

Re-contextualisation of TV Production: Implications of Audience Data in Digital Format Development

By

Sylvia Albert-Vogl

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

University of the Arts, London
College of Communication (LCC)

Director of Studies: Prof. Jonathan Hardy
Supervisor: Dr. Zoetanya Sujon

January 2026

Acknowledgements

Writing a doctoral thesis has been the longest journey of my life. It would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and encouragement of my supervisors, and I am very grateful to all those who made this journey possible. First and foremost, I would like to thank my Director of Studies, Prof. Jonathan Hardy, who mentored, inspired, and challenged me from the beginning to the end. Special thanks are also due to my supervisors, Dr. Tony Sampson, who supported the dissertation during its first phase at the University of East London, and Dr. Zoetanya Sujon, who guided and supported me during the later phases at the University of the Arts London. Their valuable feedback and discussions encouraged my critical thinking throughout.

I would also like to thank the participants in this study for generously sharing their time, experiences, and insights. Their openness and willingness to engage with my questions made this research possible and greatly enriched my understanding of the complexities and dynamics explored throughout this thesis. My sincere thanks also go to the colleagues, peers, and members of my academic and professional networks whose conversations, encouragement, and exchange of ideas provided inspiration and support throughout this journey. I am particularly grateful to my line manager and colleagues at ARD/BR for their encouragement and understanding. Their support and positive response to my doctoral studies enabled me to find the time and space needed to pursue and complete this research alongside professional commitments.

Finally, my deepest thanks go to my friends and, above all, to my husband and my parents. Their unwavering love, patience, encouragement, and belief in me carried me through the many challenges and uncertainties of this journey. Their support provided strength in difficult moments and made the completion of this thesis possible.

Abstract

Format development at broadcasters is no longer confined to fixed-time television schedules. As broadcasters increasingly operate within a platform-diverse environment, new tensions have emerged between established 'legacy' workflows and the demands of digital, social media, and hybrid distribution, including video-on-demand (VOD) (Lobato and van Es, 2025). While existing production and audience studies have investigated shifts in content and viewership (Napoli, 2023; Johnson, 2024; Lotz and Havens, 2024), the intersection of format development, institutional innovation, and data practices remains underexplored. This study investigates how UK and German public service broadcasters are reconfiguring format development strategies, workflows, and professional roles across linear, VOD, and social media platforms. It analyses the tensions between market-driven claims of platform hybridity and the operational realities of platform-specific production, asking how organisational structures adapt to profound structural and cultural change. The analysis draws on Bourdieu's field theory (1993, 2005), in combination with concepts from organisational sociology, media political economy, media production studies, and audience studies. This framework enables an analysis of how cultural and symbolic capital are negotiated in a shifting institutional field, and how power circulates through evolving production logics and professional hierarchies. Empirical findings are based on semi-structured interviews with professionals in commissioning, production, and audience strategy, alongside ethnographic observation of internal workshops at ARD/BR.

The thesis reveals a shift in decision-making processes: from hierarchical, top-down structures typical of linear television to more iterative, data-informed, and collaborative practices in digital production units. Whereas audience ratings dominate traditional contexts, digital productions have been shaped by platform-specific metrics and new forms of audience modelling. Importantly, audience data is now embedded in the earliest stages of format development rather than solely in post-broadcast evaluation. This research provides a critical comparative account of television and digital audiovisual production, offering insight into how public service broadcasters manage innovation, integrate data into creative workflows, and reconfigure organisational boundaries in response to platformisation.

Keywords

format development; TV production; audience construction; data; power; ratings; digital measurement

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Table of Contents	4
List of Figures	7
List of Tables	8
Chapter 1 Introduction: Format Development in the Multiplatform Era	9
1.0 Introduction	9
1.1 Research Context: The Digital Transformation of Television Production in UK and Germany	9
1.2 Motivation and Contribution of the Study.....	15
1.3 Research Framework and Methodological Approach.....	18
1.4 Structure and Scope of the Thesis	23
1.5 Conclusion	26
Chapter 2: Situating the Research: Television in Transition.....	28
2.0 Introduction	28
2.1 Theoretical Framework for Power, Practice, and Structure in Television Production	29
2.2 From National Broadcasting to Global Platformisation.....	41
2.3 A Comparative Perspective on British and German Media Regulation....	50
2.4 The Narrative of FAST Channels: Negotiating Broadcast and Platform Logics	58
Chapter 3: The Evolution from Measurement to Meaning: Datafication, Metrics, and Audience Conceptions	61
3.0 Introduction	61

3.1 The Four Phases of Audience Measurement from the 1950s to 2022	63
3.2 Evolving Audience Conceptions	74
3.3 Cross-Media Measurement and National Policy Contexts	78
3.4 Evolving Audience Metrics and Datafication in PSM Organisations	86
3.5 Conclusion	93
Chapter 4: Methodology, Research Design, and Analytical Framework	96
4.0 Introduction	96
4.1 Research Philosophy	96
4.2 Methodological Approach	100
4.3 Research Design and Implementation	107
4.4 Data Management and Analytical Integration	118
4.5 Validity, Trustworthiness, and Ethical Integration	122
4.6 Conclusion	125
Chapter 5: A Field in Conflict: The Politics of Format Strategies and Decision-Making	127
5.0 Introduction	127
5.1 Reconfiguring Power Clusters in Television Production	127
5.2 Data Influence and Audience Engagement across Divisions	139
5.3 The Fracturing Field of Data, Power, and Role Conflict in Decision-Making	145
5.4 Conclusion: A New Professional Settlement and Its Contradictions	147
Chapter 6: The Transformation of Public Service Media	149
6.0 Introduction	149
6.1 Case Study 1: The Redefinition of Practice in Digital Format Development	150

6.2 Case Study 2: From Format Development to Departmental Restructuring	164
6.3 Key Outcomes from Workshop Observations.....	172
Chapter 7: Discussion of Production Cultures and the Logics of Linear, Digital and Social Practices	174
7.0 Introduction	174
7.1 Academic Alignment: Situating the Findings in Scholarly Debate.....	174
7.2 Implications for Media Institutions, Practice, and Scholarly Understanding.....	178
7.3 Implications for Media Institutions and Practitioners.....	183
7.4 Conclusion	188
Chapter 8: Conclusion: A Field in Transition	191
8.0 Introduction	191
8.1 A Synthesis of Findings in Response to the Research Questions.....	191
8.2 Interdisciplinary Convergence and FAST-Driven Transformation	200
8.3 Significance and Contributions of the Study	203
8.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions	208
8.5 Final Reflections on the Systematisation of Conflict and the Future of the Field	212
References	214
Appendices	239

List of Figures

Figure 1: Research Framework.....	22
Figure 2: Territories with the Highest FAST Channel Counts.....	58
Figure 3: Power Clusters in Linear and Digital Television	128
Figure 4: Digital Target Group Map	158
Figure 5: The Contested Logic of Distribution Options	176
Figure 6: Proportion of Total Video Consumption by Platform in 2024.....	202

List of Tables

Table 2-1: Comparing Linear First and Digital/Social/Hybrid Production Structures through Bourdieu's Concepts	37
Table 2-2: Phases of Organisational Transformation in Television Production	46
Table 2-3: A Typology of Contemporary Formats in the 2000s	49
Table 2-4: Comparative Governance Frameworks - The BBC Royal Charter and the German Medienstaatsvertrag	53
Table 2-5: Comparative Overview of BBC Three and funk.....	55
Table 3-6: Audience Measurement Phases	64
Table 3-7: Public Service Remit Comparison: ARD (Germany) vs BBC (UK)	68
Table 3-8: Key Aspects of UK Audience Measurement and Regulation.....	79
Table 3-9: Key Regulation Frameworks in Germany.....	82
Table 3-10: Comparative Table of Key Video Metrics: UK vs Germany	87
Table 4-11: Emerging Grounded Theories	102
Table 4-12: Application of Braun and Clarke's Six Phases of RTA in this Study	106
Table 4-13: TV Industry Conferences Attended	109
Table 4-14: Interview Participants.....	106
Table 4-15: Speakers Analysed from Industry Talks.....	115
Table 6-16: Key Participants of the Format Development Workshop	151
Table 6-17: Key Participants in the Puls Strategic Workshop and their generic role	166
Table 8-18: Comparative Analysis: BBC Three and funk	194

Chapter 1 Introduction: Format Development in the Multiplatform Era

1.0 Introduction

While platformisation emerged in the early 2000s as ‘an assemblage of networked platforms’, power has increasingly been concentrated in the hands of a few dominant corporations (van Dijck et al., 2018: 12). Pressure from streaming and social video platforms has also begun to reshape the broadcasting sector, prompting institutions to adapt to platform-specific logics, heightened competition, and the demands of algorithmic visibility. This intensified in the 2010s as global platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and others penetrated the global market. For the broadcasting industry, streaming providers such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and, later, Disney+ reconfigured distribution logics and began producing their own formats, intensifying pressure on the television industry (Lotz, 2023: 144). In 2007, broadcasters in the UK and Germany launched their own video-on-demand (VOD) services and subsequently adapted their content, workflows, and institutional strategies, thereby embedding themselves within the platformisation ecosystem. In this study, I draw on platformisation as the process by which digital-platform infrastructures, economic models, and governance frameworks penetrate media systems and reorganise cultural practices and imaginaries (Poell et al., 2021: 428). This transformation has not only altered audience behaviour and reconfigured distribution infrastructures, but has also necessitated new approaches to format development and value production within media institutions. Traditional assumptions about a clear separation between broadcasting and digital media have given way to a range of hybrid strategies. Nevertheless, tensions persist between how formats are discursively framed within linear television and how they are realised on VOD and social video-sharing platforms. Thus, the present study of the 2018–2022 period provides a crucial foundation for understanding the cycles of experimentation and institutionalisation that continue to define television development and production.

1.1 Research Context: The Digital Transformation of Television Production in UK and Germany

This study is situated at the intersection of organisational power, production cultures, and audience data. It investigates how audience behaviour is negotiated and integrated within the format development phase, where the creative and commercial foundations of

programmes are established (Chalaby, 2016, 2022). This research examines how the increasing availability of audience metrics is constructed and conceptualised and how this process influences both the agency and structure of format development and production teams. To capture the breadth of these dynamics, the analysis considers not only traditional linear formats but also hybrid, digital and social video productions developed by broadcasters and established production companies. Despite the expansion of distribution practices, the term broadcaster is retained in this study to reflect its continued dominance within industry discourse. This usage is adopted with an explicit awareness of scholarly work that acknowledges and theorises these institutional transformations. In particular, it aligns with Lotz's (2017: 6) observation that Internet-distributed television has enabled strategies and practices previously unavailable to traditional broadcast institutions. Similarly, Johnson's (2018) framing of these shifts as *Online TV* reflects an expansion beyond linear transmission. While these developments necessitate a fundamental reconceptualisation of television, the term broadcaster is employed here as an encompassing terminology that foregrounds organisational power in this study.

The growing complexity of distribution can be illustrated by formats such as *Love Island*. The programme peaked at over 21 percent audience share during its 2019 finale, with particular success among women aged 16–34 (Porter and Standing, 2020: 1). While the format performed less strongly in Germany overall, it nevertheless achieved a 27 per cent audience share among the same young female demographic, indicating differentiated national outcomes within a shared cross-platform strategy (Meedia, 2019). Similarly, *The Traitors* gained popularity across platforms (Power, 2014). While these formats have achieved broad reach across linear, on-demand, and social video platforms internationally, the show's core production logic remains rooted in traditional broadcast structures. In contrast to these approaches, some formats are developed specifically for individual digital platforms and are often aimed at niche audiences. In this study, the term 'format development' refers to the initial stage of the production process rather than to production itself. It is understood as the phase in which ideas are generated, tested, refined, and evaluated prior to formal commissioning or large-scale production. As format development is shaped by the intended distribution platform, this research focuses on formats designed for digital and social video platforms, which are oriented towards younger audiences and present a distinct challenge for broadcasters (Stollfuß, 2020: 9). This includes activities such as concept design, format structuring, pilot testing, audience evaluation, platform positioning, and internal negotiations around risk, value, and target audiences. One of these formats is *maiLab*. The format was produced for funk (the digital content network of ARD and ZDF) between 2016 and 2023, offers an example of truly platform-native short-form production. Originally created for

YouTube and later disseminated via Instagram, TikTok, and funk's own website and App, *maiLab* exemplifies a digital-first approach. Its format leverages algorithmic optimisation, vertical framing, and informal, data-driven storytelling to engage younger audiences (Stollfuß, 2020: 654). In contrast to established legacy formats that are subsequently adapted for digital dissemination, this case illustrates how some content is conceived from the outset to align with platform logics, audience behaviours, and digital-first viewing habits. As such, it represents a shift in development strategies towards digital-native storytelling tailored to algorithmically driven distribution environments. The success of *maiLab* can be attributed in part to practices such as iterative development and the integration of metrics into editorial decision-making cycles which are embedded in flexible planning structures (van Wyngaarden, 2018: 255). Iterative development in this context can be understood as cyclical process involving the identification of audience interests, prototyping of format ideas, testing, analysis of feedback, and the rapid adaptation of content in response to those insights (van Wyngaarden, 258-259). Within the context of changing market structures and broadcasters' adaptations across platforms, this study advances the understanding of diversified format development and the elements that shape it.

Contextual Framework and Temporal Scope

The research is situated within the critical historical period from 2018 to 2022, characterised by major strategic transformations in European broadcasting before the widespread integration of artificial intelligence technologies. This timeframe captures the phase of systematisation that followed earlier digital experimentation, when broadcasters moved from provisional online strategies to more structured digital operations. Two significant developments that preceded this phase were the move of BBC Three to an online-only service and the launch of ARD/ZDF's online-only youth channel. Both have wider implications for commissioning, production, and distribution. As such, this period provides the groundwork for understanding subsequent developments, as the organisational infrastructures, data literacies, and workflow cultures established during these years form the foundation on which AI applications build. The cyclical pattern of experimentation followed by systematisation is evident in this transitional phase, highlighting the iterative nature of technological and organisational transformation in television production.

In parallel, the COVID-19 pandemic occurred during the research period, necessitating adaptations to the empirical fieldwork. While a substantial body of research has examined the pandemic's impact on viewing habits (Johnson and Dempsey, 2024; Lobato, 2024), production practices (Mikos, 2020), and creative labour (Swords and Johns, 2023), this

study does not foreground COVID-19 as an explanatory variable. The principal methodological impact of the pandemic was that all workshop observations were conducted online via platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, as physical access requests to several broadcasters in the UK and Germany were declined. This meant that the observational component of the study was necessarily confined to ARD/BR, as it was the only institution where at least digital access could be secured. While this restricted the comparative scope of the workshop observations, this necessary methodological adaptation did not fundamentally alter the thesis's overall thematic and empirical focus. By examining strategic, organisational, and creative transformations within British and German broadcasting, this study offers timely insights into the contemporary media field. Its central focus is on how public service broadcasters navigate competing pressures whilst maintaining distinct production approaches across different platforms. The analysis therefore demonstrates that, rather than abandoning traditional structures, broadcasters have institutionalised a state of managed coexistence between parallel production logics. These strategies merit continued critical scholarly attention. It is crucial to situate these findings within the historical context of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the research did not focus on the temporary logistical adjustments that the pandemic necessitated, such as remote working or productions without studio audiences. Instead, the study's focus remained on the wider, more enduring structural shifts occurring during this pivotal period. The pandemic is therefore understood not as the cause of these changes, but as a critical event that accelerated pre-existing trends towards iterative workflows in digital production.

Reconfigured Format Development within Platformised Ecosystems

Adopting a theoretical lens not only anchors the analysis within established academic debates but also provides a foundation for examining how evolving institutional practices intersect with broader platform developments. As digital infrastructures within broadcasters expand - through on-demand services such as BBC iPlayer and ARD Mediathek - new production logics emerge in parallel with the influence of video-dominated social media and commercial streaming platforms (Lobato, 2019: 187). In addition to broadcasters' VOD players, the growing number of social video and streaming platforms has significantly influenced format development and production. Typically, non-linear content does not embed a continuous flow and comes with almost no limitations on available content or 'temporal constraints' (Johnson, 2019: 123). These notions reflect a transformational shift in a fragmented broadcasting and streaming landscapes. Hence, this study explores how broadcasters address this shift, focusing on power dynamics, format development processes, and audience data. In this context, the study contrasts ritualised linear and

dynamic digital practices in commissioning, development, production, and distribution during a time of change.

Background and Research Problem: The New Imperative in Format Development

This study is situated at the intersection of organisational power, production cultures, and audience data. It investigates how audience behaviour is negotiated and integrated within the format development phase, where the creative and commercial foundations of programmes are established (Chalaby, 2016, 2022). Further, the research examines how the increasing availability of audience data is conceptualised and how this process influences both the agency and structure of production teams. To capture the breadth of these dynamics, the analysis considers not only traditional linear television formats but also hybrid, digital and social media productions developed by broadcasters and established production companies.

A significant institutional shift illustrating this transformation occurred at the BBC, which closed BBC Three as a linear channel in 2016 and relaunched it as an online-only service (Thurman, 2021: 292). In Germany, ARD and ZDF launched a youth-focused online-only channel in 2016 while closing two niche linear services, underscoring a strategic move towards digital provision. These developments highlight structural recalibration in public service media (PSM). A key aspect of these developments is the analysis of how audiences engage with non-linear formats and how this information is integrated into format development and production processes (Livingstone, 2003; 2018: 186).

Research Aims and Objectives

This study addresses three primary aims. First, it seeks to collect and analyse empirical data on the development of television formats, contributing to a deeper academic understanding of how audience metrics influence strategies across different media platforms. Second, it examines the relationship between audience data and the creation of formats, investigating how metrics inform, shape, and sometimes constrain development practices within both traditional linear broadcasting and increasingly dominant digital platforms. Finally, it aims to compare practices across British and German broadcasting to understand where and how data has been incorporated into format development, and what implications this has for production logics and organisational change. Through these aims, the research contributes to scholarship on cross-platform production, audience measurement, and the role of data in contemporary television industries. Johnson (2019: 29) highlights the evolving nature of the

term 'television', calling for a redefinition that reflects diverse screen-based consumption practices. Such redefinition is crucial for audience research, since questions of 'what viewers watch' and 'how long they watch' depend on varying understandings of what constitutes television. These shifting constructions of the audience also affect power dynamics within broadcasting organisations (Bennett and Strange, 2014: 250). The study further investigates how new data-driven practices challenge the traditional linear model of television production and reshape strategic, organisational, and procedural structures (Cushion, 2011). New professional roles, such as digital producers, audience engagement managers, social media managers, and digital researchers, were examined as evidence of these changes. These roles increasingly participate from the earliest stages of development and remain central throughout production cycles.

Audiences are not approached as a homogeneous mass but as differentiated groups researched, constructed, and interpreted by practitioners. This approach engages with critical debates in audience studies, moving beyond the traditional notion of the mass audience to emphasise diversity and agency (Couldry, 2012; Livingstone, 2018). Recognising audiences in these terms enables a more accurate analysis of media consumption and its effects. Ultimately, fulfilling these aims will enrich understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing broadcasters in the late 2010s and early 2020s. The study provides new insights into format development, organisational transformation, and the mediation of audiences through data practices, contributing to debates on how creative autonomy and data accountability are negotiated in the multiplatform era.

Key Concepts and Operational Definitions

The shift in terminology during the period investigated reflects the wider transition from experimentation to systematisation in both production practices and audience measurement. To maintain analytical precision and avoid ambiguity, it is important to define the principal terms employed in this thesis. As the study crosses television production, organisational sociology, and audience/critical data research, the meanings of key concepts differ across contexts. The following definitions establish how they are used, ensuring conceptual consistency across the analysis.

