Sunrise (Early morning) | Time shift | Twelve hour block looped | Strip 1 | Zone 1 | Homebodies | Planned random | Golden oldie films |
| | | Sunrise (Early morning) | | Strip 2 | | | Planned random | |
| | Pre-school | Pre-school | | Marathon | Zone 2 | Children and youth | Planned random | Women's interest |
| Lunchtime | Lunchtime | Planned random | | | | | | |
| | Primary school | Primary school | | | | | Planned random | |
| Six hour block looped | Prime time | Youth | | Twelve hour block looped | Strip 3 | Zone 3 | Family | Planned random |
| | | Watershed | Strip 4 | | Zone 4 | | | Serious |
| | Graveyard | Graveyard | Marathon repeat | | | Zone 5 | Adult | |

The schedule you design is simply "the one that best suits your target audience within the context of the competition"

5 The SABC

In this chapter we look at how the SABC works in relation to the other broadcasters in the global media landscape. ⁶

The SABC sits in its own particular position in relation to other public broadcasters.

SABC and the world

First of all, South Africa is a developing nation. To put that into context, if you take the income of the whole country (Gross National Product or GNP), and you divide that by the total number of people in the country, you get the Gross National Product per

⁶ For more information on the SABC's mission, vision, values and its mandate, please refer to "Content is Queen" and the Content Hub's "Pocket Guide".

capita. This figure gives you a very rough idea of what each person in the country earns on average. We can then use this figure to compare ourselves with other countries.

Just look at these figures: ⁷

| Country | GDP/Capita | | | Country | GDP/Capita |
|-----------|------------|--|--|----------------|------------|
| Angola | 6,117 | | | Kenya | 1,730 |
| Botswana | 13,992 | | | Mozambique | 934 |
| Brazil | 10,514 | | | Namibia | 6,614 |
| DRC | 332 | | | New Zealand | 26,708 |
| Egypt | 6,123 | | | South Africa | 10,244 |
| France | 33,679 | | | Swaziland | 5,709 |
| India | 2,941 | | | United Kingdom | 34,619 |
| Indonesia | 4,157 | | | United States | 46,381 |
| Iran | 11,172 | | | Zambia | 1,542 |

Notice that the United Kingdom's GDP per capita is roughly three times higher than South Africa's. This tells you a lot about what we can afford to do in South Africa, and why many comparisons between South Africa and Britain are just not valid.

We are far better off looking for similarities with these countries, with whom we share a similar GDP

| | | | | |
|-----------------|--------|--|---------------------|--------|
| Romania | 11,917 | | South Africa | 10,244 |
| Bulgaria | 11,900 | | Colombia | 8,936 |
| Panama | 11,788 | | Dominican Republic | 8,896 |
| Iran | 11,172 | | Jamaica | 8,777 |
| Brazil | 10,514 | | Peru | 8,638 |

However in broadcasting, we must also compare our needs with those of other multilingual countries. All the countries listed above have one dominant and majority language. It would therefore be better looking for comparison from countries like India, Malaysia and other African countries. However, these countries differ widely from South Africa in economic and social profile.

⁷ World Bank.

There are also no other countries in the world with anything like the cultural profile of South Africans.

So taking all of this into account, we easily come to the conclusion that in fact South Africa is unique. We have few role models, and few broadcasters from whom we have anything valuable to learn.

It's senseless for the SABC to aspire to be like the BBC. The SABC can only aspire to serve South Africans in the best way they can.

Since it offers multilingual and multicultural variety, the SABC is a leader in variety of channels, scope of programmes, public service mandate, technological expertise, and many other factors.

Obligations

The SABC is governed by various acts of parliament, and also a number of regulations.

Included in these are the Public Finance and Management Act (PFMA). This governs the strict processes the SABC has to follow in all financial transactions.

It is not free like commercial broadcasters to do what it likes and make a profit. The SABC is supposed to come out with a profit to provide for its growth and improving service.

It is obliged by law and regulation, to:

- Implement the terms of the Charter
- Broadcast up to 80% local content.
- Provide for the needs of 11 languages.
- Cater for minority groups.
- Cover public service campaigns.
- Promote the Constitution.
- And many other things

To pay for all this, the SABC can collect and use the total revenue from TV licenses, but this only gives the SABC about 20% of what it needs. To pay for the other 80%, the SABC can sell advertising.

Accordingly, SABC1 and SABC2 are designated as the public service channels. SABC3 is a commercial channel and is expected to make a handsome profit to pay the costs of the other two channels.

This puts it very simply, but it gives you the general idea.

Large footprint

The SABC can only serve the audience it reaches. The areas of the country where people can receive the channel is known as the 'footprint'. So, all the channels have to be on a signal frequency and transmitters that can be received by the target audience of each channel.

The SABC has to take all these audiences into account and cater for their likes and dislikes.

This is the job of Audience Intelligence. They allow the SABC to:

- Design its programme schedule
- Report to Parliament on how well it has fulfilled its mandate.
- Provide data to advertisers so that they can buy advertising time that reaches their target audience.

Technologically, the SABC is the most advanced public broadcaster in Southern Africa. It has world class studios, production facilities, and its market research is certainly the best on the continent.

But it faces the same problems as most other public broadcasters:

- Balancing the mandate with ways to finance it.
- Keeping up with constant changes in the audience.
- Upgrading equipment.
- Training staff.
- Adapting to the media environment that is highly changeable.

6 *Acquiring Content*

In modern TV, we refer to everything that is put on air as CONTENT. In any one day, the SABC will broadcast programmes that it has:

- produced itself, such as news and current affairs
- bought from foreign markets
- commissioned from local producers
- licensed from any number of sources
- made in partnership with other broadcasters and producers.

When it comes to acquiring content, there are more myths about this process than there are in our folklore. Broadcasters have a habit of making it sound terribly complex. Whereas actually, it is not. It's no more complicated than the commercial transactions each one of us is involved in on a day to day basis.

There are only a few ways a broadcaster can acquire content.

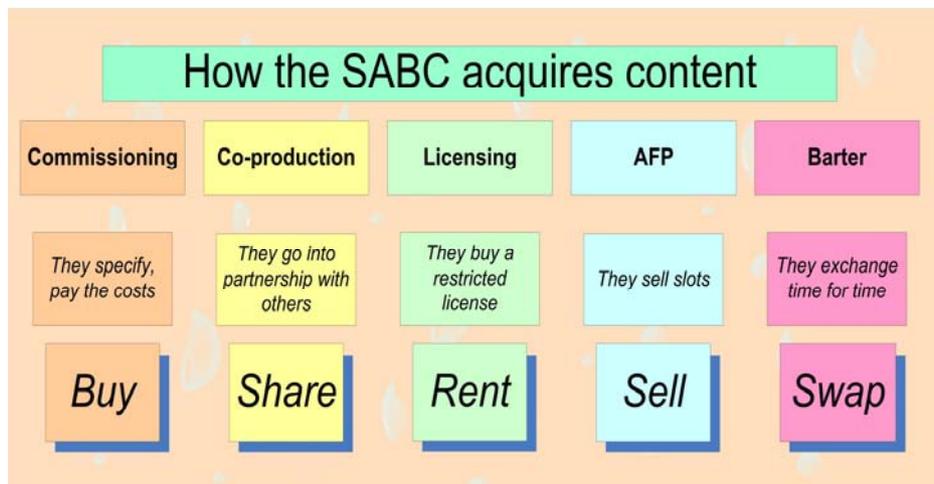
- Commissioning
- Co-production, joint ventures and partnerships
- Licensing
- Advertiser Funded Programming (AFP)
- Barter

These are rather pedantic words that mean the same as:

- Have it made
- Make it with a partner
- Rent it
- Sell the time
- Exchange it.

To understand it more simply, think of the ways in which you can get a car. You could go to a private manufacturer and pay him to make the car to exactly your specifications and requirements. It may cost quite a lot, but at least it exactly suits your personal needs. When you deliver the final payment, the car is yours. It belongs to no one else.

If, on the other hand, it costs too much to have your own personal custom-built car



made, you could go into partnership with one or more people. You then pay for it as a partnership, and get use of it equal to the amount you paid for it. For instance if you went into the deal where you put up half the costs, and two other people put up 25% each, then you would have the use of the car for half the time. The other two partners would each only be entitled to drive the car for a quarter of the time each.

You could also get a car by renting it. You go to Budget or Avis, and rent it by the day. When you are finished with it, you return it. The car never belongs to you; you only pay for the use of it.

You could even get a free car, paid for by an advertiser. The advertiser then has the right to paint anything he likes on the car body – he may even have his product flags flying from the radio aerial.

There is another way you could get a car. You could get it by exchange -, whereby you give someone something you don't need anymore, and you take something from them that they don't need anymore. For instance, maybe you have a boat or a microlight aircraft which you could swap for a car that someone else doesn't want. But

they would want to have a microlight.

As long as both of you agree that it is a fair swap, you have a deal.

Commissioning

You can commission programmes. You detail (in a Commissioning Brief) exactly what you want. You specify the duration, the genre, the target market, the intention, and the cost range. Then you invite producers to pitch for it. You give the job to the producer who has offered the best job for the best price. When she delivers it to your satisfaction, you then pay her the money and she assigns the full copyright over to you.

Everyone should be happy with the deal, especially the producer. He undertook no risk, and had his profit built into the price. The broadcaster has taken on the risk, but then has the exact programme for which he was prepared to take the risk for.

Commissioning is defined by law. It is part of the Copyright Act, which states: "Where a person commissions the taking of a photograph, a painting or drawing of a portrait, the making of a gravure, the making of a cinematograph film or the making of a sound recording and pays or agrees to pay for it in money or money's worth, and the work is made in pursuance of that commission, such person shall, subject to the provisions of paragraph (b), be the owner of any copyright subsisting therein by virtue of section 3 or 4."⁸

Commissioning is thus defined in law, and the person commissioned (the independent producer) has no legal right to copyright over the work, except for moral rights.

Section 20 of the Copyright Act states that: "Notwithstanding the transfer of the copyright in a literary, musical or artistic work, in a cinematograph film or in a computer program, the author shall have the right to claim authorship of the work, subject to the provisions of this Act, and to object to any distortion, mutilation or other modification of the work where such action is or would be prejudicial to the honour or reputation of the author: Provided that an author who authorizes the use of his work in a cinematograph film or a television broadcast or an author of a computer program or a work associated with a computer program may not prevent or object to modifications that are absolutely necessary on technical grounds or for the purpose of commercial exploitation of the work."

