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Introduction to Television Studies



Topic 5. Introduction to Television Studies

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5.1. Television and audience.

Audience analysis: attempts to isolate variables such as region, ethnicity, age, gender, and social class in order to see how different groups tend to construct different meanings for the same text.

Flow: the ways in which programmers, advertisements, etc. follow one another in an unbroken sequence across the day or part of the day, and the experience of watching the sequence of programs, advertisements, trailers, etc.

Target audience - specific groups of people that tv shows (and, certainly, advertisers) want to reach.

Fan culture the activities of groups of fans, as distinct from 'ordinary' viewers. Their importance depends not so much on the ratings but upon other questions of spectatorship.

Niche audiences: particular groups of viewers defined by age, gender or economic status who may be the target audience for a program.

Ratings: Based on a sample of tv viewers, the calculated amount and percentage of viewers watching a particular program on a particular station.

Strip: a program scheduled at the same time each day, normally Monday-Friday.

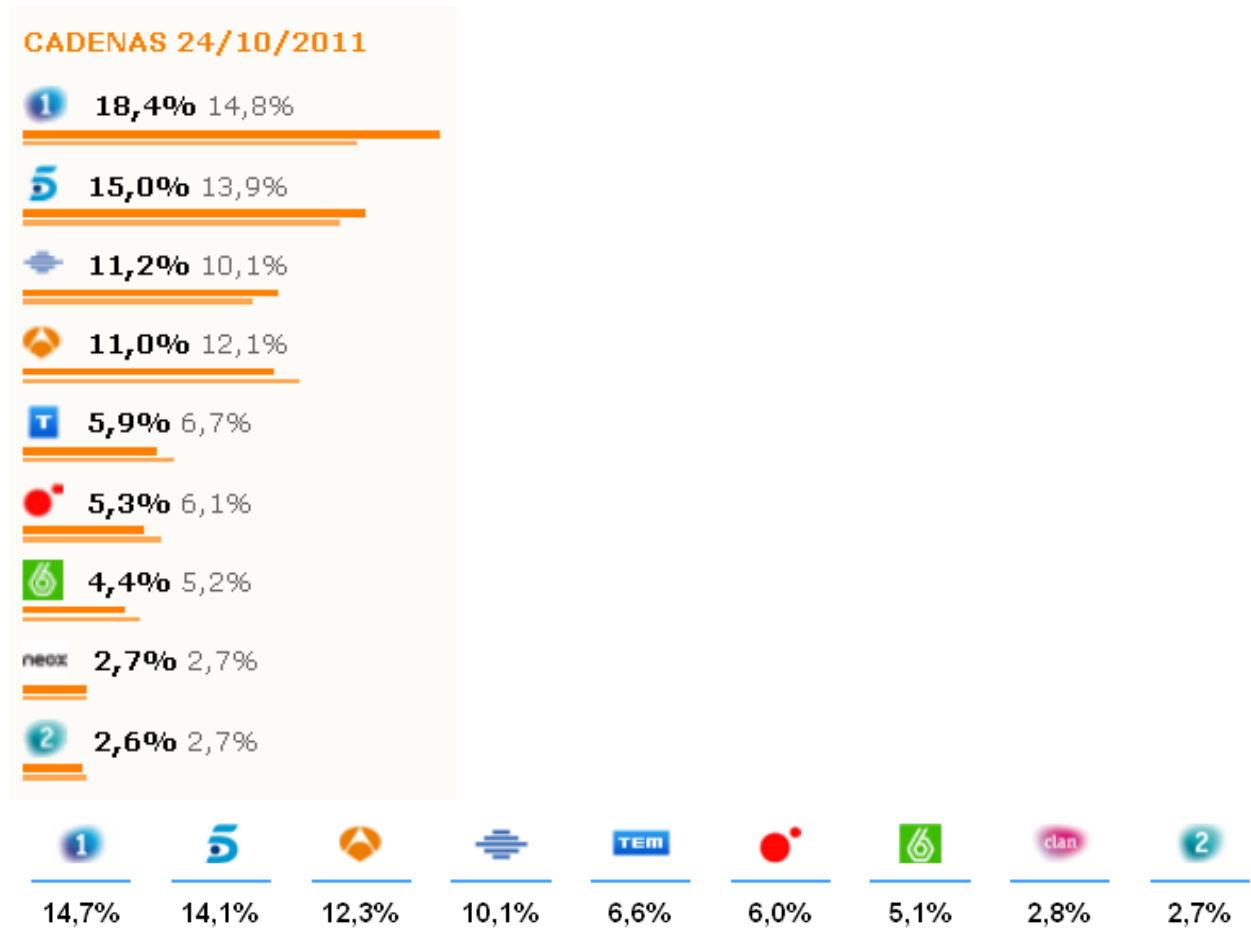
Share: percentage of people watching television at a particular time, out of the total 100 per cent of spectators