In this study, television production at broadcasters is used as an umbrella term. It covers linear broadcasting, digital on-demand services, streaming platforms, and social video-sharing platforms unless otherwise differentiated. The term reflects how industry professionals from broadcasters often still refer to 'television' when describing cross-platform

activity. It highlights continuity in production cultures while recognising growing hybridity. In this study, the term 'broadcaster' is used to refer to institutions whose operations now extend well beyond traditional broadcasting. These organisations operate across a fragmented media landscape, producing content for linear, digital, and social video-sharing platforms. The continued use of the term reflects both its widespread adoption and its connection to the historical legacy of these institutions. A more detailed typology for clustering formats is developed in Chapter 2 to differentiate between distinct forms of format production across platforms. This typology shows how linear, digital, social media and hybrid logics coexist and compete. In general, formats are often referred to as 'complex and multi-faceted commodities' that serve as recipes (Chalaby, 2016: 8). In contrast to scholars such as Moran and Malbon (2006: 26) and Chalaby (2016: 13, 2022), this study treats formats as neither confined to television programmes nor necessarily tied to licensing for international distribution. Therefore, this format development study encompasses two main methods of distribution. First, formats for linear scheduled television, where programmes are broadcast at specific times on designated channels, requiring audiences to tune in at the time of transmission (Lotz, 2014). Non-linear broadcasting encompasses distribution through platforms that allow viewers to access content at the time of their choice, including video-on-demand (VOD), streaming, and catch-up services (Meikle and Young, 2012). The relationship between streaming and linear television is increasingly one of competition and coexistence (Johnson, 2023). This transition also introduced new terminology, some of which was borrowed from software development.

1.2 Motivation and Contribution of the Study

In this section, I outline my motivation for this study as a former television journalist who became an analyst and wanted to understand the broader implications of dynamics at broadcasters. With this thesis, my aim is to expand the comprehensive body of scholarly studies within television production and social organisational studies. I started with a practitioner's perspective, which evolved over time into an academic perspective. With this dual approach, I explored the audio-visual format industry's evolution beyond national broadcasting boundaries to understand agents and subjects involved. Given the distinct cultures and strategies characterising linear and digital production, I compare and contrast the relevant entities.

Personal Motivation and Reflexivity

This research was shaped by my dual position as both an academic researcher and an industry participant, transitioning from television journalism to media analysis. In my role as Head of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) at ARD/BR, I was responsible for establishing and monitoring strategies for organic web distribution, particularly across search engines. This involved close collaboration with editorial, product, and software engineering teams, ensuring that content strategies aligned with evolving search engine algorithms and user search behaviours. Crucially, my position entailed acting as an intermediary between journalistic editorial practices and algorithmic optimisation imperatives such as those imposed by platforms like Google and YouTube. My role can be understood as translating the requirements of search engines, app stores, and other distribution channels into actionable insights for newsrooms, while preserving the integrity of journalistic writing styles. This background provides the benefit of insider knowledge of industry operations. However, it also necessitates critical reflexivity in order to maintain the analytical distance required for scholarly inquiry.

To manage the potential for bias arising from this professional background, a reflexive approach was embedded throughout the research design. Several concrete strategies were employed to ensure interpretations remained grounded in the empirical data rather than professional assumptions. First, to gain a broad and diverse perspective on the industry's key debates, I attended several international television conferences. Second, a balanced, comparative recruitment of practitioners from both the UK and German contexts was adopted. Third, and most importantly, a deliberate methodological sequencing was implemented. All interviews with professionals from a range of broadcasters and production companies were completed before the case study work which encompassed the observation of two workshops began. Consequently, the final observational phase of the research was the only part that took place at my former employer, ARD/BR. This sequencing proved crucial. It ensured that broader industry insights from the interviews informed the later, more focused institutional analysis, rather than my own institutional experience, shaping wider interpretations. Ultimately, this managed dual positioning is not presented as a limitation but as a methodological strength of this thesis. It enables the study to bridge academic theory with industry practice, offering insights that a purely external or purely internal perspective could not achieve alone.

Research Gap and Scholarly Significance

Despite extensive scholarship on linear and digital format development (Lotz, 2014; Napoli, 2011), gaps remain in understanding how audience measurement practices are operationalised within broadcasters' format development processes. Existing research has addressed audience fragmentation and platform proliferation in general terms but lacks detailed empirical analysis of how data practices reshape creative and strategic decision-making, particularly within public service broadcasting contexts. This gap is particularly pronounced in comparative European contexts, where broadcasters such as the BBC, Channel 4, ARD, and ZDF have developed distinct strategies for navigating digital transformation while maintaining public service commitments. While studies have examined either linear television production or digital platform strategies in isolation, few have analysed how broadcasters manage the complex relationship between these parallel production environments (Johnson 2019: 48). Furthermore, existing scholarship often positions creativity and data analytics as opposing forces, overlooking their complex entanglement in format development and production workflows. This binary framing obscures the nuanced ways in which audience metrics increasingly inform creative, strategic, and organisational choices across different platforms (Napoli, 2011). This study addresses these gaps by providing empirically grounded analysis of format development processes during the critical period 2018-2022, when major digital expansion strategies were implemented but before artificial intelligence integration began to alter production workflows again.

Key Contributions of the Study

This thesis makes four interconnected contributions to media and communication studies, television production research, and critical data studies. First, the study provides comprehensive empirical analysis of how data practices have reshaped audience construction across linear and digital television landscapes. Through a detailed examination of audience measurement integration within broadcaster format development processes, the research reveals how datafication transforms not only content creation but also fundamental conceptions of audiences themselves. Second, it critically examines the implications of datafication for creative and strategic decision-making in format development. Rather than treating creativity and data as opposing forces, the research analyses their entanglement within broadcaster workflows, demonstrating how audience metrics increasingly inform narrative construction, resource allocation, and distribution strategies. Third, the research investigates development and production methods employed across diverse platforms, with particular attention to distinguishing between formats developed for traditional linear

broadcast and those created for digital or social video platforms. This comparative analysis reveals that broadcaster organisations often maintain distinct production logics according to platform requirements, challenging dominant discourses of convergence and hybridity. Fourth, the study develops a theoretical framework that conceptualises audience data as a form of 'field-specific capital'. This framework demonstrates how different data types, such as ratings, analytics, and engagement metrics, are mobilised differently across institutional hierarchies. It thereby provides a new understanding of how data reshapes decision-making power. These contributions collectively reveal the changing nature of television production. Their primary function is to demonstrate the inseparability of the industry's practical evolution from the theoretical questions of power, labour, and audience construction that define the post-2010 era.

1.3 Research Framework and Methodological Approach

This section outlines the research framework and methodological approach adopted in the study. It begins by situating the research within a social constructivist paradigm that emphasises that knowledge and practices are socially produced and embedded in cultural and institutional contexts (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Vygotsky, 1978). This perspective is particularly suited to analysing television production, where creative processes and organisational routines are negotiated through interaction (see Chapter 4). While critiques suggest that constructivism can downplay structural forces (Burr, 2015), the study addresses this by drawing on complementary perspectives such as critical theory. This highlights institutional power and structural constraints (Crotty, 1998). Taken together, this framework provides a balanced analytical lens through which to examine how agency and structure interact in shaping format development. The chapter then introduces the research questions and explains the rationale for adopting a qualitative, exploratory design. It provides an overview of the methodological tools guiding the study, while further details on the empirical design and data analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

Research Questions and Research Approach

As the variety of television formats expands across multiple distribution platforms, broadcasters face intensifying competition. The earlier debate on whether television would integrate with digital platforms has been overtaken by practice. Broadcasters now operate across linear, on-demand, and social video platforms. Conventional strategies and narrative guidelines developed for broadcast television do not transfer seamlessly into these platforms. As a result, organisations have adopted distinct strategies for each platform,

creating parallel approaches that coexist with traditional models. This thesis also addresses the role of digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, which have become important channels for video distribution. These platforms impose specific publishing requirements on both individual creators and institutional producers. To gain traction and engage audiences, publishers tend to measure, understand, and adapt content based on audience metrics. Against this backdrop, the research examines how audience data influences the development of television formats and addresses the following research questions:

Research Questions

RQ1: What key drivers have shaped the strategic development of television formats in the post-2010 era in the UK and Germany?

RQ 2: What are the key elements of format development practices in the British and German public service television industries post-2010?

RQ3: How do public service media professionals conceptualise 'the audience' at different stages of the format development process in the UK and Germany?

RQ4: In what ways has cross-media audience measurement at public service media reconfigured decision-making within format development in the UK and Germany?

These research questions are designed to guide a qualitative and exploratory study. The thesis does not propose hypotheses, since it does not seek to test predefined causal claims. Instead, it follows an inductive and interpretive approach, allowing theoretical insights to emerge from empirical investigations. Addressing these questions is crucial for advancing academic understanding of how contemporary production processes are shaped by the growing influence of audience data. The study enables a critical examination of shifting power dynamics within production organisations and offers empirical insights into how broadcasters adapt to multi-platform pressures. It also provides practical relevance for industry practitioners seeking to balance data-driven decision-making with creative autonomy and editorial values. Situated within the context of the United Kingdom and Germany, this analysis contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the evolving relationship between television production, organisational change, and audience engagement.

Research Approach

This study adopted a qualitative methodology combining semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The participants included creative staff such as producers and directors, management personnel such as executives and line managers, strategic actors including consultants and researchers, and distribution staff such as commissioners and platform managers. The development of a network of informants followed snowball sampling, defined as initiating contact with a few participants and expanding through their networks (Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 2015: 109). Snowball sampling was applied only for the two case studies, in order to gain access to workshops, and was restricted to minimise risks to participant diversity. The empirical research was conducted between 2018 and 2022, a period when many broadcasters across Europe expanded and professionalised their activities on digital platforms. During this time, they produced content for traditional linear channels alongside video-on-demand services, streaming platforms, and video-dominated social media services.

The first stage of the study involved twenty-two semi-structured interviews with media practitioners in Germany and the United Kingdom. Interviewees were recruited through television industry conferences such as MIPCOM and MIPTV, and targeted invitations. Fifty-five preliminary discussions were held, of which twenty-two developed into full interviews. The remaining conversations were used only as background information where relevant. Alongside the interviews, keynote speeches delivered by senior executives at industry conferences were transcribed and analysed (see Section 4.3). This method provided access to the perspectives of high-ranking individuals who were otherwise unavailable for direct interviews.

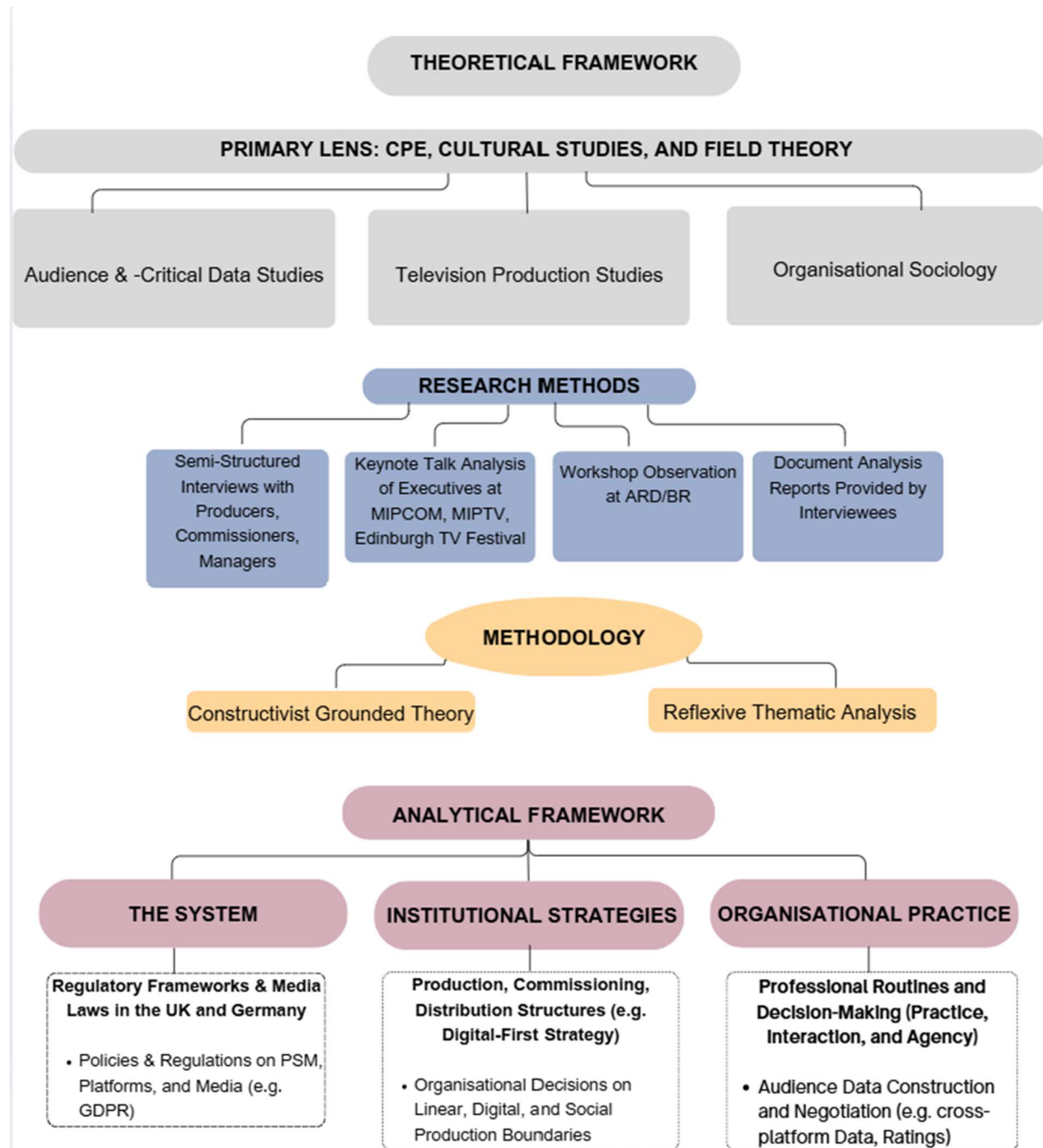
In the second stage, an observational methodology was employed. Two case studies were undertaken through participation in online format development workshops. These workshops provided insight into how practitioners conceptualised format components and development processes. Narratives from producers, commissioners, and format developers were analysed alongside those of strategic practitioners such as consultants. Some participants also shared documents and visual materials related to their processes, typically through digital links. These observations were critically assessed for the additional insights they offered, complementing the interviews and keynote speeches. This multi-method research approach aims to answer the core research questions on transitions in television production and their implications. To support this inquiry, a robust theoretical framework is outlined in Chapter 2.

Methodological Design and Rationale

Building on the research questions outlined above, this study adopts a qualitative approach to explore how audience data practices and format development processes reshape power relations. The research focuses on broadcasters and some large production companies in the UK and Germany, examining these dynamics empirically over the period 2018-2022. This timeframe is strategically significant as it captures the period when major digital expansion strategies were implemented across European broadcasting, but before the current phase of artificial intelligence integration began to alter production workflows (see Chapter 2). The comparative focus on the UK and Germany provides valuable analytical leverage, as they represent two of Europe's largest television markets, with distinct regulatory frameworks, production cultures, and approaches to digital transformation. This comparison enables examination of how similar technological pressures manifest differently across varied institutional contexts, thereby strengthening the study's theoretical contributions.

This research is grounded in social constructivist epistemology, which posits that knowledge and realities emerge through social interaction, practice, and cultural context (Charmaz, 2006; Cardano, 2020). This epistemological foundation (see Section 4.1) directly supports the study's central aim of examining how organisational strategies, creative processes, and audience constructions are produced within institutional settings. The social constructivist perspective is particularly well suited to investigating power relations, as it emphasises how meanings, practices, and hierarchies are negotiated and contested rather than simply imposed. Consequently, the methodological framework draws on Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) as developed by Charmaz (2006) and refined in subsequent work (Charmaz and Bryant, 2019). CGT emphasises inductive reasoning, iterative theory-building, and maintains critical attention to questions of power, agency, and structural inequality. This approach was selected over earlier versions of grounded theory, which have been criticised for their rigid procedural requirements and underlying positivist assumptions (Glaser, 2005; Stern, 2007). CGT's flexibility and reflexive orientation align with this study's exploratory character and its focus on understanding complex organisational transformations as detailed in Section 4.2. This epistemological stance and methodological orientation provide a coherent foundation for analysing contemporary television production practices while remaining sensitive to questions of power and institutional change. The specific research design, including sampling strategies, empirical data collection procedures, and analytical techniques, is comprehensively detailed in Section 4.3.

Figure 1: Research Framework



Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Organisational Change – Research Framework

To categorise findings, Bourdieu’s conceptual terminologies – habitus, field, doxa and capital – are deployed and further elaborated in Chapter 2. These concepts are used to illuminate

practitioners' roles in different departments, and the methods applied within their own social fields. In a broader context, Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) is applied as it advocates an open approach 'rooted in pragmatism and relativist epistemology, suggesting that neither data nor theories are discovered but are constructed by the researcher' (Thornberg, 2012: 248). This approach underpins the research's epistemological stance, enabling flexible and interpretative analysis of the data.

I analysed the pre-existing body of literature as well as contemporary literature published during this project available on television production, data and audience research. This approach was essential in ensuring the research remained current with ongoing methodological developments, conceptual debates, and recent empirical findings. To address the gaps in decision-making strategies for digital and linear format development within broadcasting and production companies, the primary research question was formulated, and purposive sampling was employed. This was employed to identify information-rich experts capable of discussing ongoing dynamics (Flick, 2018: 89). Subsequent to the transcription of interviews, the data was translated into English and prepared for coding and categorisation, an iterative process involving consistent scrutiny and examination. Afterwards, data was coded and analysed to discern relationships (Seale, 2018: 431), aligning with the concept of theoretical sensitivity that aids in pinpointing key theoretical ideas. Moreover, Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) was deployed, requiring systematic and transparent data coding. The six-phase process for thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2020: 331) is utilised, as it can be applied in both more inductive and deductive approaches, which they perceive as 'a continuum, rather than a dichotomy'. It also facilitated familiarisation with the collected data through interviews, allowed synchronisation with the case study observations during TV format workshops and documents, and supported the ensuing coding approach, thereby enriching the resulting analysis. This multifaceted methodological approach, incorporating both CGT and RTA, facilitates a nuanced exploration of the empirical data as detailed in Chapter 2. Thereby, it directly links to broader theoretical discourses in media studies and sociology. This linkage not only roots the research in established theories but also contributes to the evolving theoretical dialogue by applying and potentially extending these theories within the context of television production.

1.4 Structure and Scope of the Thesis

The thesis comprises eight chapters, organised to guide the reader through the theoretical, methodological and empirical foundations of the research, culminating in a critical discussion

of the findings and their implications. The study is divided into two main parts: the first establishes the conceptual framework and context, while the second presents an empirical analysis based on interviews, industry talks, case studies, and document analysis. Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates that the period between 2018 and 2022 should be understood not as a self-contained transition, but as a critical foundation for the next stage of organisational change. As AI technologies reintroduce conditions of experimentation into broadcaster workflows, the patterns observed in this earlier phase - negotiation, contestation, and eventual systematisation - offer essential insights into how the industry will continue to evolve.

Structure of the Thesis

In total, this thesis comprises of eight chapters that address the topic of power relations and audience measurement in TV, digital and social video format development. Chapter 1 offers an overview of the present study and its research context, purpose, and significance within the broader remit of television production and audience research. It provides an overview of the research approach, the theoretical frameworks applied, and the motivation for the study. Chapter 2 critically reviews the literature pertinent to the present study. The discussion commences with critical political economy (CPE) and cultural studies perspectives, followed by Bourdieu's concepts of field and power/capital (Section 2.1). This is followed by the conceptualisation of linear and digital production studies (see Section 2.2). Thereafter, a comprehensive review of power and innovation studies is presented long with an overview of prior approaches to audiences and data research (see Chapter 3). This also illuminates the dimensions of power as engendered through digitalisation and correlates these with Bourdieu's theoretical constructs. Furthermore, media convergence is discussed within the context of organisational and departmental transformation. Chapter 3 primarily concentrates on the data economy and audience construction approaches. Further, it encompasses the operationalisation of data in format development processes and their implications on strategic decision-making. The chapter critically evaluates the aspect of audience construction and its application in organisational contexts. This is done by drawing on scholars such as Zuboff (2019: 78), who reflects on data giants such as Google (and therefore also on YouTube). Finally, this leads back to Bourdieu's concept of fields and discusses its inherent limitations.