Read this carefully again. You will see that you cannot take away from the original creator of the work his or her right to be acknowledged as the author, and has the right to object to major alterations or distortions of the original work. However, the commissioning editor does have the right to make small changes to accommodate time constraints, technical limitations and so on. These must be reasonable. You don't have to inform the producer if you intend to cut thirty seconds off the running time.

Co-production, Joint Ventures and Partnerships

There are no precise definitions in television for these forms of acquiring content. Whether you call it a co-production, a joint venture or a partnership, it doesn't matter.

⁸ (21 (1) c. Copyright Act No 98 of 1978, as amended.

What you really mean is that instead of one broadcaster commissioning a programme, two or more broadcasters (and other partners) have joined together to commission the programme.

These broadcasters may even have included the producer in the partnership, so that he also shares in the risk and the benefits.

Maybe there's only one broadcaster driving the production and has gone into partnership with the producer and some commercial companies because it suits them to be part of the venture.

There are an infinite number of ways to configure a co-production or joint venture.

The partners will follow the three rules of business:

1. Look for a gap in the market.
2. Check that there's a market in that gap.
3. Tie up your distribution first.

The partnership conditions will be based on the simplest possible formula: you get out in proportion to what you put in.

If two partners come together and one invests 40% of the costs and the other 60%, then the first broadcaster will face 40% of the losses if it flops, and if it succeeds, he takes 40% of the profits. Simple.⁹

Licensing

Licensing happens when someone who owns the programme offers it to broadcasters in different countries, and they pay a market-related "rental" according to the conditions under which they want to broadcast it.

For instance, a broadcaster could have made a big hit with a locally made programme, and he believes he can make extra money out of it by offering it on license. No other broadcaster wants to contribute to the costs, but they are willing to buy the rights to use the programme:

- For a specified time
- In a specified area
- To a specified audience
- By means of a specified medium.

The buyer (licensee) only pays for what he needs, and has far less risk, and far greater chance of making a profit.

The owner (the licensor) on the other hand, makes a small amount of money from a number of broadcasters to which he licences the programme. In the end this is usually far more profitable than if he had charged a higher price for just a few sales.

Chapter 9 covers licensing in more depth.

Advertiser Funded Programming

Here the advertiser pays for the programme, and the broadcaster sells the time slot at

⁹ Co-production is dealt with in more detail in "The Art of Co-Production".

a profit. This is tricky, as the broadcaster needs to keep control over the editorial in the content, but at the same time allow the advertiser to market during and throughout the programme.

These AFP deals, like co-production and barter, are always difficult.

Barter

The word “barter” is full of myths. It means what you want it to mean.

Since barter refers to so many different things to different broadcasters, there is little value in discussing it in detail here, except for making some general points about it.

For each and every one of us, barter was the first business we ever experienced. As schoolchildren, we would exchange things (swap). We exchanged school sandwiches, stones, cards, and toys – all sorts of things. At an early age we could reach an agreement that the transaction was valid, when both parties received value from it. The value was different, each person needed the other product for a different reason, but the value benefit was always equal. That was how we managed happily to exchange one meat sandwich for one blue marble. Neither commodity has a comparable value, but each one of us wanted the other person’s product badly enough for the “swap” to be worthwhile.

Television barter is no different from that. You don’t have to exchange the same product. You can exchange air tickets for an advertising spot on the air. You can exchange advertisements for the right to see the presenters wearing your T-shirt.

You can exchange anything for anything, as long as both parties feel they have achieved a “good deal”.

There are no formulae, no calculations, and there should be as few rules as possible in bartering. The SABC does, however, as it is governed by the PFMA have strict processes.

Sometimes “barter” transactions are called “Trade Exchanges”, and sometimes “Trade Exchange” transactions are called “barter”.

Why do people barter? Usually because their cash is tied up in products waiting to be sold, and cash is difficult to find, so you replace money with value – which is usually easier to find.

Barter originated in the USA, and is still a major form of transaction. However, they barter for different reasons related to networks and syndication, which we do not have in Africa.

Barter occurs in Africa where foreign exchange is always a problem. It takes the form of a form of syndication which barter programming for the right to sell advertising time, but this has never advanced into a high turnover business.

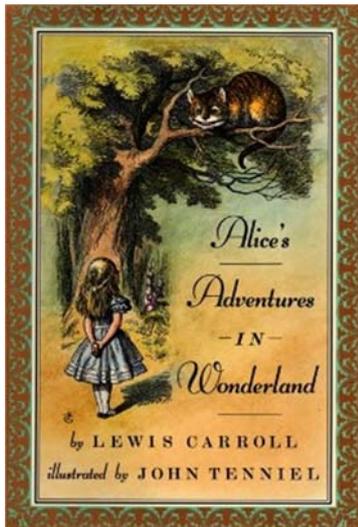
Barter is a detailed subject all on its own, and South African broadcasters use it to include trade exchanges, sponsorship, AFP and product placement.

It is very possible that barter will come into its own when digital multi-channel television arrives. There will be so much demand for content at low cost, that barter is only one of the means by which broadcasters will be able to fill so many channels with content.

7 Setting Programming Objectives

Why you set programme objectives

In the famous book “Alice in Wonderland”, Alice is lost and sees a Cheshire cat sitting up in a tree.



John Tenniel: original 1865 book cover

'Cheshire Puss, 'Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?'

'That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,' said the Cat.

'I don't much care where-' said Alice.

'Then it doesn't matter which way you go,' said the Cat.

'-so long as I get SOMEWHERE,' Alice added as an explanation.

'Oh, you're sure to do that,' said the Cat, 'if you only walk long enough.'¹⁰

This passage expresses well the reason why we must know where we want to go, and what we want to achieve before we even start with planning.

Nowadays in business, we call this 'setting objectives'.

But, there is also no point in setting objectives unless the objectives stipulate how well you are going to achieve them, and how you will measure your achievement.

The standards of objectives

Stating the objective together with the required standards is the very basis of any business plan. If there is no business plan, there is no reason to do any work on the programme at all. It is far easier and more profitable to get some Bugs Bunny cartoons that will cost you nothing and slap them on the air.

This way you amuse the audience, attract some advertising, make a little money, and don't waste any resources at all. Of course, that also means that you, the commissioning editor, are also no longer needed.

Objectives are never vague expressions of an ideal. They are concrete and defined. All objectives only need four measurements of achievement: Quality, Quantity, Time and Cost.

¹⁰ Lewis Carroll (Charles Dodgson). Alice in Wonderland. 1865

If the statement does not say what needs to be said in just one line, then you are well advised to make it into as many “one” lines as it takes. Unless you are prepared to back up your statements of objectives with firm commitments to the four standards, no one will take you seriously.

Sometimes you have to summarise the objective. In which case, make it short, but follow them with a paragraph of standards in terms of quality, quantity, time and cost.

Then it will look like this:

“To adhere to the mandate of the SABC by broadcasting 13 quarter hours of literacy programming for adults denied a formal education, and delivering reading ability of common road and commercial signs.

Standards and deliverables:

The programmes will be broadcast on SABC2 from October 2007. They will be evaluated by inviting people to enter a simple test that doubles as a competition, and will be distributed through general dealers, supermarkets and spasa shops.”

The outcome

“Broadcast 13 quarter hours of literacy programming for adults on SABC2 from October 2007.

Standards and deliverables:

The target is those adults denied a formal education, and needing reading ability of common road and commercial signs. The programmes will be evaluated by inviting people to enter a simple test that doubles as a competition, and will be distributed through general dealers, supermarkets and spasa shops. The programmes will be classified as part of the SABC public mandate on literacy”

Remember there are two ways to gauge the effects on the audience:

1. You go out and find out what effect you had (qualitative research), or
2. You get the audience to come to you and tell you what effect the programme has had (built in feedback).

The second is always cheaper and quicker. But it entails you being extremely creative in thinking up ways that make the audience WILLINGLY to want to respond. The easiest way is offer them something in return for their reaction.

8 Commissioning

The job title “Commissioning Editor” is used in broadcasting, publishing and even, at times, in music.

Basically it means someone who designs the specifications of the product that is to be contracted out for concept and production. The Commissioning Editor sorts out all the proposals for content, edits them, and manages the production and acquisition.

People who are good at commissioning in one form of the media are usually good at it in other forms.

The work of commissioning

Programme Planning, Commissioning and Scheduling are concerned with the construction of the overall shape of a Broadcaster's transmission schedule, from the current plans for broadcasts, to the long-term programme strategy.¹¹

These departments will have to meet strict guidelines for programming and will have a target audience in mind at all times. They are responsible for ensuring that effective planning and strategies are in place in order to deliver maximum value to viewers and listeners across South Africa.

Broadcasters issue commissioning briefs to producers detailing the type of programme they want to broadcast, and it is the responsibility of the Commissioning and Scheduling departments to decide if the programme is suitable, what channel it is suitable for and what is the best time to broadcast it. They will have to take into account a number of variables, such as budget, target audience, current themes and time-scale.

Producers sometimes submit unsolicited proposals, and Commissioning Editors also have to evaluate them. Remember, great ideas on TV are rare. Commissioning Editors never pass over a chance to look through a proposal.

New entrants to Commissioning will usually have some production experience, and may have some sort of media-related degree.

Commissioning Editors are responsible for obtaining, marketing and planning the broadcast of a variety of television programmes, depending on the company in which they work. They are expected to develop links with production companies and other broadcasters and keep up to date with current themes and trends, ensuring there is always something for everyone.

All Commissioning and Scheduling occupations require the following knowledge and skills:

- Good communication and presentation skills
- An analytical mind, together with logical reasoning, basic maths and problem solving abilities
- Knowledge of legal issues affecting the media, including copyright and compliance
- Broad knowledge of audience research and how audiences can be targeted
- Sales and marketing skills
- Organisation and planning skills
- Confidence

Usually supported by an administrative team and advised by a range of experts, including production unit finance managers and cost controllers, audience research data, schedulers, sales people and lawyers. Co-production with other Broadcasters and producers may also be part of a Commissioning Editor's remit to enhance a project's production values.