Turnover: the ratio of a cumulative audience as compared to the average audience for a given period of time. It indicates how faithful an audience is for specific networks or programs.

Public service programming: noncommercial or *sustaining* programming. In Spain, national public networks are (officially) aiming at being exclusively a public service, with no publicity.

Prime-time: The evening hours, (in Spain) generally between 10 and 12P.M., when the largest television audience is available. The so-called 'secondary prime-time' is from 15 to 17.

The images below show the ratings of a particular day in Spain's most important television channels. They are taken from the webpage www.formulatv.com, in which anyone can see the audience results of nearly all channels and shows. The third image shows how Spain's most successful shows of 2011 were all soccer games.



Los eventos deportivos más vistos de 2011

1	1	Fútbol: Liga de Campeones	FC Barcelona - Real Madrid	03/05/2011	14.114.000	66,9%
2	1	Fútbol: Copa del Rey	FC Barcelona-Real Madrid	20/04/2011	11.463.000	60,4%
3	1	Fútbol: Liga de Campeones	Barcelona-Arsenal	08/03/2011	9.893.000	47,4%
4	6	Fútbol: Liga española	Real Madrid - FC Barcelona	16/04/2011	8.806.000	49,1%
5	1	Fútbol: Liga de campeones	Lyon - R. Madrid	22/02/2011	8.278.000	41,5%
6	1	Fútbol: Supercopa	FC Barcelona-Real Madrid	17/08/2011	8.067.000	54,5%
7	1	Fútbol: Liga de Campeones	Barcelona - Manchester ...	28/05/2011	7.005.000	47,0%
8	1	Fútbol: Liga de campeones	Shakhtar Donetsk-Barcelona	12/04/2011	6.873.000	38,7%
9	1	Fútbol: Liga de Campeones	FC Barcelona - Milán	13/09/2011	6.816.000	42,0%
10	1	Fútbol: Amistoso	España-Colombia	09/02/2011	6.720.000	32,7%
11	1	Fútbol: Eurocopa Clasificación	España-República Checa	25/03/2011	6.461.000	34,5%
12	1	Fútbol: Supercopa	Real Madrid-FC Barcelona	14/08/2011	6.426.000	52,4%

Source:

www.formulatv.com

5.2. Television programming.

Block programming occurs when the television network schedules similar programs back-to-back. The idea is to provide similar programming to keep the viewers.

Crossprogramming involves the interconnection of two shows. This is achieved by dragging characters or storylines over two episodes of two different programs.

Bridging is used when a network tries to prevent the audience from changing channels during a junction point. There are several strategies for this: having a program already underway and something compelling happening at a junction point, running a program late so that people 'hang around' and miss the start of other programs, or television advertising the next program during the credits of the previous.

Dayparting consists of dividing the day into several parts, each of which with a different type of television programming appropriate for that particular time. For instance, daytime television programs are most often geared toward a particular demographic, and what the target audience typically engages in at that time. Some dayparting divisions are late afternoon, prime-time, late night, graveyard slot, etcetera.

Counterprogramming (aka stunting) is used when a time period is filled with a program whose appeal is different from the opponent program because it is a different genre or appeals to a different demographic. In Spain, TV programme schedules ("parrilla"), must be made public three days before airing.

In **Hotswitching**, the programmers eliminate or reduce commercial breaks between programs; this potentially hooks the audience into watching the next program without a chance to change the television channel between show.