Chapter 4 details the research design and methodological foundations of this thesis. It begins by outlining the study's ontological and epistemological positions, which are informed by the guiding philosophies of social constructivism and discursive institutionalism. To

operationalise this perspective, the study employs the multi-method qualitative approach outlined in section 1.3 for its empirical investigation. Finally, the chapter explicates the specific analytical methods used, detailing the application of Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) and Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), including the coding principles that guided the analysis.

Chapter 5 outlines the study's analysis and presents the interview and industry-talks findings. It begins with various levels of power and assigns professional groups to the power clusters. I then discuss innovation processes and how they are implemented and institutionalised. This relates to organisational transformations and how they are guided and adopted. Here, the respondents' findings and their categorisation based on the analysis are presented (Section 5.2). At a deeper level, I introduce audience segmentation scenarios used by broadcasters and how they are integrated into projects and format processes to bridge the gap between producers and consumers. Subsequently, an analysis of data perspectives and the categorisation of data used, by whom, and for what purpose, is presented. To effectively engage with workflows and practitioner discussions, Chapter 6 presents two case studies. These are situated within the public service broadcaster ARD/BR. The findings were predicated on workshops in which future formats were deliberated upon and evaluated. This includes an examination of project phases, structural approaches, working cultures, and narratives employed by different participants. It concludes with an analysis of how work cultures experimented with during format development can be assimilated as a departmental or organisational method.

Chapter 7 discusses the key findings and summarises them within a broader media context. It synthesises the concepts and methods applied and their position within the contemporary media landscape. This also includes the current debate about FAST channels (see Section 7.3.4) which has been an increasing phenomenon since 2020 according to a Forbes (2023) article. This chapter also offers a reflection on the perpetual cycle of change and its implications for the future of broadcasters. The concluding chapter reflects on academic and organisational practices and posits potential implications for future research. Further, it evaluates how the presented findings of this study will contribute to the understanding of how audience data is rendered into a new rhetoric of power discussions that are constructed in the digital television landscape. While the methodological framework remained consistent with the original research objectives, certain adaptations were required due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as outlined in the next section.

COVID-19 and Research Adaptation

The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged during the mid-stage of this doctoral research, required limited adaptations to the data collection process as briefly outlined in Section 1.3. The original research design envisaged in-person interviews and participant observation at broadcaster facilities, but pandemic restrictions made face-to-face interaction impractical between April 2020 and 2022. To maintain continuity and rigour, the methodology was adapted. The vast majority of the semi-structured interviews were conducted in person. Only a small portion had to be completed remotely via video conferencing platforms following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participant observation was also adapted by attending two online workshops on early-stage format development processes at ARD/BR. Early-stage development refers to the initial phases of ideation, conceptualisation, and strategic planning, where potential programme concepts are discussed, refined, and aligned with organisational priorities before commissioning (Chalaby, 2022). These meetings are typically sensitive and require permission from multiple stakeholders, including editorial leadership, legal advisors, and management. Under pandemic conditions, securing such access across multiple organisations proved increasingly difficult and was therefore restricted to German contexts where permission processes could be navigated. During this period, broadcasters also created or adjusted temporary content formats in response to production restrictions and immediate audience needs. While these short-term measures are important for maintaining broadcast continuity, they fall outside the scope of this study. These methodological adaptations did not compromise the validity of the research. Online workshops preserved the integrity of the original research aims, while the digital format also provided additional insights into the evolving practices of remote collaboration within television production workflows.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the central aim of this thesis: to investigate how format development is transitioning across platforms and with audience data's implications in the UK and Germany. It has established the relevance of the study by situating it within wider academic debates on institutional decision-making, audience engagement, and creative labour in media industries. First, the chapter introduced a bespoke three-dimensional theoretical lens. This framework draws on the sociology of media production, critical political economy (CPE), and cultural studies but also addresses their limitations. It also engages with audience studies to explore how data practices reshape institutional cultures and decision-making routines. This lens provides a foundation for analysing the relationship between format

production, organisational structures and evolving audience data discussions. Second, the chapter presented the 'format-type cluster'. This conceptual tool enables a structured comparison of distinct production cultures, power relations, and commissioning strategies. It supports a clearer understanding of how development and production teams operate across both linear and digital environments. Third, the chapter introduced the study's methodological approach. Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) and Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) are used to explore how professionals make sense of their work in increasingly data-driven contexts. These methods facilitate an examination of how creative autonomy is negotiated under institutional, technological, and regulatory constraints. They also allow for a connection of micro-level practices and macro-level institutional shifts.

Chapter 2: Situating the Research: Television in Transition

2.0 Introduction

The study of contemporary television production requires an analytical framework capable of accounting for the multiple, and often conflicting, forces that shape its institutional, economic and cultural organisation. Therefore, this chapter reviews key theoretical paradigms and strands of scholarship in television production and format development to establish an appropriate conceptual foundation for the analysis that follows. The term *paradigm* is used here in line with Denzin et al.'s (2023: 16) definition of paradigms as 'overarching philosophical systems' that structure how phenomena are understood and studied. Situating the research at this level is necessary to clarify the assumptions underpinning different approaches to television production and to justify the theoretical choices made in this study. Given the centrality of audiences and data to contemporary production and commissioning practices, audience and data studies are examined in more detail in Chapter 3, where they provide a basis for a critical political economy analysis of how power, value, and decision-making are organised within media production.

First, the chapter provides a critical overview of the oscillation between Critical Political Economy (CPE) and cultural studies. Bourdieu's field theory supplements these two key theoretical paradigms (Section 2.1). Collectively, these perspectives provide a framework for analysing the shifting dynamics of television production as an interplay between structural conditions, cultural meanings, and individual agency. This approach allows me to address macro (structural forces), meso (organisational structures), and micro (individual agency) perspectives. Second, the chapter reviews key debates and studies in television production and format development in the context of linear, digital, video-dominated social media, and hybrid landscapes (Section 2.2). Third, it reflects on media policies and their implications for broadcasters' decisions, with a comparative focus on BBC Three and funk (Section 2.3). This review is structured in this way to illustrate that the television field has gradually shifted from a period of experimentation (pre-2018) to an era of increasing systematisation (2018-2022). Building on this review, I integrate my own analytical mapping and models to synthesise dispersed empirical and theoretical insights and make relational dynamics within the field more visible. It further provides a systematic framework for comparing how audience data and format development are negotiated across organisational and national contexts of digital format development and audience measurement. This introduces the comparative dimensions and typologies that structure the empirical chapters and explain how the theoretical lens is operationalised in the study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework for Power, Practice, and Structure in Television Production

Understanding the shifting dynamics of television production requires an approach that accounts for the interplay between structural conditions and individual agency. Hence, this thesis draws on the three intersecting theoretical traditions of CPE, cultural studies and Bourdieu's concept of field.

Demarcation Challenges of Critical Political Economy and Cultural Industries

CPE and cultural studies are not only considered as the two main theoretical approaches in media studies but also offer complementary approaches (Fenton, 2007: 8). They have historically diverged regarding the questions of structure, agency, and the role of culture in capitalist societies (Garnham, 1995). According to Fenton (2007: 7), CPE centres on structural inequalities in production, highlighting how economic distribution shapes representation and access. Her definition of cultural studies focuses on popular practices and foregrounds individual agency in resisting dominant cultural power (Fenton, 2007: 7). To provide greater theoretical specificity, this thesis moves beyond the broad and often antagonistic mappings that characterised media theory in the late twentieth century. Earlier debates frequently polarised the field into a binary of 'cultural populism' and structural political economy. McGuigan (1992) critiqued the populist strand, associated with authors such as Lull (1990), for overemphasising audience agency and symbolic resistance while neglecting the realities of institutional power. This study rejects such binary oppositions. Instead, it aligns with the integrative tradition proposed by Babe (2009), who argues for a necessary synthesis between critical cultural studies and critical political economy. This synthesis recognises that cultural meanings and economic structures are mutually constitutive rather than mutually exclusive. By moving past these historical debates, this research develops a framework that reflects the modern industrial landscape. I intersect production culture studies, which illuminate the professional routines and creative labour of media workers (Caldwell, 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011), with television format studies to account for the transnational industrial logic of trade (Moran, 1998; Chalaby, 2016, 2022). This structural foundation is connected to the innovative disruption brought about by critical data and platform studies (van Dijck, 2013; Nieborg and Poell, 2018). These contemporary perspectives provide the necessary tools to examine how platform infrastructure and metric power mediate the relationship between institutional imperatives and the audience (Couldry and Hepp, 2017).

The study further integrates audience and measurement studies to show how datafication reshapes the 'institutionalized audience' (Ang, 1991; Napoli, 2011; Livingstone, 2019). Ultimately, this thesis argues that the intersection of datafication, platformisation, and production culture is the primary site where institutional power is currently negotiated. By refining these categories, the study avoids remaining confined within the terms of 1990s debates. Instead, it demonstrates how the long-standing tensions between symbolic meaning and economic structure have evolved into a new technical and industrial reality. This approach allows for a granular analysis of how audience data and platform logic are integrated into the fabric of contemporary television format development.

When applied to television production, these approaches intersect. A CPE perspective highlights how consolidation of ownership, financing models, and global platform economies determines which genres, formats, and narratives reach screens. For example, Netflix's commissioning practices illustrate how global subscription economics privileges scalable formats, standardised genres, and algorithm-driven production decisions (Lobato, 2019: 65). While there is a substantial body of scholarship on the social aspects of social media platforms, focusing on their infrastructure, algorithmic systems, and the circulation of shared content (Cunningham and Craig, 2019; Gillespie, 2021; Poell et al., 2021; Sujon and Dyer, 2025), this study focuses on the professional distribution of formats across platforms. Simultaneously, cultural studies remind us that producers and audiences negotiate this industrial logic. Reality television, for instance, is not simply an industrial product but a cultural form in which meaning is actively co-created by production teams, participants, and audiences (Hill, 2020: 202). Thus, television production is both economically structured and culturally contested. This captures the premise of critical political economy (CPE): production structures and financing models directly shape cultural outputs. Yet, as Meehan and Wasko (2013: 40) underline, 'the field of political economy has many traditions, schools, and debates'. Most significantly, two foundational strands are discussed in the literature: the Frankfurt School and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (often referred to as the Birmingham School). The intellectual roots of CPE lie in the first generation of the Frankfurt School (1974), led by Horkheimer and Adorno. It served as the basis for critical analysis and the conceptualisation of media as a domain influenced by capitalist ideologies. Later, Adorno and Horkheimer (1997: 120) coined the terms 'the culture industry', and 'assembly line', as metaphors for 'cultural mass production' and 'cultural homogeneity'. Both scholars framed media as a culture industry that reproduced capitalist domination. It is important to note that 'The Culture Industry' was a chapter title in their book *Dialektik der Aufklärung (Dialectic of Enlightenment)* written in the 1940s. This framework remains relevant to contemporary television production. For example, the format of *The Traitors*

(BBC, 2022–) can be read through a Frankfurt School lens. Its high-stakes reality structure is designed for replication across global markets, illustrating how cultural products are systematised and circulated to maximise profitability. The production logic privileges reproducibility and audience capture, aligning with Adorno and Horkheimer's concerns over homogenisation and industrialised cultural output. In contrast, work associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, founded by Richard Hoggart and later directed by Stuart Hall, developed a more positive evaluation of mass culture grounded in popular agency and directed attention to 'cultural forms, practices and institutions, and their relation to society and social change' (Turner, 1990: 62). From this perspective, I argue that *The Traitors* is just one example of a format that is not only an industrial product but also a site of cultural negotiation. Through its staged dynamics of trust and betrayal, the programme invites multiple audience readings. Viewers can connect their group interactions to a wider, everyday understanding of power and identity.

Stuart Hall (1993: 509-511), a member of the Birmingham School, emphasised the agency of individuals in shaping cultural meanings. Unlike the Frankfurt School's view of audiences as passive consumers of ideology, Hall treated them as active agents negotiating meaning within specific cultural contexts. However, it is important to stress that Hall's work was rooted in the media environment of the 1970s and the 1980s, when television in Britain was a tightly regulated public service system with limited channels, a coherent national schedule, and relatively stable audience habits. Since the 2000s, I draw on Shaw (2017: 597) who states that 'all interactive media technologies can be looked at in terms of what they allow users/audiences to do'. This means that the dynamics of production and reception in that period are not directly equivalent to today's fragmented, multi-platform landscape. Hall's encoding/decoding (1993) model reflects the broadcast era. He challenged the idea that interpretation is a private, individual matter. Hall (1993: 514) further argued that television operates as a structured practice that organises and constrains meaning through systemic choices about how signs are arranged. He then links this to 'misunderstandings', noting that producers often treat communication as a chain that can be 'fixed' when messages fail to land as intended. This finding reinforces the notion that policy-oriented audience research often shares this assumption by focusing on recall and comprehension. However, it can miss the more basic point that audiences may decode meanings differently from what broadcasters intend (Hall, 1993: 514). In the 2020s on-demand ecology, audiences are dispersed and asynchronous. They consume content across multiple platforms, devices, and contexts, but there is also an interactive layer that makes decoding more public and participatory. Therefore, audiences are no longer only consumers but also 'prosumers', as explained in Section 3.1.

Concerning the concept of culture, Raymond Williams offered another early redefinition of culture as 'a whole way of life' (1966: 16). This redefinition directly challenged the hierarchical division between high and low culture that characterised the Frankfurt School approaches. Williams later approached the medium of television as a complex social ritual. Rather than viewing it solely as a mechanism of ideological control, he positioned television within the domestic sphere, recognising it as both an industrial system and a cultural practice embedded in everyday life (Williams, 1974). This theoretical shift is critical for this study, as it allows for an analysis of television production in a platformised era that accounts for both institutional dynamics and social meaning. Hesmondhalgh (2019: 14) later condensed this into a more institutional focus, defining cultural industries as organisations 'most directly involved in the production of social meaning'. This highlights the recognition and emergence of multiple cultural industries rather than a single dominant one. However, Williams's understanding of culture as the emerging sensibilities of a particular period reflects subtle social and emotional shifts that can precede institutional transformation which remains analytically valuable (Sonkar, 2025: 261). This perspective is particularly relevant for analysing how cultural and organisational changes unfold within television institutions, where shifts in values and practices often occur before formal structural reform. My study of television production allows an analysis on two interconnected levels. At the micro-level, it frames formats as creative works shaped by industrial norms but still open to cultural interpretation. At the macro-level, it supports the structuring of historical phases such as the 'Standardisation Phase' (see Table 2-2), when broadcast institutions imposed systematised production practices across platforms and cultivated a shared industry sensibility. Mansell (2004: 75) argues that political economy analysis has too often been neglected in studies of new media, noting that the broader social and economic dynamics of production and consumption remain under-examined. This neglect is reflected in the 'blind spot debate'.

Smythe (1977) introduced the term to criticise critical communication research for privileging meaning and ideology while overlooking the economic dimensions of media. He argued that audiences should be understood as commodities, sold to advertisers on the basis of their attention. This has been reconceptualised by Meehan and Wasko (2013: 43), who refer to the broadcasting market as structured around the 'national commodity audience' as a marketable product. Notably, Curran's (2011: 109) argument that we should examine 'not what new technology could do, but what economic power would permit' remains highly relevant in this regard. For this thesis, I draw on Hardy's (2014) wider discussion of media power and the political economy of audiences, particularly his analysis of the debate between Smythe's (1977) notion of the audience commodity and the modifications and critiques advanced by scholars such as Meehan (1993, 2005) and Murdock and Golding

(2005). Smythe argues that advertiser-funded media assemble audiences and sell their time and attention as a commodity. Meehan refines and critiques this notion by highlighting a lack of agency and emphasising that an audience is constructed through ratings rather than reflecting real audiences. However, while ratings serve as an accepted industry concept, they have always attracted scholarly criticism (Meehan, 2004; Napoli, 2011). Hardy (2014: 140) frames ratings as estimates of viewing time combined with the value of target segments that can be commodified and sold to advertisers. Johnson (2019: 137) regards ratings as potential audiences who might be engaged with a programme, but adds that such data can also inform production decisions. These definitions illustrate not only the commodification of audience attention, but also the broader implications of ratings within television production. In this sense, I argue that ratings operate as a point of intersection between audience and production, highlighting the value of interdisciplinary approaches that explore the interconnections between audience measurement and format development. This perspective denaturalises the audience commodity and enables me to examine how market pressures and ratings practices have evolved over time and now inform contemporary debates on cross-media measurement. It is central to my study, which investigates how broadcasters and measurement providers construct, value, and segment audiences across linear, digital, and social video platforms, and how these constructions shape format development practices. This connects to the argument that affirmative accounts of consumer empowerment within cultural industries studies require a counterpoint, as developed by Hardy in *Money, (Co)Production and Power* (2017: 20). The emphasis is on the need to address power asymmetries shaped by the structuring influence of capitalism and to consider issues of regulation and governance, particularly the erosion of protection against advertiser control. These concepts, and the historic development of audiences rendered into measurable data, are examined in Section 3.1.

The review here aims to demonstrate that the boundaries between CPE and cultural studies remain blurred and some scholars (e.g. Bryman and Deacon, 1998; Murdock and Golding, 2005; Fenton, 2007; Devereux, 2013; Hardy, 2014) offered accounts of the convergence and shared roots of these positions. Despite the historical divide and convergence debates on different traditions within CPE and cultural studies a convergence can be observed. This has already been noted by Fenton (2007: 26) who stated that researchers are 'attempting to combine the socio-economic and political concerns of political economy (the macro-context), with the agency and subjectivity of cultural studies (the micro-context)' which addresses media issues in its 'social entirety'. This legitimises my approach to examining television production as both structurally determined and culturally negotiated, situating formats within broader phases of development. In particular, it allows the 'Standardisation Phase' (see

Table 2-2) to be treated as a historically coherent moment in which economic structures, regulatory mandates, and creative practices converged to shape a shared industry sensibility.

Field and Power as Extensions to CPE and Cultural Studies

This section introduces Bourdieu's field theory as a core lens that extends critical political economy and cultural industries perspectives. Bourdieu conceptualises fields as relatively autonomous, structured spaces of positions and position-takings in which agents and institutions compete over different forms of capital, including economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Positions within a field depend on the volume and composition of these capitals, while habitus mediates how agents perceive and respond to the constraints and opportunities of the field. Fields are classified as sites of ongoing struggle over value and authority over the degree of autonomy from political and economic power centres (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Hanusch and Maares, 2022: 738). Building on this, I use field theory to analyse the evolution of television production in the digital age, where power structures, cultural practices and institutional dynamics underpin creative industries (Benson and Neveu, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2018). Field theory helps to link structural forces with practitioner agency and provides a relational lens for examining how institutional logics, audience data and creative practices intersect in television production. Further, fields can be understood both as path-dependent institutional logics that ground cultural analysis and as inter-organisational environments (Benson, 2004: 275), which means that varying levels of concentration shape the distribution of power and practice. At the same time, Hesmondhalgh (2006: 215) treats Bourdieu's field theory as a valuable but limited framework for media studies, arguing that it underplays the specific structures of the field of mass production. I acknowledge this limitation and therefore use field theory alongside critical political economy and cultural industries approaches to analyse how power, data and production practices are organised in contemporary television.