¹¹ This section is adapted and extracted from the occupation definitions of Skillset in the UK. It shows how South African broadcasters follow world practice.

What is expected of a Commissioning Editor

There is no formal training of commissioning editors anywhere in the world. It is possibly because it is a rather uncommon job, and therefore not worth the trouble of educational institutions to package the skills required into one single course.

However, the skills required are covered in most media degrees. Most Commissioning Editors learn on the job.

Confirm a channel brief

It does not help you carry your job out to its fullest and perform at your best if you simply take an instructions and do not query and interrogate them. There is a very good chance that you may have a lot to contribute to the channel brief, and channels know it. That is why you look at the brief, get as much information as you can, and do not confirm it until you are happy it makes sense.

Write, confirm and distribute the brief

Writing a brief is an expression of expectations. You are stating what you expect, within a context.

It's very possible you have a clear idea of what type and format of programme you want. You may even have performers and style in mind. However, you will write something less precise that invites the independent producers to come up with something creative you didn't think of.

In the case of most public service mandate programmes, you will need to be specific about the content and its outcomes. Your brief will accordingly, be as specific.

At the other extreme, you may be faced with a problem where the slot has strong competition, and you have no idea what will wipe the other competitive channels off the air. In this case, you will write a motivating, challenging and very open brief.

Once the brief is written, once again, you must confirm it with decision makers in the Channel and your colleagues. You cannot operate in isolation. Your personal judgements are subjective, and you always have to bounce them off others with experience. What you are asking for in a brief has impact on too many other people.

Before you publish the brief, write out two other documents that are for your future reference. These will describe how you will evaluate the proposals, and how you will evaluate the success of the programme.

Evaluating proposals

How are you going to evaluate the proposals that come in? What tool will you give to readers so that can make wise decisions quickly and easily? The tool (a matrix, rubric, score sheet or any other tool) must relate to the nature of the brief. Your tool must confirm that the producer has followed the brief. However, people judging proposals should not make adverse judgements about proposals that may in fact be valid and profitable departures from the exact conditions of the brief. Broadcasting is a matter of flexibility. Audiences are too changeable, too demanding, and too fickle to be able to marshal like an army.

Short list proposals

There are a number of administrative requirements from which you cannot deviate. Refer to your procedures to make sure you follow them. They include courtesy communication with people who have submitted proposals, fairness, impartiality, confidentiality, and controls.

Your department will have internal procedures regarding who reads, filters and shortlists proposals.

It is important that all people concerned with filtering use exactly the same tools, so that decisions are made on the same basis and values.

Your department has specific procedures for shortlisting proposals, but they do not cover the initiative, discretion, and creativity that you and the readers have to exert.

Reading and shortlisting proposals are not a mechanical exercise. Audiences will not view the programmes like a machine, so how can you select a proposal like a machine? The decision on which evaluation is made must always be directed towards the audience and what is going to meet the needs of the audience.

If readers of proposals don't have experience or knowledge of audiences, make sure that you train them. They must learn to exercise instinct backed up with whatever facts, research and background they can find. It does not help for a reader to say, "I like it."

The whole process of commissioning has to be strictly confidential. You cannot let other producers know what is going on. They may be only too willing to give information to your competitors.

Evaluating the success of the programme

Once the programme has been broadcast, how will it be evaluated? In the case of a commercial programme, is it aimed to audience numbers or profit, or both? There will be a number of indicators such as ratings, advertising revenue, additional revenue, audience share and so on. These dimensions are vital to your business plan, and it is best to have a framework for them ready even at this early stage.

In the case of a public service programme, you need dimensions and tools that judge the performance of the programme against its planned outcomes.

Commissioning for foreign sales

You will often hear producers pitch that their concept or programme "shows great promise for international sales". That's meaningless.

Either you have investigated the possibility of foreign sales or you have not.

If there is little or no possibility of foreign sales, keep the costs down to the minimum and budget so that the final products "fits its purpose", and nothing more.

If there is a strong possibility of foreign sales, then spend time soliciting for pre-sales, and allocate a budget that suits the purpose. You will have to produce in wide screen High Definition, include an International Track, and modify the dialogue. You will also have to structure for commercial breaks that may be different from your own.

There is no point in a high budget just because it "might sell through."

Commissioning for archive value

The industry jargon for this is “the long tail.” It refers to a business concept that your archives can be profitably exploited. The idea came from the success of the “classic movie” pay-TV channels. They make lots of money from the thousands of old films lying rotting in the libraries of the major studios.

You have another decision to make: will the programme have any value in the future? When, and why? If so, is it worth committing extra budget to the production so that when it is needed for further exploitation it is available in wide screen and High Definition?

If there is any doubt, rather commit the lowest possible budget, and archive for a few years – after which, get rid of it. Give the copyright back to the producer, or consign it to trash. There is no data available as to how much television programming has any use in the future, and how much of it is not worth keeping. It’s your judgement.

But this decision has to be made. Digital archives are costly, and tape archives even more costly.

The budget for the production of a programme must be no more than what it is worth. This “worth” consists of:

1. The value of the primary broadcast.
2. The possibility and value of any repeat.

The heritage value. “Will three minutes of vox pops on the latest fashion fad have any value whatsoever in the record of the heritage of our nation?” Most people agree that at least half the Internet content has no moral, intellectual, spiritual and heritage value at all. Wiping it clean will be no loss to humanity at all. You should apply the same critical approach to commissioning programming – the budget and the long term value. Remember “value” has to be proven; it is not a subjective opinion.

9 Licensing and buying

There are hundreds of thousands of programmes available on the world markets.

But, there are two very important things to remember:

1. Only about 1% of these will be enjoyable by and applicable to your audience.
2. Personal visits to global markets are very costly.

Prior to going to the market, you must design a total strategy so that:

1. You know every slot which has to be filled.
2. You know the type of programme that will fill the specifications of that slot.
3. You have a list of distributors that are likely to have the programmes to meet your needs.
4. You have made appointments with prospective sellers in advance.
5. Your strategy must include a decision-making process that takes no more than 12-24 hours.
6. You are prepared to haggle with some of the best salesmen in the world.

There are a couple of myths about global markets:

1. They are glamorous.
2. You can drift around and meet celebrities.
3. They are endless cocktail parties.

They are none of these. You are likely to work 14-16 hours a day; you won't get a chance to meet celebrities (there aren't any at serious TV markets anyway); and finally you won't have time nor energy to attend the limited cocktail parties.

Remember, you may be going to a "global" TV market, but you are not buying global programmes. You are buying for the South African market and specificity for the SABC.

You won't be able to buy the programmes that are identical to locally made programmes (which are made especially for South African viewers). You are looking for second best.

However it is implied in the SABC mandate that the SABC should bring to South African viewers the very best of what is available internationally (and that they will enjoy).

This means that you are looking for the tops, the best.

You may not get it, for two reasons:

1. The window

This is an agreed period for films and TV movie sales through various windows. The time span is not as important as the cost. A free-to-air broadcaster can buy the rights to a movie before the local pay-TV station, but it will cost so much that it would be just unaffordable. Pay-TV as we saw, has a completely different business plan, and can thus afford to pay more.

It used to be:

1. Theatres get it first, for roughly four months.
2. DVD comes next.
3. Then Pay-TV
4. Followed by commercial TV
5. Finally ending up with PBS.

This allows the movie makers the best chance they have to make their movies last longest in the cinemas, and earn the highest possible income for the longest time.

The fact is that when a public broadcaster buys a film, it will already have been broadcast many times on the pay-TV channels.

The windows are still there, but the offer of extra money always breaks the window. So windows are in fact pricing mechanisms. Nowadays. Most films are made for television only, so the cinema window applies only to the high budget product.

2. Money

Pay-TV can afford to buy films earlier than commercial broadcasters, because they pay better. Movies are still at the end of line for public broadcasters, because they cannot afford to buy these films earlier than when the price is rock bottom.

However, all windows are narrowing. Why should the distributors wait for years before they are allowed to drop their prices low enough so that PBS stations can afford them?

The modern view is that windows are created when you drop out of the bidding because you just cannot afford it.

The work of licensing

What do you need to know, to be skilled to buy licensed content?

International programme acquisition is concerned with licensing product, from anywhere that:

- Complies with the broadcaster's mandate.
- Aligns with the channel strategy and business plan
- Appeals to the target audience in a particular day part slot.
- Meets the budget specifications of the channel.

There is no standard (template) job description for a programme buyer, but there are expectations of the type of person suitable for the job.

Must know

- Audience tastes, the channel strategy, the channel brand and the way budgets work.
- What the competition appears to be planning towards
- Going rates for licences locally, in Africa and in the various markets abroad.
- The rights, obligations and responsibilities that are detailed in most licensing contracts.
- The technical effects of broadcasting foreign aspect ratios. This involves:
 - ◇ How to deal with titles running over Cinemascope screens.
 - ◇ The various options for broadcasting 16:9 (wide screen programmes) in the local 4:3 aspect ratio.
 - ◇ Standards of videotape for delivery.
 - ◇ Your broadcaster's software for managing licenses, stock, expirations and extensions.
 - ◇ Current trends abroad and what new product is coming onto the market that will be suitable for channel slots.

Must have

- Strong negotiating skills, and quick reactions to making deals
- An intuitive understanding of the local audiences
- How licensed programmes have performed in the past, so that lessons can be learned from similarities and difference.
- Which performers are currently liked by audiences?
- The personality that develops and maintains personal networks.
- Energy and stress control to deal with a particularly onerous job.
- Good communication and presentation skills
- An analytical mind, together with logical reasoning and problem solving abilities
- Knowledge of financial and legal issues affecting the media, including copyright and compliance
- Broad knowledge of audience research and how audiences can be targeted
- Sales, marketing skills, organisation and planning skills
- Confidence

There are a few more skills that make buyers unique from other jobs that acquire content:

1. Stock

This is the hard part. You have to have enough stock to provide for the long term schedule of the channel, usually two years. It used to be five years, but South Africa has joined the rest of the developed world in having to follow the pace of audience changes.

Most television has a life measured in years, such as drama and documentary. Reality, news background, sport and other more current genres change in as little as six months.

