

VI Hörfunk und Fernsehen

**Broadcasting Standards Council, Andrea Millwood Hargrave:
The Scheduling Game – Annual Review.**

Audience Attitudes to Broadcast Scheduling

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The Broadcasting Standards Council (BSC), Britain's statutory organization to deal with issues on behalf of the audience, such as the portrayal of violence, has published its sixth annual review. This year's volume presents the results of audience research concerning broadcasting schedules. How do people build their knowledge of programs? Do they have fixed schedules in their heads? How much faith does the audience have in the 9.00 p.m. 'watershed', that is a time that used by broadcasters to separate family viewing from adult viewing? The research consisted of computerized data, based on audience-buttonpressing while viewing, as well as a national survey among 1.000 adults and a small scale qualitative survey among children.

The research makes clear that respondents have keen knowledge of schedules. It also demonstrates that people are concerned about program contents not so much for themselves, but on behalf of other viewers, especially children. Examples are scenes of homosexuality in soap-operas. This is not necessarily regarded offensive, but is seen instead as a bad example for children. This means that the audience occasionally expects programs, such as soaps, to be scheduled at a time that they think is not suitable, afternoons instead of evenings.

The research shows that audiences get their information about programs from listings and trailers. It is made clear in an experiment that program descriptions are a basic element conditioning the judgement of the audience before they have seen a program.

The book concludes with eight short essays by the people involved in scheduling, a mother's view as well as the view of schedulers of the BBC, ITV and BskyB. The worries of audiences are reflected in the mother's view who emphasizes the responsibility of schedulers and praises the 9.00 p.m. watershed. The schedulers' views are more socio-economical. They recognize their ethical responsibility, but more important is the maximization of their audience. There are however differences between the broadcasters: the BBC-scheduler emphasizes its public service; ITV stresses the loyalty of their viewers, which is important for their advertisers; and finally BskyB argues that their viewers are subscribers which means that if they are not satisfied they will cancel their subscription.

One conclusion from this volume can be that programming is a complex matter in which the responsibility of schedulers is twofold, maximizing the audience and satisfying the audience both in enjoying the program as well as not upsetting them. The 9.00 p.m. watershed is used and appreciated by the audience, causing less concern about programming. By discussing the programming aspects of British television it is made clear that a variety of aesthetic, technological, sociological as well as economical perspectives play a role. The book's qualitative and quantitative data support the impact of these various perspectives.

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