By integrating Bourdieu's concept of field, I conceptualise television production as a structured arena of struggles for positions. This is where all actors, including broadcasters, producers, commissioning editors and digital platforms, compete for the different forms of capital. In other words, it is where 'individuals and organizations compete, unconsciously and consciously, to valorize those forms of capital which they possess' (Benson, 2006: 190). Earlier, Bourdieu (2005: 30) argued that within a field, 'position-takings [are] aimed either at conserving or transforming the structure of relations of forces that is constitutive of the field'. These struggles remain prevalent, as my interview findings illuminate how

media organisations and practitioners compete for authority (see Chapter 5). This further connects to how practitioners in the UK and Germany negotiate audience data and format development within distinct but comparable media fields.

In these fields, however, economic capital (e.g. funding, advertising revenue) intersects with cultural capital (e.g. reputation, critical acclaim) and symbolic capital (e.g. public recognition, awards) (Ohlsson, Lindell, and Arkhede, 2017: 122). First, changes in commissioning practices reflect a reconfiguration of power within the production field. Neveu (2007: 336) argues that Bourdieu's book *On Television* (originally published in 1996) is a contribution to the influence of television and can be read as social debate. He further contends that the book offers a valuable framework for understanding social practice more broadly. By contrast, Marlière (1998: 223) argued that Bourdieu even 'interprets and theorizes the media world as a very unitary field'. Interestingly, studies on journalism and news consumption often draw on his concepts, e.g. on capital culture (Ohlsson et al., 2017) or on fields (Hamilton, 2004; English, 2013). Within the contemporary conjuncture, symbolic capital is also linked to audience adjustment strategies, and news performance indicative of modes of power' (Benson et al., 2025: 225). Producers start to adapt their habitus - their embodied dispositions and routines - to meet these new valuation regimes, balancing creative aspirations with platform and audience demands (Schultz, 2023).

Second, scholars have extended Bourdieu's concepts of social, cultural and symbolic capital by introducing the notion of digital capital (Verwiebe and Hagemann, 2024: 1862). This form of capital highlights how influence and authority are accumulated within digital fields. Bourdieu (2005: 80) himself acknowledged the rise of technical capital in the computer age. However, Hesmondhalgh (2006: 219) argues that the transformation in the 20th century is ignored by Bourdieu as he notes that 'revolutionary transformations' depend 'on the possibilities present in the positions inscribed in the field'. This thesis argues that the emergence of digital, social and hybrid formats illustrates a parallel transformation in the logic of practice within the field (see Table 2-1). Bennett and Strange (2011: 277) argue that the transformation into digital television 'opens new ways of thinking about its history and its present without needing to abandon the theoretical insights of the past'. In this light, my study examines how these transformations reshape the dynamics of format development, particularly through the lens of practitioners and a growing audience-centric notion within the broadcasting industry.

Third, Bourdieu's notion of doxa - the deep-seated assumptions that structure a field - is vital for understanding current tensions. Traditional public service doxa prioritised cultural diversity, civic responsibility, and editorial autonomy. Today, these values coexist uneasily

with commercial imperatives favouring engagement metrics, monetisation strategies, and brand competitiveness (Schultz, 2007; Gronow, 2023). Such shifts challenge the relevance of public service broadcasters as they attempt to innovate while preserving their normative missions.

To operationalise this integrated framework for this study's specific focus, Table 2-1 demonstrates how the concepts of field, habitus, and capital can be applied to analyse and compare the distinct characteristics of production fields. The distinctions set out should not be read as strict categories, since in practice broadcast and online production frequently overlap and borrow from one another. Nevertheless, for analytical purposes, the table illustrates how field logic, capital, and doxa are differently emphasised in television, digital, and social video structures. This framing is adopted because it helps to clarify the dynamics of convergence and provides a useful analytical lens for examining the reconfiguration of production practices

Table 2-1: Comparing Linear First and Digital/Social/Hybrid Production Structures through Bourdieu's Concepts

Concept	Field-Specific Characteristic	Linear First Television Production Structures	Digital/Social Video/Hybrid Production Structures
FIELD	Dominant Logics and Rules of the Game	Emphasis on broadcast schedules, ratings, established genre conventions, regulatory compliance (e.g., Ofcom), long development cycles, risk aversion.	Emphasis on platform algorithms, engagement metrics (views, shares, watch time), rapid iteration, virality, direct audience feedback loops, brand integration, experimentation with niche.
	Key Stakes and Objectives	Securing prime time slots, achieving high viewership for advertisers or public service remits, winning industry awards (e.g., BAFTAs), and maintaining channel brand identity.	Driving platform subscriptions/traffic, building online communities, achieving viral reach, monetisation through diverse models (ads, sponsorship, merchandise), data acquisition, rapid content refresh.
	Power Dynamics and Key Players	Established commissioners, channel controllers, heads of production, established production companies. More entrenched hierarchies.	Platform executives, data analysts, influencer talent, multi-channel networks (MCNs), independent creators; distributed power.
	Doxa (Taken-for-granted beliefs)	'Quality' defined by production values and critical acclaim; success measured by ratings.	'Authenticity' and 'relatability' highly valued. Community engagement is part of the process.
CAPITAL	Economic Capital (Access and Mobilisation)	Access to large broadcast budgets, pre-sales, co-production funding, deficit financing. Established relations.	Access to platform-specific funds, venture capital, crowdfunding, brand partnerships, ad revenue sharing.
	Social Capital (Networks and Connections)	Longstanding relationships with commissioners, agents, established talent, and crew. Access to industry bodies and unions.	Networks with platform representatives, digital influencers, developers, online communities, marketing agencies focused on digital. Connections may be more global in nature and less dependent on geographic proximity.
	Cultural Capital (Recognised Expertise and Skills)	Expertise in traditional storytelling, genre conventions, broadcast production workflows, scriptwriting for longer forms, managing large groups. Understanding of established audience demographics.	Expertise in short-form narrative, platform-specific formats (e.g., TikTok, YouTube), understanding of algorithms, data analytics, community management, digital marketing, agile production methods.
	Symbolic Capital (Legitimacy and Recognition)	BAFTAs, Emmys, critical reviews in established media, reputation for delivering successful long-running series. Association with prestigious broadcast brands.	Webby Awards, Streamy Awards, large subscriber/follower counts, viral success, positive sentiment in online comments, partnerships with major digital platforms or brands.

Source: Adapted from Bourdieu (1993); Benson and Neveu (2005)

Table 2-1 illustrates how Bourdieu's field theory can be applied to television production by contrasting how logics, capitals and doxa are configured across different development and production environments. For clarity, digital, social, and hybrid forms are grouped where they share overlapping characteristics, including algorithmic governance, engagement-driven imperatives, and accelerated cycles of development and production. This analytical grouping is not intended to establish a rigid dichotomy with linear production. Rather, it foregrounds ongoing struggles within the field over how capital, value, and authority are defined and legitimised. In practice, these boundaries appear to remain porous. Linear institutions increasingly incorporate digital logics, while digital-native producers seek forms of symbolic recognition historically associated with broadcast media (see Chapter 5).

In Germany, funk's youth-oriented digital formats demonstrate a different but related reordering of capital. Unlike BBC Three, funk operates primarily within platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and the ARD Mediathek (see Section 2.3). Here, symbolic capital is tied to metrics of visibility and participation, with creators and producers evaluated on the basis of their ability to mobilise audiences in fragmented digital ecosystems. This shows how symbolic capital is detached from broadcast hierarchies and recalibrated through algorithmic visibility and audience interaction, reshaping the authority of public service media in a platform-dependent context.

Bourdieu's Key Concepts as Analytical Tools

In this study, Bourdieu's framework is not applied uncritically. Rather, it is mobilised alongside insights from CPE and cultural studies to capture the entanglement of structural pressures, institutional logics, and creative and strategic practices. While this study draws upon Bourdieu's field theory, it also acknowledges its well-documented limitations. Atkinson (2016: 6) argues that field theory risks excessive abstraction, detaching analysis from lived practices and material conditions. Benson (1999: 479), while recognising its value, stresses the need to adapt field theory to comparative research by paying closer attention to the interaction between media fields and wider political and economic structures. Gronow (2011: 46) further critiques Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field for their lack of clarity when applied to rapidly changing cultural industries, where technological innovation destabilises established logics. These debates are particularly relevant for this study as platformisation and audience data recalibrate what counts as symbolic capital, who the actors within a field are, and who has the authority to define value.

The theoretical framework established by Bourdieu also provides a critical analytical foundation for this thesis to interrogate the mechanisms through which institutional and

professional authority are constructed and contested within cultural production environments (Bourdieu, 1998). For my research on format development, this framework is valuable because it connects macro-level industrial change with meso-level institutional structures and micro-level professional practices. In the following paragraphs, Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital are outlined, and the relationships within broadcasting organisations are synthesised. First, the concept of field is useful because it understands a field as a relatively autonomous social microcosm structured through struggles over recognition and authority (Bourdieu, 1998). In the context of this thesis, television production is not treated as a stable industry space, but as a contested field in which broadcasters, commissioners, producers, audience researchers and digital intermediaries negotiate what counts as legitimate knowledge. This is particularly important in the transition from linear television to streaming and social video, where audience metrics, platform analytics and digital expertise increasingly challenge older forms of editorial and commissioning authority.

Second, the concept of habitus allows this thesis to examine how professional dispositions are formed through repeated practice and institutional experience. Bourdieu's understanding of the agent is important because individuals both act and are acted upon by the structuring conditions of the field (Bourdieu, 1977; 1993; 1998). In television production, this means that professional judgement is never simply an individual preference. It is shaped by commissioning cultures, genre histories, public service values, audience measurement systems and expectations surrounding platform performance. At the same time, this thesis does not use habitus deterministically. Jenkins (1982: 270–281) criticised Bourdieu for reproducing determinism because structures appear to produce practices that then reproduce those same structures. Atkinson (2016) is particularly useful in addressing this concern because he argues that Bourdieusian sociology needs to be refined through greater attention to lived experience and reflexivity of social practice. This is relevant for my study because television professionals do not simply reproduce institutional routines. They interpret data, contest metrics and sometimes defend editorial judgement against data-driven expectations.

Third, the concept of capital further helps explain how power is redistributed within datafied production cultures. For instance, audience data can become a form of institutional and symbolic capital when it is recognised as legitimate within commissioning and strategy processes. Audience specialists and digital teams may gain influence through access to platform analytics and behavioural data. Yet, I argue that this authority is uneven because established creative actors continue to draw on professional experience as competing form of legitimacy. This aligns with Bourdieu's analysis of symbolic power, where power operates

most effectively when it is misrecognised as natural or self-evident (Bourdieu, 1993). It also resonates with Wacquant's (1992) emphasis on reflexive sociology as a method for analysing the hidden conditions that make particular forms of authority appear legitimate. For this thesis, this means asking not only who has access to audience data, but also how that access becomes recognised as decision-making authority.

The framework is also useful at the meso level because it helps analyse institutional dependency and power asymmetry within media organisations. Champagne's (2005: 48-63) work on the journalistic field is relevant here because he shows how media fields are shaped by 'double dependency', particularly between professional autonomy and external pressures from politics and markets. Although Champagne writes about journalism, the concept is useful for television production because broadcasters and production teams are similarly positioned between editorial values and audience expectations. In my study, this helps explain why public service broadcasters may defend cultural and editorial autonomy while simultaneously adapting to platform-oriented performance indicators. Hence, I contend that the field is not merely transformed by technological forces but is instead structurally reconfigured through dependencies that tie institutional legitimacy directly to corporate platform power. This also matters at the macro level because contemporary television production can no longer be understood solely within national media systems. Sapiro (2018: 365-384) argues that the sociology of fields is not confined within national borders. I argue that this is directly relevant to my comparative analysis of British and German television production cultures. Broadcasters such as the BBC, ARD and Channel 4 remain embedded within national policy, regulatory and public service traditions. However, their production cultures are increasingly shaped by global streaming services, cross-border audience metrics and platform-oriented distribution practices (Poell, 2024). Bourdieu's framework therefore helps analyse how national broadcasting fields intersect with transnational platform logics. This is particularly important for understanding television fragmentation as a relational transformation of actors, roles and forms of authority rather than merely as technological change.

At the same time, the limits of Bourdieu's framework must remain visible. Hesmondhalgh (2006: 211-231) argues that Bourdieu paid insufficient attention to large-scale commercial media production and the relationship between production and consumption in contemporary media industries. This critique is important for my thesis because television production is deeply shaped by audience measurement, platform infrastructures and commercial pressures. Furthermore, McGuigan (1992) raises a relevant concern through his critique of cultural populism, warning against approaches that either overstate audience agency or

reproduce hierarchies of cultural value (see Section 2.1). Nevertheless, these critiques should not be regarded as grounds for abandoning Bourdieu's framework. Instead, they require a more careful application of field theory that remains attentive to agency, datafication and institutional change. Atkinson (2016) demonstrates how Bourdieu can be used critically rather than dogmatically, particularly when habitus is understood as open to reflection and transformation rather than as a closed mechanism of reproduction. For this reason, the use of Bourdieu's framework is deliberately critical and adaptive. Field, habitus and capital are not used as static categories, but as interconnected concepts for analysing how television production is structured and how those structures are negotiated in practice. Field helps explain the changing relationships between linear broadcasters, digital teams and platform intermediaries. Habitus helps interrogate how professional judgement and institutional routines become embedded. Capital helps interpret why audience data, platform expertise and editorial experience acquire different forms of authority in different organisational contexts. Symbolic power helps explain why some forms of knowledge appear more legitimate than others.

2.2 From National Broadcasting to Global Platformisation

The evolution of television formats over the past two decades reflects profound shifts in media industries, cultural practices, and technological infrastructures. The discussion begins with the globalisation era of the 1990s and 2000s, when the international trade in formats provoked theoretical debates about cultural flows and local adaptation. It then moves to the 2010s and 2020s, a period in which linear broadcasting increasingly co-existed with digital and social production, giving rise to hybrid practices and new audience dynamics. Lobato (2019: 10) reminds us that 'broadcast television evolved as a hybrid medium combining prerecorded material, live programming, movies, short-form programming, and advertisements'. To conceptualise hybridity in media, this study draws on Chadwick (2017), who frames hybrid media systems as characterised by the ongoing entanglement of media logics and power relations. His non-dichotomous lens allows me to examine how audiences are conceptualised across platforms and how overlapping logics shape decision-making and professional authority in a less normative manner. Relating to RQ1, this concerns how hybrid strategies have informed the development of television formats in the post-2010 era across linear, digital and social video production. In doing so, I propose a new typology of formats (see Table 2-3) that advances theoretical understandings of the evolution of media logics, practices, and processes within a platformised media landscape.

The Globalisation Era (1990s-2000s): Format Theory

The emergence of international format trading as a dominant mode of television commerce generated intense theoretical debates about cultural globalisation and local adaptation. These debates proved crucial for understanding how television content travels across cultural boundaries while accommodating local preferences and regulatory requirements. The period witnessed the development of format studies as a distinct analytical domain, with scholars examining both the industrial structures facilitating global format distribution and cultural processes (Waisbord, 2004; Havens, 2006). The debate can be framed with the following two examples. On the one hand, there is Waisbord (2004: 368) who claimed that 'formats purposefully eviscerate the national'. On the other hand, Esser (2010: 289) argued that the flexibility of formatted programming allows greater local adaptation and cultural diversity than the financially driven use of canned imports.

The theoretical understanding of television formats as distinct cultural objects emerged through detailed analysis of international programme adaptation practices. Moran's foundational research, published in *Copycat TV: Globalisation, Program Formats and Cultural Identity* (1998), established analytical frameworks for examining how television content functions as both industrial commodity and cultural practice. He conceptualised (and referred to it throughout his later work) formats as 'program packages' that can be reproduced in different national contexts while maintaining core structural elements (Moran: 1998: 190-210). Chalaby's industry analysis in *The Format Age: Television's Entertainment Revolution* (2015) provided detailed examination of the corporate structures facilitating global format distribution. His concept of 'format publishing' demonstrated how companies like Endemol, Fremantle Media, and ITV Studios developed sophisticated international operations capable of rapidly adapting successful formats across multiple territories simultaneously. Specifically, Esser (2013) follows the franchising perspective and emphasises that formats are business commodities that contributed to the redefinition of television throughout the 2000s. In the early 2000s, one of the most critiqued formats were *Big Brother* or *The Pop Idol* (which followed the *Survivor*) and which have been studied from national and cross-country aspects (Kretschmer and Singh, 2012). Hill (2020: 204) summarised these concerns within UK media scholarship, noting that the critique was primarily aimed at declining quality standards in both public service and commercial television, the pressures of the attention and emotional economy in digital media, and the influence of television and social platforms on audience behaviour.

Within the 2010s, a shift from globalisation discussions to platform debates began (van Dijk, et al., 2018). As argued by Burgess and Green (2018: 55), YouTube became mainstream media. Within format studies, equally, Chalaby (2023: 14) argued that media trends encompass YouTube and other platforms and became transnational where borders lost their relevance. An example is funk as a PSM joint venture of ARD and ZDF (started with 40 channels in 2016) that operates under the logics of social media platforms, primarily on YouTube (Stollfuß, 2024: 187). While PSMs may see this as a necessary strategic adaptation, it raises the question of to what extent this seduction of platform aesthetics risks undermining their core public service values, ultimately blurring the lines between public broadcasting and commercial media. Many scholars debated whether a dual broadcasting system, combining public service obligations with commercial competition, created conditions conducive to format innovation or constrained development by prioritising cultural authenticity over commercial adaptability (Ramsey, 2018; Eichner, 2021; Stollfuß, 2021). Others contended that commercial competition within regulated frameworks created serves as 'justification for their continued existence' (Donders, 2019: 1024).

This brief introduction to the globalisation era's scholarship established crucial theoretical foundations for understanding format development processes while revealing some analytical limitations. The emphasis on format adaptation and distribution, while illuminating important transnational processes, obscured the examination of the creative practices generating formalisable content initially. Similarly, the focus on organisational structures failed to adequately account for the cultural negotiations occurring within production structures. These theoretical limitations became particularly evident when examining national differences in format innovation capacity. They are often confined to international formats while ignoring national formats developed in non-Anglophone territories and distributed across digital and social platforms. This analytical gap suggests the need for theoretical approaches capable of integrating structural analysis with the examination of creative and strategic practice formation.

The Transition to Coexistence of Linear, Digital, and Social Production (2010s–2020s)

Linear broadcasting is traditionally characterised by a rigid schedule on specific channels at designated times, and the simultaneous broadcasting of mixed-schedule programming delivered to a widespread audience, who view it in their homes on traditional television sets (Ellis, 2000; Katz, 2009; Doyle, 2015). However, since the late 2000s, the internet has ascended as a predominant medium for the consumption of audiovisual content,

'characterised by fluid geographical boundaries' (Johnson, 2019: 18). This is capable of providing high-quality viewing experiences. Previous conceptualisations of linear television and linear formats should be approached with caution, as the term 'linear' has been broadened to encompass platforms such as BBC iPlayer in the UK and ARD Mediathek in Germany, thereby moving beyond the traditional confines of linear broadcasting. However, the nuances are important, as at the beginning, these VOD players served as catch-up services for missed programmes. Linear production logics during this period prevailed. This gradually changed and VOD players gradually became a destination of their own. This shift encompassed 'exclusively online, interactive content and live streams of broadcast channels' (Johnson, 2017: 124) and, different production and format logics. The audience selects content from an editorially or algorithmically curated platform. This demonstrates the blurring of traditional television boundaries arising from broadcasters' adoption of multiplatform television approaches (Bennett and Strange, 2011: 18).