For instance a game show or quiz that has hit the headlines abroad, will have hit the headlines locally at the same time.

Traditionally, the Pay-TV channels have the first option to buy these programmes, which leaves the free-to-air channels having to wait a few years.

But that's changing too.

Broadcasters all over the world are on the constant look-out for new forms of income. It is possible to buy "hot property", programmes that fall out of the window. You have to be prepared to pay extra for this. But you must always make sure that you can show how the extra cost is justified: either in the form of additional revenue, blocking the competition, or simply because it is hot, and will do well for drawing in viewers on the longer term basis.

At the same time, the broadcaster cannot afford to carry too much stock with the danger of licenses expiring before they broadcast. The value of this unused stock is carried as a liability on the broadcaster's balance sheet.

2. Emergencies

Licensed content is almost always used when something goes wrong and something has to fill a slot at the last minute. Sports games are often rained out and local programmes may not be delivered. Video tapes have also been known to "corrupt" after technical evaluation.

Therefore the channel and the buyers make sure that there is sufficient stock to cater for such emergencies.

Furthermore, the "last-minute-content" has to fit into the time slot that has suddenly become vacant. So the emergency stock must cover a range of genres and durations.

Ideally, the license to use this product should be long term, otherwise you end up having to re-license if you don't use it in the short term. Long term licenses are also cheaper. This sort of product is not worth while carrying if it is costly. So it is best bought from countries where product is cheaper, such as other countries in Africa, Eastern Europe and the Middle and Far East. If it is cheap enough, you can afford to subtitle or dub.

Negotiate

Be prepared to negotiate. Remember that negotiation is not a state of opposition. Negotiation is a process through which parties find a way that benefits all of them. Negotiation is *not* bargaining or haggling.

He is as desperate to sell as you are to buy. There has to be a middle way price that suits both parties.

Three ways to buy

Local agents

Many of the big distributors have local agents. Some local people are entrepreneurial enough to acquire these agencies, especially since new broadcasters are entering the landscape, and the local market is expanding.

Agents now are no longer simply representatives of global television content, but also deal in stock shots, archives, merchandising, and content rights for the Web, retail and mobile devices.

It is easy to build trusting relationships with them, as they are so accessible.

However, you will not find all the content you need just from local agents.

Remember that successful business comes from successful relationships. These relationships are important as they lead to each party prepared to "go the extra mile" to satisfy the needs of the other. Successful relationships lead to:

- Continuity, so that you are not continually finding someone new with whom to do business.

- Confidentiality, whereby you can share information in a trusting way.
- Efficiency. As each party gets to know the other's business, there is no need eventually for detailed explanations. The distributor knows your needs, and will often come up with solutions before you have even called her.

Electronically

Internet-based catalogues

Most global agents have their catalogues on line, and you can do business electronically. It doesn't build close and trusting relationships, but often it is the quickest way to license rights without having to wait for a market.

Electronic communication is however essential for maintaining those contacts you met at markets. It is also difficult to negotiate with people you have not met, and with whom you can only communicate by email.

The markets

Buying at markets is extremely costly, but it is effective only if you have a system for working the markets.

There are a number of content markets every year. Among them are:

Attending markets

| Market name | Details | Place | Time |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------|--------------|
| NATPE | National Association of Television Program Executives. Hundreds of broadcasters and distributors showcase their product. | Las Vegas | January |
| BBC Showcase | Only BBC programming | UK | February |
| MIPTV | Best global film market | Cannes | April |
| LA Screenings | Complementary to NATPE | Los Angeles | May |
| MIPCOM | Similar to MIPTV, but six months later | Cannes | October |
| FESPACO | Film festival and market, but slowly including more TV material | Ouagadougou | February |
| DISCOP Africa | About 400 distributors from Africa and the world | Changing | Feb and Sept |
| World Content Market | Small market | Prague | Feb |
| Banff | TV festival and market | Canada | June |
| AFM | American Film Market for independent films | Santa Monica | November |

It is extremely expensive to attend markets. You must have a technique and strategy for “working the markets”. During the “easy money” days of the past, it was possible to send a delegation of 3-4 people to each market, and to include those with buying potential to attend as trainees.

This is no longer possible. You have to keep costs down. For instance, almost all the product available from FESPACO is available at DISCOP and more often. MIPCOM and MIPTV are a perfectly adequate replacement for all the other markets.

Steps and tips in buying

Each market is a little battleground. The broadcasters are battling it out against the other competitors to gain access and options to product that all would like to have.

This is probably going to change in the future as more channels appear, and they all have distinctive target niche markets.

But until that is evident, the same battleground persists: the race for rights.

The winner is the delegate with the best strategy. A simple strategy follows these steps.

Step 1: Check the channel brand and positioning

The brand is the making of the channel. The short description of the brand defines how it wants which audience to see it as their friend. However, other audiences come in because they like your product more than that on other channels. This may happen irregularly, or even constantly. This is no reason to change the brand. Just because you wear yellow clothes to attract those people who also like yellow clothes, you may also attract a lot of people who wear green clothes. That is no reason to change the colour of your clothes.

These “other” people came in of their own accord, and do not need any special attracting.

The same happens on TV channels. The audience you deliberately targeted, and the audience that came in without being targeted, now define your position. Positions change from year to year, not much, but significantly.

Step 2: Check the channel schedule

What gaps are in the schedule for short term programming needed within the next year, medium term programming for the next two years, and long term programming for the next three years? It is crazy in today’s media to even think beyond three years.

Your two- and three-year programming purchases will invariably include feature films, documentary series, hit sitcoms and drama series.

Step 3: Make a shopping list

Against a list of all the empty slots for which foreign licensed product is suitable, make notes of the following:

- Audience profile of the slot today, six months ago, and a year ago. (the position)

- Target audience by the channel (the brand)
- Shortest and longest possible duration for the slot (could it be as short as one hour, or as long as two hours?)
- The time of the day, season of the year, and the type of programming you and the channel think would be most suitable.
- Maximum budget allowable.
- Number of showings over which period of years

Each channel need only send one person provided that person has the authority to do the deal on the spot.

You can take an option to buy a license, with an undertaking to take it up or not, on a specific future date, even tomorrow. Usually you don't have to pay for an option, but that depends on your trusting personal relationship with the seller.

Check with channels if they have ideas for special seasonal celebrations (such as Christmas, or Halloween). Add any special programmes for these seasons to your list.

Step 4: Make appointments

You can do this by email. If you need to develop a personal relationship with a seller you don't know, use the phone. Email is impersonal.

Check the catalogues before you make the appointment. Check the availability of the property. Check the prices.

Getting intelligence

Licensing from the global markets is not easy. You have to know your country, your broadcaster and your audience. But you also have to know the global markets, and what is happening in each.

There are very useful sources (see Reading List), most are by subscription only.

10 Advertiser funded programming

What is it?

Advertiser Funded Programming (AFP) is as old as broadcasting. Most radio stations (including the early ones in South Africa) entered into commercial arrangements with advertisers to pay for the costs of the programme in return for naming rights, sole sponsorship and a variety of other ways to make it worth while for the advertiser.

Sponsorship is nothing new, and neither is product placement or naming rights.

So, in one way or another, advertisers have paid for the cost of programming in many different ways. So what's new?

Structurally nothing is new. But attitudes, both on the side of the broadcaster and the advertisers have changed radically.

AFP fails when the advertiser thinks he knows the business of broadcasting, and the broadcaster thinks he knows all about advertising. Successful AFPs often result when a third party broker is involved who takes an independent viewpoint.

The advertiser's point of view

Television advertising was easy when there was just one channel. It became a little more difficult to attract the attention of the audience when there were three channels. But suddenly we have four free-to-air channels, and many low cost satellite offerings.

If that is not complicated enough we have Internet advertising on social media growing exponentially. There are viable alternatives presented by community radio, and well over 350 consumer magazines.

A new word has entered the vocabulary: clutter. There is so much advertising. Everywhere the audience turns they see an ad, if not on the side of a taxi, then wrapped around the supports of a bridge.

South Africans living in metropolitan areas see thousands of brand impressions every day. What concerns advertisers is the effect of their advertising. This has led many to question the effectiveness of the 30" advertising spot. It started when the VHS recorders were introduced and people used to watch programmes when they felt like it. Accordingly, they would "fast forward" during the ad breaks. Advertisers developed more doubts when the satellite pay broadcasters introduced the Personal Video Recorder (PVR) which made it even easier to skip the ad breaks.

What really solidified their doubts was the proliferation of channels. It is so easy just to flip over to another channel in order to avoid the breaks. Those with serious doubts looked at the possibility of replacing their investment in a series of slots with an investment in an entire programme. This programme would be carefully structured to:

- Deliver entertainment to the audience.
- Embed brand and product messages, usually through the benefits of the product to the audience.

The broadcaster's point of view

At the same time, broadcasters experienced a noticeable drop in audiences. The number of channels was growing, but the audience wasn't growing at the same rate, so all broadcasters experienced a shrink in viewers. What made them really nervous was the impact of digital terrestrial television when the number of channels could go up three or four times.

This could only result in a serious drop in advertising revenue.

So when the advertisers suggested that they buy an entire programme, which guarantees the revenue for a whole programme slot, the broadcasters were suddenly very interested.

Although there have been a few instances of advertiser funded programming every year for the last few decades, the whole concept has suddenly taken on a life of its own.

Because these changes in the landscape happened at the same time all over the world, South Africans noticed what regulators were doing in Europe. They were

allowing these trends, as they were fully aware that traditional models were heading for big trouble.

So, suddenly broadcasters and advertisers were locked in creative sessions looking for ways of:

- Identifying and targeting a niche audience.
- Attracting advertiser revenue on the basis of loyalty and attention rather than numbers.
- New designs in scheduling such that programmes can be repurposed in many different ways. This is another way of saying “repeats that are acceptable to audiences because they appeal to convenience, rather than novelty”.
- New versions of programmes, usually with new language versions with subtitling and dubbing.
- Prestigious high budget block-busters commissioned or co – financed by the broadcaster.
- Advertiser funded programming to reduce the direct costs and improve the cash flow of the less prestigious programmes.

Advertiser funded programmes do NOT need to be prime time programmes. If they are directed to the retired, then mid-morning is a far better time to target that audience.