Hammocking is a technique used by broadcasters whereby an unpopular program is scheduled between two popular programs in the hope that viewers will watch it. It is very good for new shows.

Stacking is a technique used to develop audience flow by grouping together programs with similar appeals to "sweep" the viewer along from one program to the next.

Reruns are tv-shows which have already been aired. They are normally cheaper but guarantee poorer audiences.

Clipping joins one show with the next one by deleting the final and introductory credits

Theming refers to having special days (such as for a holiday), or weeks such as MTV's weekends or La Sexta 3's Clint Eastwood Saturday.

In **tent pole programming** the programmers bank on a well-known series having so much audience appeal that they can place two unknown series on either side, and it is the strength of the central program that will bring the others along to victory.

5.3. Television and genre.

It is generally agreed that every new season there are new television genres; some of them live a short life and do not leave a legacy for the future seasons, while other are very successful and remain long. In any case, this is a contemporary phenomenon. If we look at the history of television, the number of genres had been rather stable for many decades. It looks like nowadays the audience demands new formats and genres. The impact of reality television (and its many variations⁹ in the last couple of decades is the clearest example of this tendency.

The following paragraphs look at some of the most relevant genres in television. Needless to say, the list is reduced, and many others have been left out. This section is divided into three different areas, which cope with most of the contents of contemporary television: non-fiction, fiction and reality television.

5.3.1 Non-fiction.

5.3.1.1. Documentary: Nonfiction work defined by documentary pioneer John Grierson as the creative treatment of actuality. Grounded in some aspect of real life, documentaries may vary from a very deliberate account of facts to an extremely interpretive rendering of a subject, advocating a particular viewpoint on a political, social, or historical issue. In documentaries, actuality should still be dominant over the creative treatment, which, while often staged for the camera, should not go so far as to be dramatized for emotional impact and belong to such genres as historical films or propaganda. Documentaries may include re-enactments, such as showing the movements of armies, or brief scenes of individuals and dialogue, but do not include films that merely use a realistic technique in telling a fictional story.

5.3.2 Fiction.

5.3.2.1. Series and mini-series

- Sit-coms: Fictional work for television, normally running a half hour in length, which creates humor around the lives of a cast of recurring characters and the "situations" in which they find themselves. Generally, regardless of what happens in any given episode, the characters remain in the same relationships and position as they were before, and much of the humor derives from this predictability. The characters seldom change, and react in an expected manner to whatever challenges them, and generally the overall tenor of the shows is upbeat, expecting a happy, satisfying resolution. Everyday life is often an important element, and as a result, although the setting could be almost anywhere, most situation comedies are set in the home or workplace.
- Soap-operas: a continuing drama serial involving a large number of characters in a specific location, focusing on relationships, emotions and reversals of fortune.

- Docusoap: television form combining dramatized storytelling with the 'objective' informational techniques of documentary. Abbreviated as 'dramadoc' or docudrama'.

5.3.2.2. Made-for-tv movies. Individual fictional work presented on television, usually running from 90 minutes to three hours in length (which may include commercials), and is not part of a regular series or mini-series.

5.3.3 Reality

Reality television is the newest and most successful genre, as well as the most influential. It has happened worldwide, and there are many variations. Those who predicted the ephemeral nature of this phenomenon were wrong. On the contrary, reality television is stronger every new season. Some of the sub-genres of reality television are:

5.3.3.1 Talent show, in which contestants show their skills in some particular area. Musical talent shows such as "The Voice" are very successful, but there are many other abilities that have been tested, such as gardening, building, etc

5.3.3.2 Classic competition show. The impact of reality television is perceived in traditional genres, such as game shows. Some of them have adjusted to the new demands and incorporated the legacy of reality television (for instance, following contestants to their homes or work places).

5.3.3.3 Docu-reality. It is another example of how reality television has determined other genres. Many documentaries present the characteristics of reality television nowadays.

5.3.3.4 Make-over. The narratives of these shows follow the changes in the participants. It can be radical changes, such as surgery, or improvements of their lives, homes, cars...

5.3.3.5 Personality reality. This is possibly the newest tendency: a pseudo-documentary series in which the camera follows the daily (but often staged) lives of some celebrities.