Beginning in 2020, scholars have increasingly examined how the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped media production processes and consumption. Research by Túnñez-López et al. (2020: 14) claimed that for European public broadcasters, including the BBC and ARD, COVID-19 was a media accelerator to foster innovation ecosystems, a trend aimed at addressing future technological and content gaps. Their findings are based on an EBU Report, which noted that it accelerated the expansion of development teams and the knowledge on data and AI, as well as automating processes (Túnñez-López et al., 2020: 5). In the German context, Mikos (2020: 83) focused on PSBs and drew on AGF data that showed a 75% audience reach in non-linear viewing in March 2020 (70,9% in March 2019). This data also showed an increase in viewing time, the number of younger viewers, and the subscriber base of streaming services. Johnson and Dempsey (2024: 502) extend this conversation post-COVID-19 in the UK by examining 'circular, reinforcing process, in which encounters shape expectations, which shape values[]'. Collectively, I argue that these and many other studies offer valuable insights into institutional adaptation, audience shifts, and content delivery under crisis conditions. While this thesis falls within the same temporal frame, it does not engage directly with the pandemic as a central object of analysis. Instead, it examines production practices that reflect enduring structural and institutional changes rather than immediate responses to a health crisis. However, the workshop observation analysed in Chapter 6 suggests that COVID-19 can be interpreted as an impetus for more production versatility.

The Phases from Digital Experimentation to Standardisation

Building upon foundational scholarship and recognising its complementary value, the co-existence of linear, digital, and social video production logics has necessitated expanded theoretical engagement. In this context, non-linear is conceptualised as formats across all digital and social media platforms. It is not limited to a specific genre but most of the interviewees work in unscripted formats (see Chapter 5). To illustrate the shift from experimentation to systematisation, the table below outlines the characteristic logics, key events, organisational focus, and links to audience data. Beyond the impact of COVID-19, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a significant recent development. As this study focuses on the period from 2018 to 2022, AI falls outside the empirical timeframe. However, it is important to recognise that generative AI in particular has opened a new area of scholarship. This includes work by Nixon et al. (2023), Erickson (2024), and Connock (2024). While the table indicates this phase, it cannot be addressed in detail in this project. It is included for future study endeavours and is labelled the 'Re-Evaluation Phase'.

Table 1-2: Phases of Organisational Transformation in Television Production

Characteristic	The Experimentation Phase (pre-2018)	The Standardisation Phase (2018-2022)	The Re-Evaluation Phase (post-2022)
Dominant Logic	Establishment of new units: Broadcasters react to the initial disruption of streaming and VOD services. 'Digital expansion', often happening in isolated, experimental units.	Systematic and embedded: Digital-first logics are more integrated into the core organisational strategy. Various digital units get formalised towards previously developed processes.	Efficiency-Driven and Exploratory: A dual logic of achieving profitability and navigating the next phase of experimentation; uncertainty of new technologies like generative AI.
Key Events	BBC Three goes online-only (2016); funk launches (2016). Both are seen as bold, risky experiments to test digital models for youth audiences.	Revised AVMSD implemented in 2018 for 2019-2022 (European Commission Report, 2024) Additional streaming platforms launched (Disney+/Apple TV+ in 2019). These events force a systemic, regulated response from the industry (see Section 2.3).	AI affected production logics (since 2023). The 2023 Hollywood strikes were ignited by AI, which emerged as a central point of contention.
Organisational Focus	New format and technological units (called labs) were established. The focus was on modifying platform development.	On whole-organisation transformation. The focus shifts to a cross-measurement data infrastructure and developing integrated, hybrid workflows that serve all units.	Focus on integrating AI into workflows (e.g., commissioning decisions, format development) and the rise of FAST channels.
Audience Data	Used primarily for retrospective performance measurement (e.g., how many people watched a show on iPlayer last week).	Various data sources are used predictively, along the process, and prospectively. Cross-platform measurement approaches are integrated into the daily work of production teams.	Used for generative insights and hyper-personalisation. Data begins to inform not only what is commissioned, but what can be AI-assisted in daily routines.

Source: Adapted from BBC (2018), European Commission (2024), ARD/BR (2024)

This study's focus on the standardisation phase allows for an analysis of an established, systematised period in which non-linear format development became integrated into industry practice. First, this phase is defined by the critical intersection of innovation, industry adaptation, and evolving audience measurement (see Chapter 3), which together mark the sector's shift from traditional broadcasting to cross-platform production strategies. Second,

the implementation of the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) falls within the Standardisation Phase, forcing a systematic, regulated response from the industry (see Section 3.3).

In establishing the historical context for this phase, my study avoids imposing a fixed or reductive historical narrative. While periodisation necessarily involves drawing boundaries, my study treats these boundaries as provisional and shaped by evolving institutional logics and technological advancements. Rather, I follow Johnson's (2012: 10) assertion that periodisation should be treated as a 'fluid analytical construction rather than a fixed temporal schema'. Accordingly, the analysis begins in the late 1990s, when broadcasters first began trials with digital distribution. This gradual expansion into digital operations was subsequently driven by numerous factors, such as mobile device proliferation, media deregulation, and the rise of video dominated social media and streaming platforms from 2007 (Holt and Perren, 2019: 31). Platforms evolved to become key infrastructural extensions. This evolution extends beyond VOD platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video to encompass a wider platform ecosystem that includes Google (with YouTube), TikTok, and Instagram, which integrate automated ad-trading technologies, data intermediaries, and aggregators (Nieborg and Poell, 2025: 1917). Broadcasters, particularly public service media, that diversify their non-linear production strategies towards these platforms become embedded within this ecosystem and, in doing so, help to reinforce it, as Ferrell noted at RIPE 2020. While the interwovenness of advertising within format distribution is acknowledged, this study does not analyse advertising practices directly, since its primary concern lies within production cultures. It also avoids a simple linear versus non-linear dichotomy, aligning with Johnson's (2019: 127) argument that viewing experiences are shaped by a dynamic interplay of both logics. For this reason, the next section introduces a typology framework.

Towards a New Typology of Formats

The preceding review has demonstrated that scholarly analysis frequently treats traditional television, digital production, and social media formats as distinct fields of inquiry. This separation reflects their different research traditions. Yet broadcasters now operate across a fragmented media environment in which content is produced simultaneously for linear, digital and social distribution channels. This thesis therefore proposes a new conceptual framework to analyse these coexisting and often competing forms of production. To address this research gap, it develops a typology of contemporary formats categorised according to their primary distribution environment. This organising principle is particularly important because,

as Chapter 6 demonstrates, platform selection emerged as a strategic decision closely linked to target audience considerations during the period under investigation.

The typology proposed in this thesis functions as an analytical framework for understanding the increasing fragmentation and diversification of television and screen production in the platform era. Rather than treating digital production as a singular category, it differentiates between distinct production regimes characterised by different industrial logics, audience assumptions, temporalities and measurement systems. The framework identifies five overlapping but analytically distinct categories: linear-first formats, linear-first formats with digital expansion, digital-first formats of long and medium duration, video-first social media formats, and hybrid or transmedia formats. Linear-first formats remain primarily tied to scheduled broadcasting and continue to operate through established institutional routines, genre conventions and ratings-based measurement systems. Linear-first formats with digital expansion extend these programmes into on-demand environments through catch-up services, supplementary content and second-screen strategies, while retaining broadcast scheduling as their organisational centre. By contrast, digital-first formats are developed primarily for video-on-demand environments, including broadcaster streaming services and YouTube, and are shaped by retention metrics, discoverability, bingeability and audience segmentation strategies.

Video-first social media formats, typically distributed via TikTok, Instagram or YouTube Shorts, operate according to highly iterative and platform-specific logics in which visibility, engagement, algorithmic circulation and rapid feedback loops become central to development processes. Finally, hybrid or transmedia formats combine elements from multiple categories and are conceived as integrated multi-platform experiences from the outset. However, the empirical findings suggest that these integrations frequently remain uneven and organisationally fragmented rather than fully converged. However, the analytical utility of this typology extends beyond a merely descriptive taxonomy of institutional variance. By mapping the simultaneous coexistence of heterogeneous production cultures, this framework critically challenges the conceptualisation of the contemporary broadcaster as a monolithically unified site of media production. It exposes deep structural fragmentation, revealing how the development of a linear factual programme, a serialised streaming format, and a short-form social video are governed by competing operational logics. Consequently, while these diverse outputs remain bound by a singular corporate architecture, they operate within highly fractured professional normativities. This internal tension raises critical questions regarding how public service values are unevenly distributed, translated, or compromised across divergent workflows. This framework therefore moves beyond a

simplistic binary of old versus new media or linear versus digital. It aims to identify five distinct but interconnected production models: Linear, Linear with digital expansion, Digital First, Social Video First, and Hybrid/Transmedia. These categories are not merely technical descriptions of distribution platforms. As the analysis in Chapter 7 indicates, they represent fundamentally different production cultures, each with its own logic, professional practices, and relationship to the audience. This typology is therefore central to the present study. It provides the necessary vocabulary to deconstruct how a single broadcaster navigates the competing demands of these different platforms. Further, it allows for a more nuanced investigation of how power, creative autonomy, and audience measurement are reconfigured across this fragmented field. The following table details this framework, outlining the key characteristics of each format type.

Table 2-3: A Typology of Contemporary Formats in the 2000s

Production Type	Linear First Formats	Linear First with Digital Expansion	Digital First (Long and Medium Length)	Video-First Social Media First (Short to Medium Length)	Hybrid/Transmedia Formats (varied lengths)
Primary Platform	Traditional broadcast on terrestrial or satellite television with fixed scheduling.	Scheduled-first on linear TV, digital on-demand strategy (e.g., supplementary videos on BBC iPlayer, ARD Mediathek).	Digital-first, primarily VOD, but also on YouTube.	Digital or Mobile-first, e.g. primarily hosted on TikTok, YouTube, or Instagram.	Integrated Multi-Platform: A holistic format where linear, VOD, and/or social media are all integral, co-primary platforms.

Source: Adapted from the European Broadcasting Union (2023)

This typology is not merely descriptive. It rather serves as a foundational analytical framework for the remainder of this thesis. Firstly, it will be used to analyse the interviews, ensuring that format development logics allow for a nuanced comparative analysis. Secondly, it enables an investigation into how these different production logics correlate with specific industry practices, forms of creative labour, and audience measurement techniques. In separating distinct typological approaches, I position this framework as a means of sharpening the analysis of the strategic negotiations that practitioners undertake within a complex multi-platform environment. I therefore present the typology as both a conceptual map of the contemporary field and a practical analytical tool that underpins the empirical investigation in the chapters that follow.

2.3 A Comparative Perspective on British and German Media Regulation

Although a full account of media policy and regulation lies beyond the confines of this research, it is essential to highlight key policies that have shaped the television production landscape. Policy, regulation, and cultural mandates continue to be pivotal in shaping the distinct television and digital production landscapes of the UK, Germany, and beyond. Both territories represent significant cases for examining production dynamics and their regulatory implications. The UK and Germany are both robust public service traditions and were early adopters of sophisticated electronic audience measurement (Bourdon and Méadel, 2014: 5). However, they offer a productive contrast for comparative analysis due to their divergent roles in the global format landscape. The UK serves as a pre-eminent 'format originator', where the BBC and Channel 4 have historically acted as 'format laboratories', leveraging digital-first initiatives and international IP exports to offset domestic funding pressures (Steemers, 2014: 45-46). Conversely, Germany represents a primary 'import market', characterised by a more cautious approach to digital transformation. Here, the ARD and ZDF maintain immense cultural authority and federal regulatory obligations, often using proven international formats to stabilise their linear reach (Esser, 2013; Krauß, 2021). Consequently, comparing these markets reveals how audience data and platform logics are negotiated differently by UK 'exporters' seeking global scalability versus German 'importers' focused on domestic institutional preservation within different media regulations. Over decades, national frameworks continuously encounter profound challenges from the transnational logics of global platforms. This section therefore focuses on some major regulatory frameworks first. Then it examines how their historical foundations, rooted in formative legislation like the UK's Communications Act (2003), interact with the reconfiguring pressures of recent European arrangements such as the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and the modified UK GDPR. This analysis illuminates how these evolving regulatory pressures shape the contemporary field of format development.

The Influence of National Media Policy: From Charter to Treaty

In the UK, public service broadcasting (PSB) obligations have traditionally mandated specific commitments to national culture, diversity, and innovation (Born, 2003; Freedman, 2014). The BBC, Channel 4, and ITV have historically been subject to regulatory frameworks requiring investment in original content and independent production. The independent production sector took shape in 1982 with the creation of Channel 4 as a 'publisher-broadcaster'. This channel was required to commission programming from external

producers, a development noted by Darlow (2004) and Potter (2008) and discussed further by Chalaby (2022: 106). This policy shift created the conditions for independent production to expand. During the 1980s, companies in the most advanced markets began to consolidate and move into international operations. Television formats were central to this expansion, providing a vehicle for growth across national borders.

The increasing dominance of global streaming platforms such as Netflix challenges traditional regulatory mechanisms and generates new tensions between national and global content, yet their influence is often 'complementary rather than substitutive' (Lobato, 2019: 183). A growing internationalisation also necessitated updated media regulation. EU audiovisual (EU AV) policy evolved from the 1989 *Television without Frontiers* Directive (TWFD), a forerunner to the AVMSD that aimed to modernise incumbent regulation. Against the backdrop of subsequent revisions of the AVMSD in 1997 and, more significantly, in 2007, Hardy (2012: 522–523) remarked that 'this introduced further liberalisation while extending basic content standards to 'television-like' services available online and other so-called nonlinear services, such as video-on-demand (VOD)'. This extension regulated wider media production and distribution across borders. For example, the AVSMD rule for US platforms to work with UK production companies does no longer apply since Brexit. Only to public service broadcasters this obligation applies 'under section 285 of the 2003 Communication Act to commission independent producers approved by Ofcom' (Harcourt, 2022: 54). However, the 2018 AVMSD has provided a more flexible interpretation and allows EU states to oblige US platforms to invest in domestic productions. An opportunity that has been used by Germany, France, and others' (Harcourt, 2022: 54). EU audiovisual policy provides a shared regulatory backdrop for both the UK and Germany through the development of the *Television Without Frontiers* Directive into the *Audiovisual Media Services* Directive (AVMSD). As Hardy notes in relation to the UK, this European framework combined market-opening objectives with minimum content standards and was progressively extended from linear broadcasting to encompass on-demand and 'television-like' services, reflecting broader processes of convergence (Hardy, 2012). While implemented within distinct national regulatory traditions, the AVMSD shaped common conditions under which broadcasters in both countries adapted to digital distribution, advertising regulation, and cross-border provision, even as core public service obligations and institutional governance remained nationally determined.

Brexit introduced new complexity into European production networks. Schlesinger (2022: 48) characterised it as a 'profound constitutional rupture', which can be interpreted as regulatory disintegration. More holistically, Doyle (2021: 41) concludes that the evolving challenges

confronting systems of media provision across Europe demand sustained, interdisciplinary inquiry that integrates creative economy analysis with critical policy perspectives. She further argues that such research illuminates how technological convergence, shifting audience practices, and globalised distribution reshape the governance, sustainability, and cultural value of European media production and dissemination.

The BBC offers a distinctive case of how an established legacy public service broadcaster has embedded adaptability into its governance structure. Its Royal Charter functions not only as a constitutional safeguard but also as a cyclical mechanism that compels strategic renewal and responsiveness to technological and market transformations. Jathol and Rüling (2019: 115) argue that the BBC's digital transformation between 1992 and 2015 was uniquely shaped by its temporary incorporation under the Royal Charter, which functions as both a governance mechanism and a catalyst for strategic renewal. The Charter's ten-year renewal cycle created a distinctive organisational rhythm that compelled the BBC to periodically redefine its strategic direction while maintaining institutional continuity and autonomy. For the BBC, content aggregation has been directed by its public service mission as articulated in Article 5 of the Royal Charter, reaffirming the Reithian triad to inform, educate, and entertain (DCMS¹, 2006a). These enduring principles have since been expanded to reflect broader policy debates about the BBC's contemporary remit (Brown and Goodwin, 2010: 122). This includes balancing its cultural and democratic obligations with its evolving role within a competitive, digital media environment.

¹ Department of Culture, Media and Sport; The UK government department responsible for overseeing broadcasting, communications, and the creative industries; it defines the BBC's public purposes through the *BBC Royal Charter* and accompanying *Framework Agreement* (DCMS, 2006a, *A Public Service for All: The BBC in the Digital Age*).

Table 2-4: Comparative Governance Frameworks - The BBC Royal Charter and the German Medienstaatsvertrag

Legal Basis	Royal Charter (granted through a government-led constitutional procedure)	Medienstaatsvertrag (Interstate Media Treaty, ratified by all States)
Renewal Cycle	Every 10-11 years	Indefinite, but amended periodically through Länder negotiations
Regulatory Oversight	Ofcom since 2017	Independent broadcast councils (Rundfunkräte) at ARD and ZDF
Public Purpose Definition	Article 5 of the Royal Charter (to inform, educate, and entertain)	Article 26-31 MStv (diversity impartiality, democratic function)
Institutional Structure	Single Nation Corporation (BBC)	Decentralised network of regional broadcasters (ARD) and national ZDF
Funding Mechanism	Licence fee set by the government	Licence Fee (broadcasting contribution) determined by the KEF (independent body)

Source: Adapted from Medienanstalten (2024); BBC Royal Charter Archive (2017)

Through this renewal mechanism presented in Table 2-4, the BBC was able to balance continuity and innovation by developing external collaborations (e.g. Freeview, YouView, Discovery partnerships) while simultaneously cultivating internal competencies (e.g., BBC Online, iPlayer, interactive content), as Jathol and Rüling (2019: 113) conclude. Further, they claimed that the Charter renewal process legitimised experimentation and risk-taking, while ensuring accountability through structured public debate. This iterative cycle of incorporation and renewal encouraged what the authors call *strategic responsiveness*, an ability to anticipate and adapt to industry-wide technological disruption without undermining public service values. By institutionalising responsiveness through cyclical review and stakeholder engagement, the BBC sustained its public credibility while leading digital innovation in UK broadcasting.

In Germany, there is no direct equivalent to the Royal Charter as a single national constitutional regulatory mechanism. Instead, the PSB is governed by a federal legal framework based on inter-state treaties (Staatsverträge) agreed upon by the federal states (Länder). Unlike the UK Charter, which is granted by the Crown and negotiated centrally, the German model is federal and consensus-based, requiring agreement among all 16 Länder governments (Medienstaatsvertrag, 2020). Dreyer and Lüdemann (2015: 46) note that German public broadcasters such as ARD and ZDF are obliged to uphold cultural and educational standards, with regulatory oversight ensuring investments in national content

production. However, Chalaby (2024: 5) observed that 'Broadcasting was a national industry that progressively internationalized, streaming is a global business that is progressively localizing'. Hence, it can be argued that expansion of international TV production groups and streaming services has complicated the enforcement of national cultural mandates, often pushing German producers to adapt formats for global rather than purely national markets. Some scholars further highlight that regulatory policies have struggled to keep pace with platformisation. Lobato (2019) and Van Dijck et al. (2018: 156) explain how platforms in general largely operate beyond national regulation, posing significant challenges to policymakers. Hesmondhalgh (2021: 66) argues that contemporary media policy faces the challenge of sustaining local creative ecosystems. The aim is to support local creative ecosystems, such as national broadcasters and independent production sectors, while also adapting to global market pressures and platform-driven international investment. My analysis of the literature indicates that while regulatory and cultural mandates have historically fostered strong national production cultures, they are increasingly being tested by the transnational flows of content and capital enabled by digital platforms.

BBC Three and funk as Examples of Market Shifts

The transformations outlined in previous sections - platformisation, audience fragmentation, and shifts in production cultures - are vividly illustrated in the strategic repositioning of BBC Three in the United Kingdom and funk in Germany. These two cases offer critical insights into how public service broadcasters have adapted to the changing media environment, particularly in their attempts to remain relevant to younger, digitally native audiences.