AFP does not suit the advertiser or the broadcaster every time.

What each party wants

The difficult challenges in successful AFPs are the achievement of the objectives of the two parties. These are very different.

What the advertiser wants

The advertiser (whether it is the marketer directly or the representative in the form of an advertising agency) wants to achieve product sales. Even if he calls it “brand recognition or awareness”, the ultimate objective is increased sales.

The advertiser is accustomed to the thirty-second hard sell spot. His mind is focussed on sales, his experience is cemented in traditional advertising, and his outcome is written in terms of sales.

Even though advertisers initiated AFP as an alternative to the traditional thirty second spot, their mindset is still on the immediate effect of the exposure on product sales.

What the broadcaster wants

The broadcaster’s raw materials consist of appealing programmes combined with a saleable audience. His customer is the advertiser. He sells audiences to the advertiser. He will have no audiences to sell if he has not attracted them first.

These audiences may be simply identified as: “as many as possible”, or a target audience of specific demographics or segment. (A segment is never a primary target. A segment is an attitude and cannot be measured in terms of numbers. For instance you cannot target a language by targeting a segment. You also cannot target a

culture by targeting a segment.)

The broadcaster's objectives are to, at least, maintain and preferably grow audiences, and thereby increase revenue into the long term future.

AFP carries inherent risk

The inherent risk comes directly from the different points of view of the two parties.

How the advertiser sees it

The advertiser looks at audience backwards.

The advertiser is looking for a specific market. He will define this in terms of language, gender, age, LSM, and perhaps even education, interests, attitude.

The advertiser now uses audience research tools like Telmar, IMS, Nielsen or others to find out where he can reach the largest target market at the lowest cost. This gives him a cost per one thousand target viewers (CPM). Usually he does not get this CPM in one slot – he has to spread his placement of a range of slots during any one day to achieve this optimum CPM.

He relies on the broadcaster delivering this target audience to him in the future based on the past performance.

Usually the delivery is reasonably accurate, so the advertiser continues placing ads in slots based on past performance.

So, the advertiser plans his revenue (from increased sales) based on past performance.

How the broadcaster sees it

The broadcaster also tracks past performance, but her focus is not on that past performance. His focus is on the future. He may have to maintain that past performance so he may:

1. Decide to give up a slot and just put low cost programming into it because competitor channels are both battling it out with high cost programmes that have taken most of the market share any way. This is a trade-off between trying to get all the remaining audience at a certain cost, or broadcasting something really cheap and being happy with whatever advertising he attracts.
2. Decide to change the focus and demographic of a slot because competitors have also aimed towards niche programming.
3. Have to change the focus of the slot for regulatory reasons.

The broadcaster takes a long time to make a programme at enormous cost. He hopes that audiences still want this type of programme in six months or a year's time. He also never knows for sure what the competitors will be planning in a year's time. So there is a complex mixture of guesswork, intuition, experience, and intelligence gained from other channels.

(Broadcasters follow each other around at markets and try desperately to find out from suppliers what their competitors have bought. They also carefully listen to rumours in the independent producer sector to find out what has been commissioned and for which dates.)

Even though past performance is one of the factors, it is in fact one of the many factors in making future programme decisions.

So the broadcaster plans his future revenue based on predictions into the short, medium and long term future. The broadcaster is always looking forwards.

This is exactly the opposite view to that taken by the advertiser.

Different focus

The advertiser focuses on short term sales. He plans to get the audience to react fast, and buy products. He also looks for long term loyalty as a by-product to immediate sales.

The broadcaster relies heavily on long term loyalty. If he doesn't keep his audience in a slot, or over a series of slots, then he will not be able to plan for the future and may end up over-budgeting on future programmes – in which case his costs will exceed his revenue.

Broadcasters are not very flexible. It takes them a long time to change a schedule. Advertisers are. They can get a new ad on the air in days. Broadcasters are used to being inflexible. Advertisers are used to being flexible.

A broadcaster, who has total control over its own programmes, and has financed it, can look forward to steady growth in the slot's audience.

If however, a programme fails, and the share drops, the programme that follows does NOT inherit the high audience the slot used to have. It inherits the last audience of the last episode of the flop.

This proves the old show business adage, "You are only as good as your last show".

If a programme inherits an average AR of 6 in the slot, and it grows to an AR of 8, it will pass that AR of 8 to the following programme series. If however, the audience falls to an AR of 4, then that slot will pass on an AR of 4 to the following series. There's not much in broadcasting that is certain, but this is one of them.

Editorial independence

In Advertiser Funded Programming, who owns the programme? Who has the final say into what is seen and heard on the screen? After all, don't we accept that "whoever pays the piper, calls the tune"?

AFPs are subject to the same ICASA and BCC broadcasting code rules as conventional sponsored programmes. But this covers only a small part of what is called "editorial control".

Theoretically, the advertiser pays for a programme that makes a product statement, but does not interfere with the broadcaster's control. However, if you look at it in practice, this spells out only one word: conflict.

When discussions start, when the advertiser presents to the broadcaster, both parties must agree on the ground rules of control. They must discuss and agree:

- The concept and the target audience
- Why the concept is expected to be a hit with that target audience.

-
- The programme treatment and the script.
 - How the advertiser makes his mark in product placement, exposure to the product and the brand
 - How the audience will accept the “intrusion” of the product into the programming.

There is also the matter of ownership of the copyright or intellectual property. Copyright always extends to time, place and medium.

It can become complex when the programme agreement also includes foreign distribution, other media such as comics, cell phones and the Web, licensing to others. There are a host of complications.

AFP is not easy exposure for the advertiser and not easy money for the broadcaster. Misplaced and badly conceived AFP can backfire so that neither of the parties has an audience at all. It often takes a lot of money and many other damage control measures to woo the audience back once this happens.

11 Working with the Audience

The Importance of the Audience

Remember, broadcasting starts with the audience and ends with the audience. In fact, we may go so far as to say, that everything in broadcasting is directed towards the audience.

However, there are three factors that are important when it comes to understanding our audience:

- How many there are
- What their social outlook is
- What they feel about specific stories and themes.

Quantitative research

We want to know how many people from a specific target audience there actually are, and how many end up watching the programme. To establish this we do quantitative research.

In this kind of research, people are just numbers. We do quantitative research, because we usually need numbers with which to evaluate the success of commercial programming. When evaluating public service (mandate) programmes, we often have to count how many of the target audience watched. We also want to know if they did the things we hoped they would do (like enter competitions).

Culture

Every group of people have their own way of looking at the world, at life, at society and at other groups. This is their culture.

Every group has a culture. The people who live in the same street often see things slightly differently from the people in the next street. Different age groups (generations) see things differently, as do people from different religious backgrounds, different countries, and even different income groups.

The culture of a large group immediately tells us whether they are going to accept a type of programme or story, and which they will find offensive.

Qualitative research

This research tells us what a group of people feel about a theme, a story, a genre or a particular medium.

People rely on stories to make sense of the world, and to provide them with strategies with which to deal with change. People use entertainment to turn their fears into hopes.

If a story resonates with them, strikes an emotional chord, “clicks” – whichever way you want to put it, they will like it. They will feel that they can use it; it provides the emotional stimulation that they are looking for.

If it doesn't, then they will hit the remote and go to another channel. People watch programmes, not channels. It was hard for them to change channels before the remote was invented. But now? It takes less energy than to send a “Please call me” on a cellphone.

Qualitative research tries to find out why and to what extent people like the programme. The research will uncover the usefulness of the programme, its relevance to viewer's emotions and how it fits in with the audience's cultural values.

Research must measure

Research is useless unless it measures – either counts the number of people, or measures value on a scale.

How do we do research?

Counting people

We count people (quantitative research) using data that comes from market research, the census and many other sources.

We want to find out how many people there are in:

1. Gender groups

South Africa is one of the most gender-equable in the world. You really only see a large difference between male and female viewing on programmes involving pregnancy, and bringing up infants.

2. Age groups

(3-6; 7-10; 11-14; 15-24¹²; 25-34; 35-49; 50+) We even have nicknames for these:

¹² Marketers in South Africa now regard “adults” as 15+ and no longer 16+. This decision was made as the result of much research. It is proof of the casual observation made for years that “children are getting older,

toddlers, tykes, tweens, teens, family, mature, grey-power.

3. Language groups

This is very important. With so much English spoken in South Africa, we assume that it is the dominate language. Yet only 8.2% of South Africans claim it to be their first language. For all others who claim to speak English, it is actually their second or third language. The facts, revealed by research show:

This puts English as the fifth most used language.

| | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|--|----------------|------------|
| IsiZulu | 23.8 | | Sesotho | 7.9 |
| IsiXhosa | 17.6 | | Xitsonga | 4.4 |
| Afrikaans | 13.3 | | SiSwati | 2.7 |
| Sepedi | 9.4 | | Tshivenda | 2.3 |
| English | 8.2 | | IsiNdebele | 1.6 |
| Setswana | 8.2 | | Other | 0.5 |

Ref: SAARF Trends 2005-2009

4. Income groups

In South Africa, we use the Living Standards Measurements (LSM). There are ten of them with specific definitions ranging from the very poor in LSM 1 to the very rich in LSM 10. These LSM levels are not in fact income based. They are derived from how people live, and what they buy. You can derive a family income from these dimensions. But this gives you little indication of their disposable income. You should not use the derived income of each LSM as an indication of how much people earn, just how well they live. Think about it – they are two different things. ¹³

5. Religion

Religion plays an important part in the lives of most South Africans. Religion is one of the most important influences on culture. Religion forms part of a person's beliefs and values, and these are almost impossible to change.

6. Lifestyle

Here we look at the chosen lifestyle of people. There is interesting research which indicates that people within lifestyle groups have similar interests.

7. Geographics

People who live in specific geographic areas also have interests and culture specific to them.

8. Education

A person's educational level plays an important part in his interests, likes and dislikes.

¹³ A family can earn R10 000 a month, and spend every cent, and even live on credit, buying the products advertised on TV. Another family can earn R10 000 a month, save at least R3 000 a month, and live very frugally by choice. These people are less desirable to advertisers.

Counting the viewers

All of these factors can be quantified in terms of available research. It is possible to accurately estimate the people in a defined group, even within a specified geographical area.

As we target in on an audience the total size of the group gets smaller and smaller.

For instance:

The population of the country is 48-million.¹⁴

- Since only about 70% of people have access to TV, the universe of TV viewers is only 34-million.
- If we want to isolate only women, we are down to a universe of 17-million.
- If we want to drill down further and isolate only women who are in LSM 5 (about 15% of the population), then we are down to 3-million.
- So there are 3-million women in LSM 5 who have access to TV.

Our main sources of information for this data is the demographic data from SAARF other market research organisations, and the last Census.

How are audiences measured?

In South Africa, we use the same sophisticated audience measurement systems used in all developed countries.

Audience measurement is entrusted to the South African Advertising Research Foundation, a non-profit company jointly owned by all media players – press, broadcasters, advertisers, and marketers.

SAARF employs world class audience measurement technologies from companies such as ACNielsen and Gallup, and uses them within the South African context. SAARF explains as follows:

SAARF Television Audience Measurement Survey (SAARF TAMS®) is able to measure the second-by-second movement of audiences whose TVs are connected to SAARF TAMS® PeopleMeters, which are geographically distributed to give an accurate sample of the total viewing population.

The data is automatically transferred from panel homes to a central computer every 24-hours via radio, cellular telephone or landline.

The data is then processed and made available to broadcasters. There are drawbacks to this system, but it is the best available, and all broadcasters are measured equally. So the standard statistical margins of error apply equally to all stations.

We now come to some simple measurements.

¹⁴ Excluding an estimated 3-million immigrants, some of whom are income earners and television viewers desirable to advertisers

As we saw earlier, the number of people in South Africa with television (about 70% or 34-million) is called the “Universe”.

AR

One audience ratings point (AR), is one percent of that universe. So a 1 AR of the entire universe is 1% of 34-million, or 340 000 people.

However, you can also have specific universes. You can have a universe of just black women age 16-24. In this case, the Universe of black women age 16-24 is very much smaller. But 1% of them are still 1 AR of black women age 16-24.

When you hear the generic terms, “Oh the programme got 3.5 AR”, they are probably referring to a universe of all adults 16+.

In the absence of a qualifier, always assume the universe is all persons 16 and older.

If you go back to the last graph on page 13 you see that at prime time 21:00, only 45% of people are watching. Therefore the maximum AR that can be obtained is only 45 AR. However, that has to be shared between SABC 1, 2, 3, e.tv and DSTv.

Theoretically then, you have to divide the maximum available audience between five sources of channels so every channel can only have a small share of the available audience.

In fact it is possible to get half the audience. Generations on SABC 1 has managed to capture half the total audience at 20.00 on weekdays for years.

AR’s are also available, not as a percentage, but in terms of number of people (AMR). AR is a term that suits advertisers who are trying to buy according to CPM. AMR is easier for people who work in content. A specific number of people are easier to visualise creatively.

That brings us to the term “Share”.

Share

Whereas AR is a percentage of the total viewers available (those people with access to TV), “share” is the percentage of the total viewers watching at any moment in time. If a slot across all channels commands 20 AR, and your show gets a 5 AR, then you have a share of 25% ($5 \div 20 \times 100$).

Reach

The number of viewers you can draw under ARs represents only the average number of people who watched each episode. But not all the viewers watched every programme. That’s why we include “Reach”, which is the total of all individuals who watched at least once for a few minutes or so. This is very important for educational programmes. Reach is always considerably higher than AR.¹⁵

Cume

Cume Reach refers to the total audience for a specific period without any duplication of individuals. Cume Reach data helps track how audiences build over time, and also

¹⁵ www.saarf.co.za and its publication SAARF TRENDS. The LSM, Lifestages and Lifestyle data is available electronically on a CD. There is also a free interactive data section on the SAARF site.

provides data for channels that do not meet the minimum requirements to be released on the TAMS database. To be released on the TAMS database, channels need to have a minimum of 60 respondents logging-in to view the channel for three consecutive weeks.

Summary

As long as you are clear on the following, you know everything you need to know about audience terminology:

1. The universe is the total number of viewers with access to TV.
2. Audience Ratings points (AR) are a percentage of the total audience with access to TV.
3. You can specify a group of the audience, so your Universe can be very specific.
4. In the absence of the AR universe being specific, you can assume it refers to all adults over 16.
5. Share is a percentage of the total number of people watching at a particular time. Share can also be specific to a particular group.
6. Reach is the total number of individuals who tuned in, even for just a short time, over a given number of programmes.
7. Cume Reach data helps track how audiences build over time.¹⁶

12 The culture of the audience

Before we can understand culture, we need to understand what drives us, and influences the way we see things.

Perception

Suppose you are facing me and there is a coffee mug between us. To me, the handle is on the left. To you, the handle is on the right.

To me, it is a left-handed mug, and to you it is a right-handed mug. Normally this may not be an issue, but what if we both believe that a left-handed mug represents bad luck?

You will be quite happy with the mug, but I will be seriously disturbed by it.

This is perception at its simplest.

It gets more and more complex, as you start moving into things that affect values and beliefs.

Beliefs

We often say, "I know that ...", and it can refer to anything from the existence of God,

¹⁶ The ratio between AMR and Reach is an important indicator of attention and loyalty.

all the way to whether you will catch a cold if you stand in the rain.

In all cases, we feel that we know something to be true, that we regard as a fact. As far as we are concerned, it needs no argument of proof. We don't even bother discussing it because it is so obvious.

Those are our beliefs.

Values

Values come from our beliefs. Because we believe something, we will act consistently in a certain way. Values are sometimes held by many people. When we hold the same values as others, we feel like we belong together. Values are usually few in number, not tied to specific situations, and form the ties that bind groups of people together. The validity of values never has to be proved. We never have to prove our beliefs, so why should we prove our values?

Customs

Customs are the things we do under specific circumstances that show how we respect our values.

Our beliefs are our starting points. They give rise to our values which guide our behaviour. Customs are the ritual behaviour that comes from values.

Attitudes

Attitudes reflect the way we feel about something, whether it is favourably or unfavourably. They come from our values, are present in our customs, and reflect things that happen around us. They also come from personal experiences. They are part of our immediate reactions to something, and are a mixture of values, perceptions and experience.

We can change attitudes, but with difficulty. It is almost impossible to change values.

Now that we have looked at what drives us and what influences us, let's look at culture.

Culture

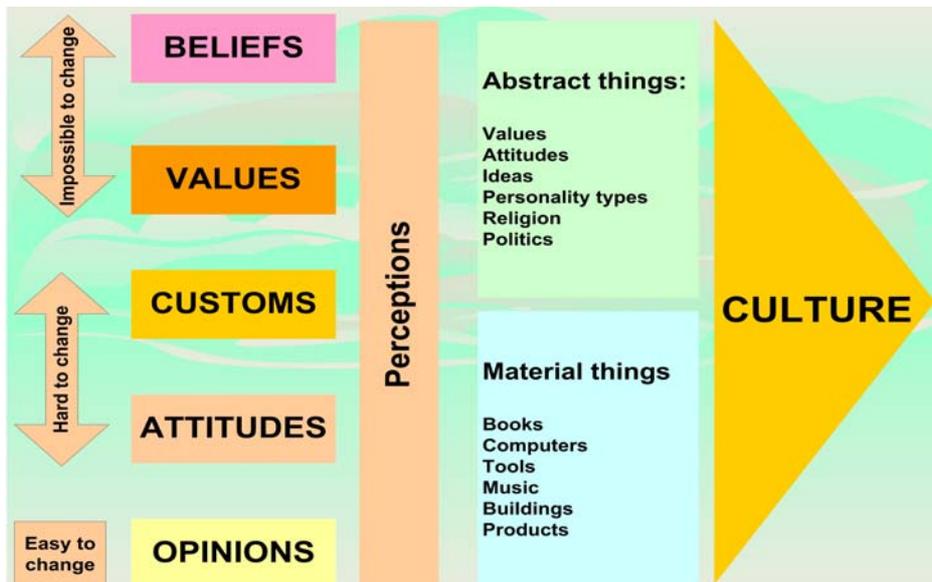
Culture is made up of all learned beliefs, values, customs, attitudes and perceptions. These influence how a person reacts to things and people around them. Culture displays itself in abstract things like values, attitudes, ideas, personality types, religion and politics. It also can be seen through material elements such as books, computers, tools, music, buildings, and specific products.

We can only describe culture by means of these abstract and material things.

These things are not easily understood. We are used to attaching precise scientific definitions to culture and beliefs, but since scientists cannot even tell us what the chemical formula for the human brain is, it seems a bit much to ask for a scientific definition of culture.

If you look at yourself and try to separate your beliefs from your values, your attitudes from your perceptions, you are on the way to distinguishing between your culture and that of others.

Culture is NOT religion. There is a culture in the rural youth that is different from the urban youth. There are different cultures among rich and poor, between youngsters and their grandparents, between animal lovers and racing cars maniacs.



You best define a culture by comparing specific parts of it to the same parts of another culture. We will look at this later when we look at world cultures.

Measuring culture

How do we measure and define the culture of a group of people? Don't ever try to do it by guessing. The only way is tireless research and analysis. You can only research and analyse things you can see, hear and feel (and taste and smell).

It's the same with emotions. You can live with someone for fifty years and you will still never know what they are thinking. The only clues to what they think and feel are in the things that they say and do (their verbal and body language, the music, art and writings they produce).

This we call behaviour. Feelings and emotions are hidden and expressed through behaviour. We can observe and analyse behaviour.

It's the same with culture. You can't see beliefs, attitudes and perceptions, but you can see the results of them.

However, when you measure culture, don't compare "apples with pears".

We call this a matrix. You can design it any way you like, as long as you take the EFFECTS and compare the same effects in both cultures.

World cultures

There are basically two cultures in the world today.

1. The Individualist or Western culture.
2. The collectivist culture

Western culture is found in North America, Northern Europe and Australia and New

| | Rural people | Urban people |
|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Cars | Utility, tough, durable cars | Sporty, flashy, small |
| Animals | Part of existence | Amusement |
| Dirt roads | Luxury | Poverty |
| Electricity | Luxury | Necessity |
| Rivers | Place to swim | Where you get water-borne diseases |

Zealand.