BBC Three's trajectory reflects the complexities of digital migration and hybrid production models. Initially launched as a linear broadcast channel in 2003, BBC Three targeted younger audiences with innovative entertainment, comedy, and factual programming. However, driven by austerity policies, shifts in consumption habits, and a broader institutional strategy to strengthen digital services, BBC Three was closed as a linear channel in 2016 and repositioned as an online-only brand within BBC iPlayer (Hardy, 2019; Johnson, 2019) and again moved back to linear in 2022. Scholars such as Steemers (2019) and Hardy (2019) argue that this decision formed part of a wider policy agenda to reposition the BBC as a platform-led public service media organisation, as detailed in Section 2.3. Following the 2022 Charter Review, BBC Three was reinstated as a broadcast channel, justified under the Charter's renewed public purpose of 'representing and serving diverse communities across the UK'. The decision was rooted in Charter-based accountability, with Ofcom's approval process requiring evidence that the relaunch would enhance creative

plurality and national representation (Ofcom, 2022).

Table 2-5: Comparative Overview of BBC Three and funk

Category	BBC Three (UK)	ARD/ZDF – funk (Germany)
Strategic Key Transformations	BBC Three shifted to online-only (2016) and, then returned to a hybrid linear/online model (2022).	funk was established as a decentralised, online-only content network (Web/App/Social Media) in 2016.
Funding and Mandate	Funded by the TV licence fee; operates under a public service remit to inform, educate, and entertain.	Funded through the licence fee, with a strong public service remit to inform, educate, and entertain.
Commissioning Process	Mixed commissioning model: in-house production and independent producers; diverse content slate.	Structured, decentralised commissioning; regional public broadcasters collaborate with independent producers and creators.
Digital Integration	Strong digital integration via BBC iPlayer, YouTube, and social platforms; prioritised VOD expansion.	Primarily a network of YouTube-native channels and formats; less focused on a single VOD destination like the Mediathek.
Geographic Contextualisation: Market Dynamics	Deregulated, competitive market; focus on global content strategies and discoverability.	Highly regulated media landscape; prioritises long-term content stability over rapid digital experimentation.
Key Illustrative Formats	Internationally successful dramas like <i>Fleabag</i> and <i>Normal People</i> , showcasing a focus on high-quality, VOD-centric content with global appeal. Adaptations of formats like <i>RuPaul's Drag Race UK</i> also serve to attract key youth demographics to BBC iPlayer	Primarily a network of YouTube-native formats. Channels like MailLab (science communication), STRG_F (investigative journalism), and the multi-platform drama <i>Druck</i> (the German adaptation of <i>Skam</i>) demonstrate a focus on personality-driven, educational, and social media-native content.
Geographic Contextualisation: Market Dynamics	Deregulated, competitive market; focus on global content strategies and discoverability.	Highly regulated media landscape; prioritises long-term content stability over rapid digital experimentation.
Geographic Contextualisation: Regional Production and Collaboration	Faced criticism for commissioning Scottish network content from London-based companies.	Regional public broadcasting model fosters localised content, but slower decision-making process. Since 2023, national centralisation has accelerated due to cost concerns.

Sources: Adapted from Ofcom (2025); European Broadcasting Union (2025)

While BBC Three produced critically acclaimed content such as *Fleabag* and *Normal People*, concerns arose regarding audience reach, brand visibility, and the erosion of shared cultural experiences traditionally associated with linear broadcasting (Lotz, 2017; Johnson,

2023). Recognising the limitations of an online-only model, the BBC reinstated BBC Three as a linear channel in 2022. This decision indicated that digital-only strategies were insufficient to meet public service objectives of accessibility, visibility, and democratic engagement among 16-34 year olds (BBC Public Interest Submission, 2021).

Submissions to the Public Interest Test Consultation² from two media scholars were critical of the online-only move. The first, submitted by Hardy (2021), argued that governmental and commercial media pressure, along with budget cuts, were responsible for the initial decision. Although no submission document is available for the second scholar, Barwise (2021) argued that the BBC interpreted both of their critiques as strong support for BBC Three's return to linear broadcast (BBC, Public Interest Submission, 2021: 12-13).

A parallel restructuring occurred in Germany, where ARD and ZDF closed their niche channels, ZDFkultur and EinsPlus, to consolidate resources towards a new digital-first youth service called funk (Broadband TV News, 2016). Funk, launched in 2016 with 40 channels and has grown to 60 after one year (Media Perspektiven, 2021). It has been designed as a platform-native brand distributing original short-form content through YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok (Sehl, 2022). Funk's commissioning and production model prioritises digital storytelling and participatory audience feedback over linear television. This takes place amid a policy shift that impels format executives to place social media at the centre of the network's content, while continuing to uphold its public responsibilities (Stollfuß, 2019: 516-517). However, the broader debate within broadcasters extends far beyond the notion that young audiences no longer watch television. Instead, I argue that three key arguments underpin these shifts. First, the repositioning of BBC Three and the creation of funk can be seen as strategic responses to the changing media ecology. While younger audiences have shifted towards mobile, on-demand, and social media consumption, they have not abandoned long-form or public interest content (Lotz, 2017; Van Dijck et al., 2018). Both the BBC and ARD/ZDF recognised the need to adapt distribution strategies without relinquishing the core values of public service broadcasting (Steemers, 2019; Hardy, 2022). Second, economic and institutional pressures were significant drivers of these transformations. As Hardy (2019) notes, BBC Three's closure as a linear channel responded not only to audience shifts but also to broader austerity measures and ongoing debates around the BBC's licence fee funding. Similarly, the German decision to shut down ZDFkultur and

² The Public Interest Test Consultation is a regulatory review used by Ofcom to assess whether a proposed media service or merger serves the public interest. It examines effects on competition, plurality, and audience benefit. (Ofcom, 2021)

ARD EinsPlus³ was motivated by political scrutiny and the need for public broadcasters to demonstrate financial efficiency (Mikos, 2022; Hölig and Hasebrink, 2022).

Third, there are important cultural and democratic implications. Scholars argue that reducing public service content to fragmented, platform-dependent spaces risks undermining broadcasters' role as shared cultural forums fostering societal cohesion (Sujon, 2021; Donders, 2021). Public service media have historically provided spaces for collective identity and public deliberation; shifting entirely to algorithmically governed digital spaces could weaken this vital democratic function (Johnson, 2023; Meikle, 2022). Hence, concerns regarding platform dependency and data sovereignty have become increasingly central to contemporary media scholarship. The reliance of funk on commercial giants such as YouTube and TikTok, alongside BBC Three's dependence on algorithmic discovery both within and beyond the BBC iPlayer, raises fundamental questions about the control of cultural visibility and editorial independence (Van Dijck et al., 2018). This relationship is inherently shaped by what Cotter (2023: 1227) defines as 'epistemic authority'. Her concept articulates how platforms set the conditions under which knowledge about algorithms is constructed and legitimised. Rather than offering transparent insight into algorithmic systems, platforms actively structure the terms of understanding by selectively disclosing information. As a result, creators' perceptions of visibility are mediated through platform-sanctioned metrics and explanations. Epistemic authority thus can be understood as a subtle yet powerful mechanism of governance. It shapes how creators learn to interpret platform feedback while limiting their capacity to assess algorithmic decision-making independently. Synthesising insights from platform studies and television production scholarship, I argue that visibility is increasingly mediated through platform-defined metrics. These metrics establish the dominant institutional logics that public service broadcasters aim to internalise to maintain organisational legitimacy within competitive digital environments. The cases of BBC Three and funk demonstrate how major shifts in production, distribution, and audience engagement are reshaping the future of public service media. Their trajectories highlight the need to balance strategic innovation with a continued commitment to the democratic and cultural missions of public broadcasting.

³ ARD EinsPlus was a German digital television channel operated by SWR on behalf of ARD, broadcasting from 2005 to 2016 with a focus on youth-oriented information, service, and culture programmes before being discontinued. *Source:* ARD (2016) *EinsPlus wird eingestellt – Neues Angebot für junge Zielgruppen geplant*

2.4 The Narrative of FAST Channels: Negotiating Broadcast and Platform Logics

Narratives, as Hansen and Machin (2013: 152) argue, ‘reveal the fundamental values of that particular society at that particular time’. In this study, narratives are examined not as static representations but as dynamic processes embedded in television production cultures. The analysis seeks to uncover how broadcasters develop formats through specific organisational strategies and creative practices, reflecting and negotiating competing perspectives within the production field. In doing so, the study contributes to a critical understanding of contemporary challenges in format development, particularly the ways in which broadcasting organisations incorporate emerging narratives into their workflows. These narratives are shaped not only by creative methods but also by broader market transformations, as exemplified by the rise of Free Ad-Supported Streaming Television (FAST) as a novel distribution and monetisation model. This concept can be considered to ‘remediate existing industrial and cultural/consumptive practices’ (van Esler, 2025: 13), as FAST encompasses both linear and on-demand. There are several narratives around the acronyms VOD, SVOD, and AVOD, as demonstrated in Section 7.1. Chalaby (2024: 5) argues that these models should not be understood merely as distinct technological formats but as differentiated monetisation logics that underpin the structural transformation of the television industry. In his analysis of the streaming economy, he situates FAST within AVOD, highlighting how platformisation reorganises value capture and power asymmetries across national and transnational markets. FAST was introduced in the U.S. and expanded to almost 1.200 channels in early 2025 (see Figure 2). Even if the market dominance remains in its root market, it also gains more recognition in Europe, especially in the UK and Germany.

Figure 2: Territories with the Highest FAST Channel Counts



Source: Gracenote4 Global Video Data (2025)

⁴ Gracenote is a subsidiary of Nielsen (now Nielsen IQ / Nielsen Media), acquired in 2017, and operates as part of Nielsen's global media data and measurement division (Nielsen, 2017).

In Europe, next to other US FAST channels such as Pluto TV (Paramount-owned), Samsung TV Plus, Tubi (Fox-owned), and The Roku Channel, Rakuten TV, ITVX, M6+, Fremantle, and BBC Studios are among the national players (Redge Media, 2025). Unlike conventional TV, FAST channels utilise the internet to offer viewing flexibility across various devices, including smartphones, tablets, and smart televisions, serving as a bridge between linear TV and streaming (van Esler: 2025: 13). It can be viewed as an alternative for SVOD, which is based on subscription. The curated nature of channels under this model allows broadcasters to enhance brand awareness in a digital landscape as the core is to 'collect, curate, and distribute television programming' (Lotz, 2017: 8). In turn, it is another shift for the 'power-structures and institutional relationships that have been persistent for decades' (Evens and Donders 2018: 3). While FAST channels are not a primary focus of this study, they are discussed in Section 8.2, as they are receiving increasing attention from both industry practitioners and scholars and have implications for distribution and production strategies.

2.5 Conclusion: Reframing the Study of Format Development and Production Fields

In this chapter, I have argued for the need to examine format development through a holistic, multi-scalar perspective that draws on critical political economy (CPE), cultural studies, and field theory. This approach situates production not only as a set of creative practices but also as an institutional process embedded within organisational and market structures. In developing this multi-dimensional approach, I reviewed how the literature on television production has evolved, tracing debates on international format trade and the growing reliance on data in development processes. Scholarship on media production has also yielded valuable insights into transnational commissioning and sustainable television production (Doyle, 2019: 2). While these accounts have advanced their understanding of global dynamics, they have paid less attention to the processes through which formats are developed for national audiences within public service television. This thesis responds to this gap by focusing on format development as a nationally situated practice, embedded in institutional logics, regulatory frameworks, and culturally specific audience relationships. It underscores that content created for platforms such as BBC Three and funk is not primarily intended for international sale or adaptation, but rather reflects strategic attempts to reach domestic publics and test new forms of narrative and engagement.

In the next chapter, I turn to the second theoretical foundation of this research: the scholarly literature on audience measurement and datafication. This includes an examination of how cross-platform metrics are constructed, how they inform organisational strategies, and how they are integrated into creative and strategic decision-making processes. To account for the rise of metric culture in television, I situate these developments within the wider framework of audience studies and datafication. In their entirety, Chapter 2 and 3 provide the conceptual scaffolding for analysing the entanglement of production practices, professional identities, and the increasing centrality of audience data in the development of television formats.

Chapter 3: The Evolution from Measurement to Meaning: Datafication, Metrics, and Audience Conceptions

3.0 Introduction

This chapter situates contemporary debates on audience measurement within a longer tradition of scholarly inquiry that has examined how audiences are defined within the UK and Germany. It opens with a historical account of audience measurement, tracing its development from early ratings systems to the current phase of digital metrics. It then introduces the notion of audience currency, extending this discussion to digital and cross-currency systems and their implications for value formation and control. Rather than presenting a neutral technical progression, the account highlights how measurement practices have been shaped by institutional interests, regulatory pressures, and commercial imperatives. By foregrounding these dynamics, the chapter illustrates how digital measurement formalisation both extends linear ratings logics and contributes to the emergence of cross-media logics since the 2010s.

Audience literature illustrates that the conceptualisation of 'audience currency' is often negotiated through the competing lenses of technological transformation and the institutional construction of audiences for commercial exchange (Napoli, 2011; Meehan, 2005). Through a technological lens, the emergence of digital platforms and the associated 'process of audience evolution' calls for a re-evaluation of how these currencies are defined (Napoli, 2011: 15). While the term refers to a framework in which attention is translated into measurable indicators, such practices are often deeply embedded within specific media buying and selling structures (Napoli, 2011: 113). Following a political economy framework, Meehan (2005: 32) contends that audience ratings are less a reflection of public taste and more a manufactured commodity produced for market exchange.

In linear television, audience currencies have traditionally been stabilised through ratings systems based on panel measurement (Bermejo, 2009: 143-144). Metrics such as reach, share, and average audience have become institutionalised reference points that inform both commercial and editorial decisions. Scholars have argued that these measurements may not simply reflect audiences but participate in constructing them as objects of economic value, particularly within advertising-funded media systems (Meehan, 2005). As a result, ratings operate not only as technical tools but also as symbolic indicators that carry authority within organisational hierarchies. The expansion of digital and platform-based distribution has complicated this measurement landscape. Audience currencies now encompass a range of platform-specific metrics, including views, watch time, engagement, and retention. These

measures are often produced through proprietary systems and are not directly comparable across platforms. Consequently, organisations increasingly work with multiple forms of audience metrics, each associated with different operational goals and professional domains. This has contributed to a situation in which no single metric holds universal legitimacy, although linear ratings often continue to retain prominence in senior decision-making contexts.

From a critical perspective, audience currency systems can be understood as socio-technical arrangements shaped by institutional priorities and methodological choices. As Napoli (2011) notes, the increasing availability of granular audience data does not automatically resolve questions of audience value, but instead introduces new forms of negotiation over which metrics matter, for whom, and in which contexts. In this sense, audience currencies remain contingent rather than fixed, and their influence depends on how they are interpreted and mobilised within specific organisational settings. More broadly, scholars have cautioned that the growing emphasis on behavioural metrics risks privileging forms of visibility that are readily measurable, while marginalising dimensions of cultural or public value that are less easily captured through data (Zuboff, 2019). This does not imply a uniform or inevitable outcome, but it highlights the need to treat audience currencies as historically situated and politically inflected constructs, rather than neutral representations of audience activity. Following the platformisation, new forms of datafication that capture continuous behavioural traces were introduced, and TV ratings, as a mirror of public taste, were increasingly criticised (Ang, 1991; McChesney, 2000; Meehan, 2005; Andrejevic, 2013a; Kitchin, 2014). While Meehan (2005: 118) argued that ‘the ratings industry does not measure audiences; it constructs them’, a significant body of scholarship on data and algorithms has since emerged, much of which has focused primarily on journalism (boyd and Crawford, 2012; Kitchin, 2014; Zuboff, 2019; Couldry and Mejias, 2019). Yet, as Johnson (2019: 134) reminds us, data and algorithms are also important to ‘understand the power of television as a medium in the internet era’. This underscores how both metrics and algorithms have become central to commissioning and scheduling decisions across broadcasters and platforms.

Having outlined these historical foundations, the chapter reviews the key authors, findings, and debates in the literature on datafication and audience measurement, before identifying key gaps. In particular, it highlights the limited attention paid to television in comparison to social media, the lack of comparative studies across territories with differing regulatory and technological infrastructures, and the scarcity of accounts that show how measurement systems are translated into everyday industry practice. By foregrounding these issues, the

chapter sets out the conceptual terrain for analysing how data and measurement shape contemporary television production in the platform era.

3.1 The Four Phases of Audience Measurement from the 1950s to 2022

To understand the contemporary role of audience data, it is first necessary to address the conceptual gaps that persist within the existing scholarship. Much of this research remains nationally bounded, which limits robust comparative analysis (Reineck et al., 2017; Iwabuchi, 2018), with many studies focusing predominantly on Anglophone contexts such as the UK and the US (Waisbord, 2013; Hesmondhalgh, 2021). This focus persists despite the existence of established comparative media systems frameworks (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Brüggemann et al., 2014). Furthermore, the interplay between production cultures, format development, and audience data attracts growing scholarly attention such as from Steemers (2016), Napoli (2011, 2019), and Poell et al. (2022). In contrast, empirical studies on the lived experiences of audiences and media professionals remain scarce (Livingstone, 2018: 176; Kennedy, 2018; Hill, 2019). This includes critical inquiries into how data are constructed and operationalised during the development process (Gillespie, 2014; Couldry and Mejias, 2019; Beer, 2019). To address these parallel gaps, this thesis synthesises the review of television production (see Chapter 2) with a historicised analysis of audience and data research paradigms in this chapter. To establish the necessary foundation for this analysis, this section introduces a four-phase (though overlapping) model of audience measurement (see Table 3-6). This relates to Livingstone (2018: 172) who argues that the framing of audiences should be understood in 'relation to their times'. The first two stages, *Analogue Measurement Establishment* and *Analogue Measurement Consolidation*, trace the rise of institutionalised sampling of survey-based metrics. This is followed by *Digital Measurement Emergence*, a period of methodological stress caused by platform fragmentation, and finally *Digital Measurement Formalisation*, which represents current attempts to synthesise data into unified cross-media metrics.

Table 3-6: Audience Measurement Phases

Phase	Time Period	Key Characteristics
1. Analogue Measurement Establishment	1950s – mid-1960s	- Survey-based audience estimation - Television as public service infrastructure - Post-war nation-building context
2. Analogue Measurement Consolidation	mid-1960s – early 1990s	- Introduction of electronic metering - Institutionalisation of panel systems (BARB, AGF) - Audience data central to commercial/public service planning
3. Digital Measurement Emergence	mid-1990s – 2009	- Multichannel and platform fragmentation - Emergence of digital and time-shifted viewing - Methodological stress on established legacy systems
4. Digital Measurement Formalisation (cross-media emergence)	2010 – 2022	- Rise of big data and platform dominance - Cross-media integration efforts - Attempts to establish unified audience value metrics

Sources: Bourdon, J. and Méadel, C. (eds) (2014); Webster et al. (2014)

Whilst the four phases primarily reference developments in the UK and Germany, many European territories have followed a similar trajectory. As demonstrated in Table 3-6, the first phase, *Analogue Measurement Establishment* (1950s–mid–1960s), marks the emergence of television as a mass medium and the foundational adoption of audience measurement through survey-based methods. These early techniques reflected broader cultural narratives of post-war reconstruction and public service ideals. The second phase, *Analogue Measurement Consolidation* (mid-1960s–early 1990s), captures the transition to electronic metering and the institutionalisation of panel-based systems such as the Broadcasters’ Audience Research Board (BARB) and Arbeitsgemeinschaft

Fernsehforschung (AGF). Audience data became central to commercial and public service media strategies (Meehan, 1984, 2005). The third phase, *Digital Measurement Emergence* (mid-1990s–2009), addresses the fragmentation triggered by multichannel expansion, the rise of digital platforms, and the introduction of PVRs. Traditional methods became insufficient, prompting early methodological innovation. The fourth phase, *Digital Measurement Formalisation* (2010–2022), is defined by the establishment of a media environment dominated by digital platforms and big data analytics. A key characteristic of this period is the drive towards integrated cross-media measurement, an effort to create a unified system of value across divergent platforms. The resulting confluence of these industrial, regulatory, and technological challenges provides the principal historical context for this thesis. Within the key developments of each phase, this review consciously seeks to integrate and delineate multiple voices and perspectives. It also illustrates industry practices – the 'how' and 'what' of measurement technologies and methodologies employed by organisations like BARB, AGF, Nielsen, GfK, broadcasters, and platforms. Further, it analyses industry understandings – how these practices informed the ways audiences were conceptualised, segmented, and valued, particularly in relation to broadcast markets or public service justifications. This aims to outline viewing behaviours, contextualise industry shifts, and introduce relevant theoretical frameworks (e.g., engagement, flow). Crucially, it also engages with critical scholarship – CPE and cultural studies in alignment with television production studies, organisational sociology, and audience and critical data studies. Altogether, this allows for an interrogation of the underlying power structures, biases, and limitations.