The table above shows a comparison between the Individualist and the Collectivist cultures. This distinction is an essential concept for people who acquire content through co-production and through licensing.¹⁷

South Africa is a mixture of Collectivist and Individualist cultures. However it is fair to generalise and say that as we move from poorer to richer people, we move from

| <i>Collectivist Cultural Traits</i> | <i>Individualist Cultural Traits</i> |
|--|--|
| Centred on the group. | Centred on the individual |
| Submissive to authority, wisdom and age. | Greater emphasis on self-reliance |
| Rigid social structures. | Resents class-based distinctions |
| Active relationship with nature seeking harmony with nature | Active to conquer nature. |
| Emphasises inner experiences of meaning and feeling. | Concerned with physical experiences and the world of things. |
| Respect for differences and diversity. | View that the world can and should emulate Western values. |
| Culture rests on kinship ties and tradition with a historical orientation | Places primary faith in rationalism and is oriented toward the future. |
| Places weight on vertical interpersonal relationships. | Places weight on horizontal dimensions of interpersonal relationships. |
| Values a person's duties to family, clan, and state. | Values the individual personality. |
| Thinks analogically. | Thinks logically. |
| Accepts the unseen. | Accepts only what is seen. |

¹⁷ Source: Adapted from Carolyn A. Lin, "Cultural Values Reflected in Chinese and American Television Advertising," *Journal of Advertising*, 30, 4, Winter 2001, 83—94.

Collectivistic to Individualistic. The majority of people are Collectivistic. It's important to know in which sectors of the population the different cultures predominate.

13 The feelings of the audience

This is the third part of our analysis of an audience. In the first part, we counted the audience, and in the second part we measured their culture. Now we are going to measure their feelings.

A word about measurement:

In audience studies all we can sometimes do is measure by comparison, in which case we will have only three degrees: "more than", "equal to" and "less than".

So we measure the feelings of an audience by saying that "younger people like this more than older people". It is often as far as we can go. You NEVER measure audience feelings on the basis of whether you personally like it or not.

WARNING

Do NOT take into account the opinions of your friends. How many do you have? 50? 100? Even if you have 500 friends listed on your Facebook page, you do not canvass all of them for how they feel about a programme. Even if you did, they represent 0.0014% of the population. Furthermore they are probably all from similar age, language and cultural groups. So keep yourself and your friends out of it.

Emotions

Here is a summary of the range of emotions according to Carroll Izard¹⁷ He divides them into six.

This simple list makes it easier when analysing audiences.

As a result of feeling emotions, people normally DO something. It is that "DOING" that we are interested in.

We now come to the major factor in entertainment: memory. The best description comes from the film *Shadow of the Vampire*, where a character says: "We are all

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|-------|-----------------|---------|----------|
| Joy / Happiness | Fear / Anxiety | Anger | Sadness / Grief | Disgust | Surprise |
|-----------------|----------------|-------|-----------------|---------|----------|

scientists engaged in the creation of memories."

Think about it.

The end objective of a TV programme is to develop a specific behaviour in the audience.

Why a behaviour and not an emotion? Because, as we saw earlier, we can only observe and measure *behaviour*. We cannot "see" emotions, and therefore cannot measure them.

¹⁷ Izard, C. E. (1991). *The psychology of emotions*. New York: Plenum.

That is the only way we can evaluate the success of a TV programme, by measuring what the audience does as a result of watching the programme. Do they watch all the way through? Do they participate in competitions? Do they go to the website? Do the same people watch again next week? Is there a bigger audience each week, and do we think this is because of “word of mouth”?

People will only say or do something (behaviour) if they remember the emotions that they felt during the programme. In fact one of the things we want all of our viewers to do after the programme is to talk about it.

Word of mouth is always the cheapest and most effective form of marketing.

So, we want our viewers to:

- Feel emotions during the programme.
- Remember those emotions after the programme.
- Do something as a result of the memories
- Talk about it to their friends

Act on it (phone in, join a club, donate to charity, sign up for a course – whatever we set as the objective of the programme).

To simplify:

Decide what you want to do → Do it → Evaluate it

Two points to keep in mind:

Memories

The more, and longer, the audience remembers a programme, the more they will act on those memories. Therefore a programme is as successful as the length of the memories it produces in the audience.

Them, not you

You will remember the programme you worked on for the rest of your life. The audience may only remember it for five minutes. It is never your feelings, your emotions and your memories that count. It is the audience's feelings, memories and actions that count.

14 Targeting the audience

In chapter 3, we looked at the seven steps of targeting an audience. We now look at them in greater detail

The brand

As we saw earlier, the channel brand is important, though some people make too

much of it. Although people may tune in to the brand they prefer, they will always check the programme on that channel as well as on all the other channels. Their first choice might be to see what is showing on their favourite channel brand, but they will only watch the programme they most want to see at that time, regardless of the channel it is on.

People might be very loyal to the Nestle chocolate brand as opposed to the Cadbury brand. But that's because the products are much the same if not identical.

Television programmes are never the same: not on the same channel, not on different channels, and not on different times of the day, and days of the week.

Programmes however must line up with the channel brand. For instance, you would never expect to see action cops on the Disney Channel.

- Watch the channel carefully and get a feel for what the audience expect to see.
- Contact the channel and ask for the mission, values and any branding statements of interest to producers.
- Ask the channel for an audience profile.
- Watch the channel again and discover how the profile fits the programming style.
- Put yourself into the mind of the audience profile, and watch programmes to discover how they communicate with you.

The right time

If you go back to the SAARF graph that shows viewership throughout the day, this tells you how many people watch TV at each hour of the day.

This figure is divided between SABC1, SABC2, SABC3, e.tv, and DSTv, and all the new broadcasters. The graph does not tell you which people are watching, where they live, what they do, how they live, what interests them, and why.

You cannot generalise and say that most people start work at 8 and end at 5. Some people travel to and from work for only half an hour. Others face an arduous two hours of travelling twice a day.

This certainly affects their TV viewing, as people have to be at home to watch TV.

However, what we can get from the TAMS data (which comes from the PeopleMeters), is:

How many people watch at any specific time, who they are, their gender, language, LSM, area of residence, interests, education, and the type of things they do for fun.

Your audience research department can get you any of this data.

It takes some time to digest all the knowledge you can derive from this data, and the easiest way to do so is to get in front of a terminal for a few hours, play around, ask questions of the interface, and just be amazed at how much you can learn about audiences.

15 *The meanings of programme standards*

What is standard? It is a statement of how WELL you want to do something.

In countries that South Africa interfaces with on a more regular basis, standards and quality have different meanings.

Standards and quality

Technical standards

These are non-negotiable. They are defined by the broadcaster in order to:

1. Deliver the highest possible picture and sound quality to the viewer.
2. Comply with international technical standards.
3. Ensure that other broadcasters will accept a product because they adhere to their technical specifications.

These technical standards are precise and can be measured against the technical specifications. You can see the standard on a scope or a meter. They either meet the standard or they don't. It's as simple as that.

Programme quality

This has no meaning whatsoever, unless it refers to precise outcomes of stated objectives. (Please read the sections on setting objectives and standards). But you can measure programme quality: Did it or did it not achieve its objectives?

Any programme can have any number of outcomes. They can relate to size of the audience, income, and changes in audience behaviour – in fact any number of desired outcomes. A programme of high quality will achieve those objectives.

Production values

Production values basically relate to the visible evidence that money was spent. A low cost programme, regardless of whether the audience loved it or not, is said to have "minimal production values"

The concept of production values grew up with films in the 1930's and was emphasised by the early days of competitive TV. The more glitz, glamour and lavish costumes and sets, the "better" the show. Often production values are used purely to get an edge on the competition when the actual emotional value of the show has it at a disadvantage.

Production values enable you to compete nationally and internationally with average and mediocre content. You do not have to spend money to have a show that "touches the hearts" of people.

It is a big mistake to try and cover up shoddy production with digital effects and artificial "gloss".

You cannot measure production values except in terms of money.

How can a low cost programme be quality?

There are only three things an audience wants a programme to be:

1. Seen
2. Heard
3. Understood

On the face of it, this is all you need.

The reason for our confusion about the word “quality” is that almost all South African programming lies side by side with lavish American programming. A local programme is usually sandwiched in between two very costly and competent shows purchased at one tenth of the cost of the local programme. Or, if there is more than one channel, the unfortunate local programme lies side by side with lavish American programmes on the other channel.

It makes it even harder when there are satellite pay-TV programmes crammed with the most lavish production in the world.

That’s why they are open to comparison, and of course our local programming pales into insignificance next to the extravagant and polished programme that probably cost our country’s GDP.

Yet our local programmes are loved, appreciated and welcomed, despite their low production values. They are about us, look like us, sound like us, and we can recognise the performers as if they were next door neighbours.

But the fact remains, they cost ten times the amount of money to produce.

If audiences love our local programmes so much, how can we produce more of them so that we can fill extra channels that digital television will bring?

There’s a very wise saying that is used often here: “Quality comes out of quantity”. When people make a lot of programmes, they get better at it, and they make them cheaper. If a producer has a long run (many episodes to make), he will make it cheaper.

Also, producers are people; they have limited tastes and styles. That is why they should only make the programmes that they are good at making.

There are lessons to be learned from the success of the extremely low cost Nigerian films:

Simplicity, sincerity, and relevance are worth millions of dollars.

What is broadcast quality

There is so little consensus about quality as very often “quality” gets confused with “production standards”.

Often production values are required when local programmes have to be acceptable alongside imported costly programmes. Audiences won’t define a local programme as “high standard” if it does not match the overall visual style and production values of other programmes shown on the same channel. But if it touched their hearts, they don’t care.

(This is where multi-channel TV scores – you attract a niche audience who are far

more interested in the specific content than the production values. However on free-to-air, the mixture of styles and values means that audiences tend to “average out”, and expect the same production values from local programming as they see in imported programmes).

Broadcast quality may be seen as “that which achieves the needs of the broadcaster and the audience”. Since meeting both these needs is always the objective of a programme, we can then say that a quality programme is one that achieves its objectives.

Fit for purpose

The new multichannel environment (many channels, fragmented audiences and income streams) has made a decade old concept: “Fit for Purpose” mandatory.

Fit for Purpose basically means that you do not expend any more resources on a product than the actual purpose warrants.

This means:

1. No more aiming for the highest possible production values regardless of any considerations
2. Producing programmes that are primarily directed to the needs of local audiences. Foreign sales and international awards are secondary.

It also means:

1. Maximising archive material
2. Longer runs and contracts at lower prices.
3. Maximising the spread of overheads
4. Utilising economies of scale
5. Versioning
6. Using marketing to repurpose content to fit other brands.

The primary driver is money. If you go back to the Introduction, you can see why there is a desperate need to produce content at 25% to 30% of the costs we are accustomed to. New content also has to be produced smarter so that it can be made cheaper. This is not a South African phenomenon; it is an imperative all over the world.

A “Fit for Purpose” formula?

Is there a way we can determine what costs are “Fit for Purpose”? There is no formula, but there is a developing practice that looks at the value of the content to the broadcaster.

Here are some principles:

1. You cannot attract an audience that is historically not there, or not at home.
2. Advertisers have preconceptions about slots and their value. Try and leverage extra revenue by expanding the perception of the slot’s audience.
3. A repeat that is carefully repurposed, even just changing the ribbon that wraps it, does not have to be a repeat.

4. Good talent needs little support. Some genres are cheaper than others. The cheaper the intrinsic cost genre or format, the more you should be prepared to pay for talent.
5. There is no replacement for or compromise on:
$$\text{INCOME} - \text{PROFITS} = \text{COST}$$

Determine what income you need from the slot.

This will involve:

1. The history of the slot's income value. This must be net profit. For net profit, you need to know the revenue, and the cost of sales (discounts, commissions etc.)
2. The need to cross subsidise, if applicable. Obviously some prime time slots will be expected to carry the losses chalked up by mandated content. At the same time, off peak content that is not mandated does not have to run at a loss.
3. The part the slot plays on the business plan of the channel and the broadcaster.

Check what the other broadcasters do at that time

Go through the history of the slot. Use standard audience data to determine the basic demographics of the audience at that time (average over the past year). Then look at what sort of programmes have been shown in that slot over the past year, and the relative broadcaster share for each programme. It takes a bit of work, but it is worth it.

Check this against what your audience historically expects from you at that time

Now concentrate on your programming and the history of your share in that slot. See if there is a niche that has been missed that you may grab profitably.

Analyse the total revenue at that time, and compare the broadcaster shares from month to month over the past year.

Take the lower estimate of the total revenue, required from the slot (according to your business plan) and subtract your overheads and the profit you need to make. What is left over is the total cost of marketing and content.

Calculate the maximum cost of content

It's simple: $\text{TOTAL INCOME FROM ALL STREAMS (lowest estimate)} - \text{NET INCOME REQUIRED FROM THE SLOT} = \text{TOTAL COST (including marketing and overheads)}$.

See if there's a better alternative

The above calculation assumes that the product you acquire is good only for one showing. Think about whether it could be rerun, repurposed and used again, or even licensed out? If so, recalculate the costs by applying the new income potential. What you are doing now is effectively widening the PURPOSE.

16 The Programme Business Plan

What is a business plan?

Every programme or programme series in public broadcasting requires a business plan before it can be considered as viable.

The programme or project business plan is an explanation by you of why you believe the project will fulfil the mandate of the SABC.

It should have headings that are something like this:

- Proposal synopsis
- Editorial treatment
- Audience fit
- Budget evaluation and price setting
- Proposed payment schedule
- Advertising sales projections
- Exploitation and revenue opportunities
- Deal structure
- Special marketing brand extension or opportunities

Here are some guidelines as what each heading means:

Proposal synopsis

This is similar to what a standard business plan would call the “Executive Summary”

It is a single paragraph that details what the programme is all about and its target audience.

It should state why it will suit that channel and the target audience in that slot and why it is required in terms of the mandate. The last sentence should be total cost and the expected revenue.

Keep it short; you should not need more than one quarter page.

Editorial treatment

Here you will go into the content or storyline. You will follow this with some description of the style and why it is relevant.

You will find it much easier if you follow every statement with a reason or result:

- The programme is a serious drama BECAUSE ICASA regulations require drama in this slot and on this channel.
- The programme is a sitcom SO THAT the schedule can carry its audience through to the 20:00 slot in the face of light entertainment on the most serious competitor channel.

Don't just make a statement – show the reader that in everything that you say, you

know what you are talking about.

You will also have to analyse the genre and style, and relate them to the business case.

Again, you need reason and result.

Don't get complicated when it comes to analysis. You have to remember that you are trying to make a case before the production has been made, or perhaps been before the script has been written. It is pointless going into deep critical analysis of something that doesn't yet exist. All you are trying to do is justify your intentions.

Audience fit

How does this previous analysis relate to the audience? Refer to your evaluation tools and summarise the benefits to both the audience and the broadcaster.

Keep it simple. Break up the target audience into its demographic and psychographic elements. Then show how the content, style, performers and genre meet the needs of each element of the audience.

- Budget evaluation and price setting
- Proposed payment schedule
- Advertising sales projections
- Exploitation and revenue opportunities
- Deal structure
- Special marketing brand extension or opportunities

Budget Evaluation and price setting

The producer's budget as negotiated and agreed between you and the producer is not enough. The business plan makes a case for that budget, and decides if it is realistic in terms of the Content Hub and the Channel's needs.

The producer's budget tells you what the production will cost.

The business plan tells what the whole package will cost, and how much revenue it will earn.

The producer's budget is just one of the costs. There are also development costs, overheads, a marketing budget. There may also be other costs involved in co-productions.

Exploitation and revenue opportunities

On the other side there are the various elements that make up "Total Revenue". They do not only consist of advertising revenue. There could be phone-in revenue, merchandising, product integration, sponsorship, and even ticket sales for live events. The modern converged IT and media environment allows for so much creativity in making money that these kinds of opportunities are opening up daily.

17 Evaluation

Evaluation is all about how well we have done in our work. We can never make any claim as to how good we are in our work, unless we can show how well the job was done.

Evaluation is rarely about ratings. What it is about is achieving the objectives as laid out in the business plan.

These objectives have to relate to MEASURABLE standards of quality, quantity, time and cost. (See Setting Objectives). Evaluation is very simply whether these standards have been achieved.

Evaluate the programme

Once the programme is off the air, and you have the results from Audience Research (and if necessary from Airtime Sales), you have to decide, "To what degree was the programme a success?"

A programme is only EVER a success in terms of what was intended for it. You CANNOT claim success outside of the context of the objectives and outcomes.

Either it:

Did not meet the standards in the original objectives.

OR

It met those standards.

OR

It exceeded those standards.

There is nothing else to discuss under evaluation, unless you want to isolate certain experiences that are valuable for future programmes.

The bad news

You are always looking for an evaluation that exceeds your objectives. The bad news is: it won't happen every time.

Experience here and abroad shows that in TV, only 15% of all programmes are hits. The ones that lose money are about 30%. The balance, 55%, break even.

Of course good broadcasters can improve on these figures. But the estimates above are "average".

Evaluation is essential. You have to know how well or how not-so-well a programme has done—after all, we are usually talking about millions of rand. If a programme has not done all that well, then evaluation is an investment in not making the same mistakes again.

The worst thing you can ever do is to avoid evaluating just in case the news is not so hot. It's not a matter of "facing the music"; it's a matter of learning, growing, and building a responsible and rewarding career.

Further reading

There are no local books specifically concerned with television programme management. However, you will learn a lot from:

- Media Programming. Strategies and Practices. Susan Tyler Eastman, and Douglas Ferguson. Wadsworth. 2009
- Media Promotion and Marketing. Susan Tyler Eastman and Douglas Ferguson. Focal Press 2006
- Consumer Behavior and Culture. Marieke De Mooij. SAGE. 2004
- Electronic Media Management. Peter Pringle, Michael Starr and William McCavitt. Focal. 1999.
- Media Studies. Peter J. Fourie, Juta. 2007. Four volumes.
- Media Ethics in the South African Context. Lucas M. Oosthuizen. Juta 2002.
- Amusing ourselves to Death. Neil Postman. Penguin. 2006
- Dealmaking in the Film and Television Industry. Mark Litwak. Silman-James. 2002
- Television Production Handbook. Herbert Zettl. Thomson. 2005.
- Sight Sound Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics. Thomason. 2006
- South African Social Attitudes. Udesch Pillay (Ed). HSRC. 2006
- Marketing. Lamb, Hair McDaniel. South African Edition. Oxford. 2004
- Film and Video Budgets. Deke Simon and Michael Wiese. MWP. 5th ed 2008
- www.international-television.org
- www.mediametrie.fr/eurodatatv/

You should subscribe to, and read:

International

Variety

Hollywood Reporter

World Screen

Television Broadcast International

www.balancing-act-africa.com

World Screen Newflash

World Content Market

World Screen Weekly

Screen Digest

Www.broadcastnow.co.uk

Local

Screen Africa

www.bizcommunity.com

The Media

www.filmcontact.com

The Art of Sourcing Content

A Handbook for Content Professionals

Times change, and they are changing faster than they ever have before.

There used to be a time when television reflected what was going on. Now it has to anticipate change and make sure that it is up there with the audience when change happens.

South Africa is on the brink of a television revolution. Multi-channel will make an impact on audiences, programming, the economics of the business, advertising, business plans and new income stream models.

All of this means that the old ways of acquiring content, and the prices involved are going to change.

Everyone will be affected: independent producers, commissioning editors, programme buyers, schedulers, station managers, advertisers, sponsors and funders.

This book looks at the situation as it is now, and indicates the places where things will change, and how.

It goes through television processes step by step, and urges the reader to do what it focuses on — never take your eyes off the audience. It describes things as they are, simply, and shows just how simple the business is.

*Howard Thomas has worked in the entertainment industry in South Africa for nearly 40 years. He is an award-winning TV producer, and has worked in radio, theatre, film, magazine and interactive media. He has been writing about the industry for over ten years and training in the industry for over 20 years. He is a SAQA-qualified training designer, assessor and quality assurance manager. He authored *The Art of Pitching* and *The Art of Co-production for the SABC*. He specialises in broadcast management, scheduling and audience targeting, and has made extensive studies of Audience psychology within African cultures. He lectures, trains and coaches all over Africa.*