This thesis focuses on audience measurement and its mediatisation. As this study demonstrates, metrics remain central to broadcasters' justification of content decisions and resource allocation (see Chapter 8). Understanding the evolution of measurement practices is therefore essential. This includes how such practices acquire meaning through media discourse, institutional routines, and technological infrastructures. The next sections expand on the four phases of audience measurement during the different decades.

Phase 1: Analogue Measurement Establishment – The Emergence of the Dual System (approx. 1950s – mid-1960s)

The years following the Second World War marked the definitive emergence of television as a transformative mass medium across Western Europe. It gradually supplanted radio as the dominant source of domestic entertainment and information (Briggs, 1995: 14). In the UK, the BBC, which had pioneered television broadcasts before the war, resumed and rapidly

expanded its service, operating under a public service monopoly until 1955 (Crisell, 2006: 11). The passage of the Television Act 1954 fundamentally restructured this landscape by ending the BBC's 'great monopoly' and introducing a 'life-and-death' competition for audiences (Briggs, 1995: 5). Central to this shift was the establishment of the Independent Television Authority (ITA).⁵ According to Sendall (1982: 38), the legislation deliberately avoided a single national commercial rival in favour of a 'plural' system of regional contractors. This decentralised structure was a calculated attempt to prevent a 'London-centric' commercial monopoly, ensuring that the burgeoning commercial sector remained locally rooted. The resulting competitive environment proved more lucrative than anticipated, eventually creating a 'licence to print money' for the regional contractors through advertiser funding (Sendall, 1982: 102). However, this commercial success was strictly moderated by the ITA's mandate for 'balanced programming', which ensured that competition did not result in a decline in standards (Sendall, 1982: 312). Consequently, the British broadcasting landscape evolved into a 'dual system', where public and commercial services functioned as a regulated duopoly. During the 1960s and 1970s, the British broadcasting duopoly consolidated its position as coverage reached 90 per cent saturation by 1964, resulting in high-quality programming produced by both the BBC and ITV despite a period of national economic decline (Potschka, 2012: 83-84).

In Germany, the post-war broadcasting structure was deliberately decentralised, reflecting Allied policy aimed at preventing the concentration of media power (Humphreys, 1994: 24). While the UK system remained more London-centric, the German model of 'cooperative federalism' ensured that cultural and broadcasting authority remained with the individual *Länder* (states) rather than the federal government (Potschka, 2012: 165). This regional autonomy led to the formation of the ARD consortium in 1950, which functioned as a network of independent regional broadcasters. Humphreys (1994: 24) argued that this structure was not merely an administrative choice but a 'security measure' against totalitarianism. Subsequently, the second national channel (ZDF) was established in 1961 (Potschka, 2012: 170). This approach required a complex federal treaty to ensure it did not infringe upon the regional sovereignty that defined the German public sphere (Meyen, 2009:

⁵ The Independent Television Authority (ITA) was the UK regulatory body established by the Television Act 1954. It was succeeded by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) in 1972 and the ITC in 1990, before duties were transferred to Ofcom in 2003. Its primary mandate was to license regional franchises and ensure commercial broadcasting met public service requirements (Ofcom, 2023). Available at: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/our-website/regulator-archives>.

325). During this initial phase, the primary industrial focus in both the UK and Germany was the expansion of transmission infrastructure. Beyond technical reach, broadcasters were tasked with the cultural challenge of establishing regular programming schedules to fill the expanding hours of available airtime (Crisell, 2006: 14). This era marked the transition of television from an experimental medium into a structured, daily domestic utility. Audience measurement, in this nascent period, was rudimentary and largely exploratory, frequently adapting techniques directly from established practices in radio research (Buzzard, 2012: 8). The principal objective initially was basic quantification: to gain an understanding of the size and geographical reach of the viewing audience for these new, technologically advanced, and politically significant services (Burns, 1977). In the UK, the BBC's Listener Research Department (later Audience Research Department) initially depended heavily on large-scale postal surveys soliciting information about listening and viewing habits (Burns, 1977: 125). As part of a consistent audience panel, the BBC sent out postal questionnaires from the 1950s to the late 1970s that functioned as daily diaries, often referred to as logs, in which participants recorded their viewing practices (Silvey, 1974: 79-80). Historically, this methodology originated with US radio measurement in the 1920s as a means of quantifying listenership (Webster et al., 2014: 27).

The advent of ITV in 1955 created a competitor to the BBC (Potschka, 2012: 15) and an immediate commercial requirement for more regular, systematic, and seemingly objective audience data. There was a need for a measure that would be acceptable to advertisers as a basis for buying and selling airtime (Sendall, 1982: 311). Consequently, the Independent Television Authority (ITA) and the ITV programme companies jointly commissioned research, leading to the establishment of Television Audience Measurement Ltd (TAM) in 1956 (Twyman, 1998: 83-84). TAM initially employed a dual methodology: panels of households equipped with an audimeter (the 'Tammeter') attached to the television set to record usage times without recording individual data (Vollberg, 2014: 104). These were supplemented by viewer diaries (the 'Tamlog') kept by the same or parallel panels to identify who within the household was watching which programmes (Twyman, 1998; Buzzard, 2012). Even these early attempts at generating 'ratings' were acknowledged to be facing challenges related to achieving truly representative population samples for panels. It incorporated the inherent subjectivity and potential inaccuracies of diary self-reporting, and the persistent difficulty of capturing viewing that occurred outside the home (Ang, 1991: 53-54).

From both an industry standpoint and within early academic media studies during this foundational period, the television audience was predominantly conceptualised through the theoretical lens of the 'mass audience' (McQuail, 2010: 400). Early mass audience theories

therefore tended to conceptualise the audience as a large, relatively undifferentiated, and anonymous collective, positioned primarily as passive recipients of broadcast messages that were assumed to exert uniform effects across the population (McQuail, 2010: 400).

For public service broadcasters such as the BBC and the ARD constituents, this notion of the 'mass' symbolised the national public they were explicitly mandated to serve. The table below offers a comparative overview of the public service broadcasting remits of ARD (Germany) and the BBC (UK), highlighting key structural and regulatory characteristics.

Table 3-7: Public Service Remit Comparison: ARD (Germany) vs BBC (UK)

Aspect	ARD (Germany)	BBC (UK)
Public Service Mission	Mandated to inform, educate, and entertain. Example: Tagesschau (news), educational programmes, family entertainment.	Charter obligation to inform, educate, and entertain. Example: BBC News, BBC Bitesize, Strictly Come Dancing.
Legal Basis	Medienstaatsvertrag and Basic Law (Art. 5). Example: ARD's remit is legally protected as a non-commercial public service.	Royal Charter and Framework Agreement; regulated by Ofcom. Example: Charter defines independence and public purposes.
Structure	Decentralised consortium of regional broadcasters (e.g. BR, WDR, NDR) who all produce regional and national programmes. Example: NDR produces regional focused programmes but also the prime-time news show <i>Tagesschau</i> .	Centrally managed corporation. Example: BBC Board oversees UK-wide strategy and content delivery.
Editorial Independence	Guaranteed by state broadcasting councils with civil society representation. Example: Rundfunkräte review editorial output.	Guaranteed by Charter and monitored by Ofcom. Example: Ofcom enforces impartiality in news and political content.
Public Accountability	Accountable to Länder-level media councils. Example: Regional audiences can file complaints via local governance structures.	Accountable to BBC Board and Parliament. Example: Subject to public consultation, annual reports, and regulatory audits.

Source: Medienstaatsvertrag – Media State Treaty (2020); BBC Royal Charter (2022)

This public service mandate in UK and Germany entailed providing a diverse range of programming aimed at fulfilling objectives such as informing, educating, and entertaining (Scannell, 1991; Hoffmann-Riem, 1996; Tracey, 1998).

The political economy of communication perspective emphasises how the specific forms of audience measurement adopted (e.g., counting households reached via meters, estimating broad demographics via diaries) were not neutral technical procedures. They were rather 'social constructions of media audiences' (Napoli, 2011: 3) shaped by, and serving, the economic interests of the commercial broadcasting system or the institutional legitimisation

requirements of the public service system (Meehan, 1993, 2005). Consequently, production and commissioning decisions during this era were demonstrably less directly influenced by detailed audience data. Any data was considered frequently sparse, delivered with significant time lags, and often viewed with scepticism by creative personnel (Burns, 1977; Sendall, 1982). More profoundly, audience data was shaped by powerful intermediary institutions such as Nielsen, whose measurement frameworks exerted significant influence over how audiences were constructed and categorised.

Phase 2: Analogue Measurement Consolidation (approx. mid-1960s – early 1990s)

This extended period, roughly spanning from the late 1960s through the 1980s and into the early 1990s, it represents the consolidation phase of analogue broadcast television. During this time, the medium achieved near-universal household penetration and profound cultural centrality in both the United Kingdom and Germany (Meyen, 2009). It was characterised by significant technological advancements in the methods of audience measurement, leading to the consolidation of industry-standard systems capable of providing reliable, quantitative data on viewing habits (Buzzard, 2012). Consequently, these audience metrics became deeply integrated into the economic calculations and operational logics governing the broadcasting industry (Napoli, 2011; 2021). This era was marked by the dominance of emerging quantitative metrics. However, this period also witnessed the flourishing of critical academic theories where media studies started to contribute to an understanding of new power shifts that encompass audiences and their real-world contexts (Livingstone, 2018: 171). While early academic contributions to audience measurement may seem dated today, they continue to offer valuable insights and foundational perspectives within the field. The most significant historic publications are the *Nationwide Audience Study* (Morley and Brunson, 1980), the *Watching Dallas* Study (Ang, 1985), Corner's overview of *New Audience Studies* (1991), Spigel's *Make Room for TV* (1992), Silverstone's (1994) *Television and Everyday Life*, Livingstone and Lunt (1994) and some research of Nightingale (1996). These examples demonstrate a dominant interest in television research in the 1980s and 1990s.

The pivotal technological shift in audience measurement from an industry perspective was the successful development and large-scale implementation of electronic metering systems (Kent, 2011). This advancement was further enhanced by the continuous refinement of these systems and the integration of mobile interaction technologies (Miller et al., 2017). Electronic devices, attached to television sets in statistically representative households, automatically recorded viewing times and channels. This method reduced recall bias and

reporting inaccuracies found in earlier survey-based approaches (Webster, Phalen and Lichty, 2006). A crucial further development was the introduction and widespread adoption of the ‘people meter’ system, which typically included a supplementary handset device requiring individuals present in the room to register their presence by logging in when they began watching and logging out when they stopped. This innovation allowed for the collection of person-level viewing data (identifying who was watching) rather than merely recording household-level set tuning data (Buzzard, 2012; Napoli, 2011).

In Germany, a broadly similar trajectory unfolded, albeit influenced by its distinct federal structure and later introduction of large-scale commercial television. From the mid-1970s onwards, increasingly sophisticated data was provided primarily for the public broadcasters and the advertising industry (Hasebrink and Popp, 2015; Meyen, 2009). Following the political decision to liberalise the German broadcasting landscape and the subsequent launch of major private commercial channels such as RTL plus (later RTL) and Sat.1 starting in 1984, the competitive pressures increased. A tender for measurement was won by the market research institute Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung (GfK), which developed and operated a substantial television meter panel from the mid-1980s onwards (Vollberg, 2014: 107). In 1988, the AGF was established through the initiative of a TV research group of ARD and ZDF which included two commercial broadcasters: RTL and Sat.1 (Vollberg, 2014: 107). Similar to BARB, AGF was established as a Joint Industry Committee, bringing together the public service broadcasters and the major commercial broadcasters. Simultaneously, advertising industry associations and other commercial broadcasters joined the AGF. Like its UK counterpart, the AGF/GfK system provided the essential audience ‘currency’ underpinning the functioning of the German television advertising market. This aligns with Napoli’s (2011: 149) contention that a currency functions effectively only when it is collectively accepted as the ‘coin of exchange’. The widespread availability of this seemingly reliable, standardised, quantitative audience data, profoundly impacted the television industry’s structure, economic basis, and routine practices (Webster, Phalen and Lichty, 2014: 23–24). Considering the perspective of industry actors, BARB and AGF ratings became the indispensable currency for the buying and selling of advertising airtime, audience size, and increasingly, the specific demographic composition of that audience.

Phase Three: Digital Measurement Emergence (approx. mid-1990s–2009)

Phase Three can be understood as a period in which digital measurement practices began to emerge between the mid-1990s and 2009, gradually reshaping how audiences were quantified and understood. Balnaves and O’Regan (2011: 4) refer to the period from the

1990s as 'The Contemporary Moment', during which measurement technology expanded to include desktop tracking and the creation of audience databases. They associate this contemporary moment with the erosion of the concept of a mass audience. This is illustrated by the peak prime-time viewing figures in the US, when ABC, CBS, and NBC together accounted for 93 per cent of the audience. By 1996, this number had dropped to 53 per cent due to new market entrants such as United Paramount Network (UPN), Warner Bros. (WB), and Fox (Balnaves and O'Regan, 2011: 146). Academic research often referred to technical and methodological measurement approaches (Bourdon and Méadel, 2011: 792), the impact of audience fragmentation on measurement systems (Napoli, 2008, 2012; Webster, 2012), and the monopolistic structure of audience measurement (Taneja, 2013: 204). From an industry perspective, the technical and methodological measurement approaches developed by BARB and AGF may be understood as significant institutional responses to the challenge of capturing non-linear viewing, particularly as the widespread adoption of Personal Video Recorders (PVRs) began to alter established viewing practices. As a result, the conventional approach of measuring live television viewing became insufficient as audiences increasingly engaged in time-shifted viewing. BARB responded by integrating playback data into its ratings, resulting in the creation of 'consolidated' ratings that included viewing within seven days of the original broadcast – commonly referred to as 'Live +7'⁶ (BARB, 2011, 2024). This innovation became the standard metric for assessing programme performance in an age of delayed consumption. Nonetheless, viewing that occurred beyond the seven-day window or of recordings made long beforehand continued to pose considerable measurement issues.

The rise of online video and the initial iterations of Broadcaster Video on Demand (BVOD) services presented even more complex measurement difficulties. Traditional panel meters affixed to television sets were incapable of capturing viewing behaviours occurring on computers, tablets, or mobile devices. Early efforts to address this gap included supplementary surveys designed to elicit self-reported online viewing patterns, as well as experimental approaches involving software-based metering on panel members' devices (BARB, 2011). These methods, however, appeared resource-intensive, technically complex, and often produced data that was not easily comparable with traditional television metrics (Napoli, 2011, 2019). As a result, the ambition to develop a reliable measure of 'total'

⁶ 'Live +7' is a viewing metric used by BARB (Broadcasters' Audience Research Board) that combines audiences who watched a programme live with those who viewed it via recorded playback within seven days of its original broadcast, providing a more accurate measure of total TV consumption (BARB, 2024).

audience reach across platforms has remained a continuing methodological challenge rather than a resolved objective.

The broader process of digitalisation signalled a period of ongoing change in how television audiences were conceptualised and measured. The growing prominence of digital platforms and on-demand viewing increasingly placed traditional measurement systems, such as those operated by Nielsen, BARB, and AGF, under scrutiny. These systems were initially designed to capture linear, scheduled viewing, yet over time it became apparent that 'exposure-based systems of audience measurement are really only capturing the tip of the iceberg', as Napoli (2011: 84–85) observed. This recognition contributed to discussions about the need for more comprehensive and integrated measurement frameworks. As viewing practices diversified, audiences appeared to engage with content across multiple platforms and devices in more fragmented ways, further complicating the ability of existing ratings systems to account for the full range of audience behaviour.

Referring to data from the Audience Project (2019), Budzinski et al. (2021: 116) note that Netflix holds a leading position among the most widely used streaming and download services in the US, the UK, Germany, and other European countries. Hence, it can be argued that achieving a comprehensive overview of audience viewership is highly challenging as it represents only one example of phenomena that remained outside official audience measurement systems at the time of writing. Lotz (2021: 12) argues that such changes reflect a deeper tension, a conflict between established legacy broadcast structures and platform-driven models of value. This demonstrates the transition into an era where the audience is not a collective body to be measured, but a 'series of data points to be harvested, often in ways that remain invisible to the public and to regulators' (Napoli, 2022: 154).

Within the television industry, audience measurement challenges occurred alongside strategic adaptations. Major broadcasters in the UK and Germany pursued dual strategies. With a continued focus on investing in high-budget, broad-appeal programming for their flagship channels (BBC One, ITV1, ARD, ZDF, RTL, Sat.1) which remained primarily judged by established consolidated BARB and AGF ratings (BARB, 2021; AGF Videoforschung, 2022). Simultaneously, broadcasters launched or acquired portfolios of digital niche channels (e.g., BBC Three/BBC Four, ITV2/ITV3/ITV4, various Sky channels in the UK; thematic channels from ProSiebenSat.1 or RTL Group in Germany). Their aim was to target specific demographics and capture fragmented audiences in order to compete with SVODs for viewer attention (D'Arma et al., 2021: 685). This also led to more attempts to foster

‘engagement’ beyond passive viewing, providing producers with a direct, albeit limited and often commercially skewed, measure of audience involvement (Esser, 2016: 22).

Phase 4: Digital Measurement Formalisation (approx. 2010 – present)

Phase Four reflects a methodological realignment in audience measurement, as the rise of datafication and platformisation reoriented how the industry defines and measures audiences across platforms. Historically, traditional ratings did not merely measure audience size and composition; they constructed audiences through measurement practices shaped by technologies and behavioural patterns (Bermejo, 2009: 138). These practices broadened from around 2010 onwards, as digital platforms and data-driven systems became increasingly central to the distribution and consumption of audiovisual content (Arsenault, 2014: 442). This period is associated with the rise of on-demand viewing and algorithmic recommendation systems, which contributed to what Napoli (2011: 25; 2023: 31) conceptualises as an ‘audience evolution’, a process through which industry actors continually redefine the audience in response to technological and institutional change.

Broadcasters have responded in two main ways. First, some have invested in internal data systems to build first-party audience insights (Sørensen, 2023). Second, others have partnered with analytics providers such as Comscore to access real-time and cross-platform data. However, as Webster (2016: 82) observes, these systems often fail to account for ‘media repertoires’, leaving the audience’s cross-platform journey ‘invisible to the public and to regulators’. These shifts appear to have encouraged new forms of data-led decision-making, although several scholars have also expressed reservations about their broader implications. For instance, Beer (2021) warns that the rise of algorithmic visibility may produce new forms of hierarchy and exclusion. Hesmondhalgh and Meier (2022) argue that creative decisions are increasingly shaped by opaque performance metrics. These ‘shadow metrics’ often lack transparency and are difficult to compare across platforms. In response, measurement bodies have begun to adapt as their customers demanded cross-platform data. The ‘Total Video’ approach in Germany (AGF, 2024) and cross-media initiatives in the UK aim to maintain public accountability in a fragmented media landscape. However, Nielsen in the United States launched its first ‘Total Audience Measurement’ tool in 2016 to combine linear, DVR, and VOD viewing across multiple devices (Johnson, 2019: 139). Lordache et al. (2025: 61) note that Public Service Media (PSM) organisations are currently required to negotiate multifaceted tensions, as they are challenged to implement responsive audience measurement frameworks whilst simultaneously upholding core public values and maintaining ethical practices. This institutional precariousness reflects a broader struggle to

reconcile the contemporary demand for granular, platform-centric data with the traditional mandates of transparency and public accountability. Consequently, I argue that the adoption of such frameworks should be carefully calibrated to avoid drifting into the purely extractive logics of the private sector. Viewed through this lens, such practices suggest a shift where data collection is no longer strictly tethered to user utility, but instead facilitates the creation of predictive models. As Zuboff (2019: 81) posits, this 'behavioural surplus' arguably transforms the audience from active participants into a source of 'raw material', repurposed for extraction.

The expansion of global Video on Demand (VOD) platforms marked a further transformation in the media landscape (Thurman et al., 2023). The entry and subsequent dominance of services such as Netflix (launched in the UK in 2012 and in Germany in 2014), Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, Apple TV+, and others disrupted established broadcasting models and profoundly altered viewer habits. Concurrently, the ubiquity of global social media platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, reinforced the centrality of digital video as a dominant mode of media engagement (Napoli, 2019). Broadcaster Video-on-Demand (BVOD) platforms appeared to undergo a phase of significant consolidation throughout this timeframe, as broadcasters sought to reconfigure their digital presence. Initially designed as basic catch-up services, platforms such as BBC iPlayer, ITV Hub/ITVX, and All 4 in the UK, alongside ARD/ZDF Mediatheken and Joyn in Germany (a joint venture between ProSiebenSat.1 and Discovery), evolved into comprehensive digital ecosystems. These services now offer extensive content archives alongside platform-exclusive programming, becoming critical elements of contemporary viewing behaviour (Lordache et al., 2025: 62). Against this backdrop, a broader sector-wide shift towards data-driven operations has become increasingly apparent. Across global streaming platforms as well as traditional broadcasters and production companies, media organisations have sought to mobilise extensive forms of user data to inform strategic decision-making. These practices underpin efforts to optimise content development, refine advertising strategies, and tailor user experiences, a process examined in greater detail in Chapter 8.

3.2 Evolving Audience Conceptions

The preceding historical overview in Section 3.1 detailed a significant technological and methodological progression across four distinct phases of audience measurement. Despite these shifts, certain core theoretical frameworks demonstrated enduring relevance. Fundamental questions of power consistently shaped audience conceptualisation within each period. Specifically, these involved who defined the audience and for what institutional

objectives. The 'audience' itself was therefore always a socially constructed entity, reflecting the prevailing measurement paradigms discussed. This construction highlighted an inherent, evolving tension: the industry demanded quantifiable, often commodified, metrics, while academic inquiry pursued a more nuanced understanding of audience agency and interpretation. This dynamic underscores the continuous interplay of technology, economics, and scholarly thought in defining how the television audience was known.

Audience Research as a Distinct Field

Audience research faces an epistemological challenge because it draws on diverse academic traditions and sub-disciplines, including marketing, cultural studies, and media studies (Walmsley, 2017). These traditions are informed by differing theoretical assumptions and methodological frameworks for understanding the relationship between audience behaviour and measurement approaches. In the context of increasing platformisation and datafication, audience research has expanded beyond conventional ratings systems and reception studies towards questions of algorithmic visibility and behavioural tracking. This transformation has encouraged the convergence of approaches that were historically regarded as methodologically or epistemologically distinct, particularly across critical cultural analysis. Simultaneously, audience research increasingly requires an international and cross-platform perspective as it is now shaped by globally operating digital platforms and transnational audience flows (Johnson, 2024). Nevertheless, audience practices continue to be mediated by specific cultural and regulatory contexts. It is therefore necessary to account for both the growing internationalisation and platformisation of media systems and for the persistent cross-cultural differences that continue to structure audience engagement across different national and socio-cultural environments.

Within this broader field, subsequent scholarship has examined how audiences are commodified within media institutions, particularly through audience categorisations designed to satisfy advertiser-oriented forms of valuation (Meehan, 2005; Napoli, 2011; Webster, 2014; Lordache et al., 2025). Several scholars have extended these debates towards the datafication of audiences, demonstrating how digital infrastructures transform audience engagement into continuous streams of behavioural data that can be operationalised for prediction and targeting (Kitchin, 2014; Couldry and Mejias, 2019; Livingstone, 2019).

Industry measurement systems occupy a particularly significant role within these processes, as they do not merely describe audiences but actively construct them in institutionally meaningful ways. Ratings panels, cross-media currencies, platform analytics, and

behavioural metrics each embed specific assumptions regarding what constitutes audience 'value', engagement, and relevance, as well as how audiences can be 'manufactured' (Bermejo, 2009). As Napoli (2011) argues, these systems shape the very conditions through which audiences become visible and knowable to media organisations. Audience measurement should therefore be understood as a form of institutional mediation through which metrics, methodologies and data infrastructures shape strategic priorities. This is particularly evident within contemporary television production, where established panel-based systems increasingly coexist with platform analytics and digital metrics, while the comparability and legitimacy of audience data across platforms remain contested.

Transmedia Engagement and Distributed Viewership

The proliferation of multi-platform television has necessitated the production of content for various screens and platforms. This led to the development of new production practices (Strange, 2011; William, 2011; Liu, 2015; Boyle, 2019). In particular, the concept of transmedia storytelling refers to a technique involving the dispersal of integral elements of a single-story experience across multiple platforms and formats, leveraging current digital technologies (Jenkins, 2006; 2015). Each platform offers a unique contribution to the overall narrative. Such an approach encourages audiences to actively engage and piece together the story world. Indeed, Jenkins (2006: 95–96) defines it as a process where 'integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding story'. The strategy thereby aims to permeate everyday life and foster deeper audience engagement. Scholarly definitions of transmedia storytelling vary, yet offer complementary insights. Similar to Jenkins's (2006: 95) position that 'a transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole', other scholars have advanced this line of inquiry. Pratten (2015: 2), for instance, also offers a similar definition: 'telling a story across multiple platforms'. An earlier publication of Scolari (2009: 599) defines transmedia storytelling as 'a particular narrative structure that expands through both different languages (verbal, iconic, etc.) and media (cinema, comics, television, video games, etc.)'. He emphasises how these various media contribute to the construction of an overall transmedia story world. Furthermore, Scolari (2009: 601) argues that transmedia research should move beyond textual analysis to examine the co-creative dimensions of transmedia storytelling, thereby foregrounding audience participation as integral to transmedia processes.

Between Participation and Exploitation: Transmedia as an Industrial Strategy

The question of how the invitation for audiences to access multimedia extensions and merchandise reconfigures the boundary between audience agency and commercial exploitation remains contested. From a critical political economy perspective, transmedia entertainment can be scrutinised as an advanced industrial strategy. Executives often seek to maximise profit while creative managers promote cultural work and try to mediate (Hesmondhalgh, 2018: 94). Hence, this industrial strategy is often framed as a means of deepening consumer allegiance across multiple, monetisable platforms. Such encouragement not only enhances audience engagement but also generates new revenue streams for media producers (Jenkins, 2015). Hardy (2011: 8) uses *True Blood* as an example of 'intertextual flow' to illustrate a form of commercial intertextuality that incorporates popular culture references, product placement, and other commercial strategies within television programmes. *True Blood* was broadcast on HBO, available on its VOD service HBO On Demand, and accessible online (Hardy, 2011: 10). Similarly, HBO's epic fantasy series *Game of Thrones* exemplified this through its intricate world-building, extensive merchandising, and multi-platform fan engagement, creating an immersive narrative universe that encouraged extensive online discourse and ancillary consumption. Likewise, the BBC's long-running science-fiction programme *Doctor Who*, while originating in a public service context, demonstrates comparable strategies. Its narrative extends across television episodes, novels, comic books, audio dramas, and significant commercial tie-ins, fostering a dedicated global fanbase. These examples elucidate how media corporations strategically manage content across multiple platforms to create cohesive brand narratives.

While the above discussion may underscore the significance of transmedia storytelling in contemporary media production and audience engagement, this thesis does not adopt transmedia as its primary analytical lens. Although transmedia practices have influenced certain formats in shaping multi-platform television strategies, they represent a distinct and expansive field of study, with their own theoretical frameworks and industrial paradigms. The focus here is on PSM television formats developed for different platforms, which do not necessarily follow a transmedia approach. While transmedia storytelling highlights the strategic extension of narratives across platforms, the following section shifts focus to how audience flows are increasingly shaped by platform architectures, social video networks, and user agency.

3.3 Cross-Media Measurement and National Policy Contexts

Across Europe, the shift towards multi-platform media consumption has driven a fundamental rethinking of audience measurement methodologies. As traditional systems struggle to reflect the complexities of fragmented viewing behaviours, national measurement bodies have sought to develop integrated approaches capable of capturing cross-media exposure. In particular, the rise of digital platforms and social media has rendered established legacy measurement tools increasingly insufficient. Social media platforms have introduced new forms of participation and audience articulation that escape conventional broadcast metrics. This is what Zuboff (2019: 281) called 'the datafication of everyday life'. Facebook, Instagram, and other platforms launched their own video elements as they sought to capture a share of the streaming services' original content market (Sujon, 2021: 207). This development should not be understood solely as a shift in content provision. Instead, it can be read as reflecting how social platforms have begun to reshape both the measurement of audiences and the ways in which they are imagined and acted upon by media institutions (Sujon, 2021). In the British and German contexts, audience measurement institutions have responded by experimenting with hybrid models that incorporate both panel-based methods and big data approaches, including the tracking of social media interactions, streaming behaviours, and second-screen activities. The following section explores these institutional adaptations in response to the demands of cross-media usage. Here, particular attention is given to the incorporation of social media metrics and the broader implications of datafication for public service and commercial broadcasters alike.

Cross-Media Measurement in the UK

The transformation of audience measurement in the UK should be understood within the broader regulatory and institutional architecture of its media system. The UK's response to digital fragmentation has been shaped by two long-standing characteristics: a liberalised market environment and a robust public service broadcasting tradition. Within this context, the entrance of new market players, such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, is not viewed as an inherent threat. Instead, these players are widely seen to act as a catalyst for re-evaluating the role of PSM (Doyle, 2023). With the rise of on-demand services, linear audience patterns appeared to become fractured, thereby challenging the perceived value of traditional panel-based methodologies (Doyle, 2018; Napoli, 2016). This shift suggests that established measurement techniques may no longer fully capture the complexities of contemporary viewing habits. However, the shift from traditional audience conceptualisations toward algorithmically inflected measurement in the SVOD era appears to have affected

commissioning practices (Doyle et al., 2025: 1133). This realignment in measurement approaches and commissioning strategies informs the key bodies that define the UK's contemporary media landscape.

Table 3-8: Key Aspects of UK Audience Measurement and Regulation

Aspect (Year Established)	United Kingdom
Primary TV Audience Measurement Body (1981)	BARB (Broadcasters' Audience Research Board). A Joint Industry Committee (JIC) setting the 'gold standard' for TV viewing.
Primary Media Regulator (2003)	Ofcom (Office of Communications). A converged regulator for broadcasting, telecoms, and online services driven by the UK Labour government and Parliament.
Blocked VOD Initiative (Proposed 2007)	Project Kangaroo. A proposed joint VOD venture from the BBC, ITV, and Channel 4 that was blocked by the Competition Commission (now CMA) in 2009 for being too dominant.
Key International Media Frameworks (1989 and 2010)	AVMS Directive and ECTT. The EU's AVMS Directive (updated 2010 to include VOD) was the foundation for UK VOD/VSP regulation pre-Brexit. Post-Brexit, the Council of Europe's ECTT (opened for signature 1989) now governs cross-border linear broadcasting with the EU.
Cross-Media Measurement Model (Announced 2015)	Project Dovetail. BARB's initiative to create a 'total video' view by fusing TV panel data with online census data.
Key Data Protection Regulation (2018)	UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. The post-Brexit framework governing how personal data is lawfully collected and processed, which became fully effective at the end of the transition period in 2021.
Unified Advertising Campaign Metric (Launched ~2019)	C-Flight. A BARB-governed metric for de-duplicated reach and frequency across linear TV and broadcaster VOD (BVOD).
Key Digital Platform Regulation (2023)	Online Safety Act 2023. Imposes a 'duty of care' on platforms to protect users from harmful content. It received Royal Assent on October 26, 2023.

Source: Adapted from Screenforce Whitepaper (2024)

BARB responded with Project Dovetail, which exemplifies what Loosen (2019) characterises as the datafication of audience knowledge. Dovetail integrates panel-based and census-level datasets to generate a more granular depiction of media consumption across television sets, tablets, smartphones and PCs (GfK, 2020). Through its Dovetail Fusion model, BARB uses statistical modelling to merge demographic panel data with behavioural census data sourced

from broadcaster video-on-demand (BVOD) platforms such as BBC iPlayer, ITVX, and All 4 (BARB, 2025). This approach marks a shift from extrapolative sampling to continuous behavioural capture. Yet it also signifies an epistemological reorientation: audience measurement is no longer primarily a public informational resource, but a commercial data product shaped by platform logics. This evolution reflects the UK's hybrid media governance model. Although BARB operates independently, it is funded and governed by a consortium of stakeholders that includes both public service broadcasters such as the BBC and commercial entities such as ITV, Channel 5 and Sky. This co-regulatory structure supports what Hesmondhalgh (2018: 176) calls the commercialisation of cultural policy – where public value is negotiated within the constraints of market-driven frameworks. While the BBC continues to advocate for representational inclusivity, BARB's increasing focus on advertiser-facing metrics illustrates the growing dominance of commercial logics within measurement practices (Ofcom, 2023).

The CFlight initiative reinforces this trajectory. Developed jointly by ITV, Channel 4, Sky Media and STV, CFlight provides de-duplicated reach and frequency metrics across linear and BVOD platforms. It is optimised for advertising performance rather than civic accountability, targeting commercially valuable demographics such as 16–34 year-olds (Thinkbox, 2022). While CFlight represents a significant technical advancement in measuring cross-media campaigns, its emphasis on market optimisation raises questions about which audiences are prioritised and which remain marginalised. BARB has also expanded its remit to include third-party platforms. Since 2021, YouTube TV set viewing has been incorporated into its panel reporting, and from 2022, BARB began publishing viewing figures for Netflix, Disney+ and other subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) services (BARB, 2025). These developments may mark a shift towards comparative platform analysis, yet the asymmetrical data relationships involved reveal deeper structural constraints.

Further, the shift towards behavioural measurement introduces tensions between measurability and meaning. As Andrejevic (2013) and Gillespie (2020) argue, big data practices in media measurement risk privileging visibility over significance. While census data offer scale and precision, they lack the interpretive depth of demographically grounded panel data. Moreover, reliance on device-level tracking may systematically exclude hard-to-measure user groups such as older adults, low-income households or digitally disengaged viewers – thereby compromising the inclusivity of audience metrics. This transformation aligns with a broader restructuring of media power. As Zuboff (2019) observes, the growing integration of behavioural analytics into institutional decision-making is indicative of

surveillance capitalism, where the commodification of user data supersedes public service objectives. BARB's dual orientation – combining public broadcasters and commercial stakeholders – captures this tension. While its methods are increasingly aligned with industry needs, they risk undermining traditional regulatory values such as universality, accessibility, and civic representation. This duality suggests that the UK's model of cross-media audience measurement appears to reflect both institutional innovation and normative compromise. The integration of panel and census-level data, and the partial inclusion of non-broadcaster platforms, illustrate methodological progress. However, I contend that this progress is shaped by significant commercial dependencies. These appear to manifest through increasingly blurred platform relationships and a perceived retreat from traditional public interest metrics. Such a transition suggests that the evolution of measurement logic is driven by market imperatives, potentially at the expense of the democratic values inherent in public service media.

Cross-Media Measurement in Germany

The German audience measurement landscape, shaped by a historically decentralised public service broadcasting system and a consensus-oriented regulatory culture, has undergone significant transformation in response to digital fragmentation and platform convergence. The AGF (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Videoforschung), Germany's central measurement institution, has pursued a strategy of methodological innovation aimed at establishing a unified video measurement currency (AGF, 2022). However, in contrast to the UK's BARB, the AGF appears to operate within a context characterised by more stringent data governance standards and a comparatively restricted integration of global platforms. Furthermore, the German landscape may be seen to exhibit a degree of persistent institutional fragmentation. These factors suggest that the evolution of measurement logic in Germany is moderated by distinct regulatory and structural constraints that differ from the UK's more centralised approach. The key institutions and regulatory frameworks that define this landscape are outlined in table 3-9 below.

Table 3-9: Key Regulation Frameworks in Germany

Initiative / Aspect (Year Established)	Germany
Primary Media Regulator (~1984)	Die Landesmedienanstalten (State Media Authorities). A federal system where each of the 16 states has its own media authority.
Primary TV Audience Measurement Body (1988)	AGF (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Videoforschung). A JIC representing public and major private broadcasters that defines the official video currency. In 2017, AGF restructured and expanded its shareholder base, creating a new licensing model to combine TV and streaming measurement.
Blocked Public VOD Initiative (2013)	ARD/ZDF 'Super-Mediathek' (Germany's Gold). Proposals by public broadcasters to deeply integrate their online media libraries were heavily scrutinised by the Bundeskartellamt, which warned against creating a dominant position that could unfairly disadvantage private competitors.
Cross-Media Measurement Model (~2017)	AGF-BewegtBild / AGF X-REACH. AGF's convergent currency project, fusing GfK's TV panel data with digital measurement to create a cross-media reach metric.
Key Data Protection Regulation (2018)	EU GDPR and Bundesdatenschutzgesetz (BDSG). As an EU member, GDPR is the core data protection law, strictly regulating user consent and data processing.
Blocked Private VOD Initiative (Proposed 2020)	Project Gold. A planned joint streaming technology venture by ProSiebenSat.1 and RTL. The project was withdrawn in 2022 following preliminary anti-trust concerns from the Bundeskartellamt.
Key Digital Platform Regulation (2020)	Medienstaatsvertrag (MStV - Media State Treaty). The key federal media law that replaced the former Broadcasting Treaty. It includes modern provisions for regulating digital 'media intermediaries' such as smart TVs and app stores to ensure the prominence and 'findability' of public service content.
Key Digital Platform Regulation (2020/2022)	EU Digital Services Act (DSA), Digital Markets Act (DMA) and Medienstaatsvertrag (MStV). EU laws create a pan-European framework, while the MStV sets national rules for media intermediaries.

Source: Adapted from Screenforce Whitepaper (2024)

At the centre of AGF's cross-media strategy is the development of X-REACH, a converged metric designed to capture total video consumption across linear, broadcaster video-on-demand (BVOD), and digital platforms. This system builds on three core data sources. First,

the traditional television panel, operated by GfK and consisting of approximately 5,400 households. Second, census-level data collected from platform partners such as ARD and ZDF Mediatheken, RTL+, and Joyn through embedded tracking tags. Third, a cross-device panel run by Nielsen, which measures video consumption on smartphones, tablets and PCs within participating panel households (AGF, 2024). The fusion of these data streams is achieved through the AGF Videopotentialmodell, a statistical model developed to produce de-duplicated reach figures across devices and platforms. While conceptually similar to BARB's Dovetail methodology, AGF's approach reflects distinct institutional and market constraints. Most notably, negotiations with several international streaming providers broke down due to fundamental disagreements over measurement transparency and methodological control. As of early 2024, YouTube, Netflix and Amazon Prime Video remained outside AGF's official X-REACH framework, although the organisation does commission separate studies on SVOD consumption (AGF, 2024). In 2025, the negotiations with Amazon Prime Video finally came to an agreement and they are part of format-based ranking list (AGF, 2025). Still, this selective platform inclusion compromises the holistic ambition of cross-media measurement and creates significant data gaps, particularly in relation to younger, digitally-native audiences.

This exclusion of global platforms underscores structural limitations in AGF's data governance model. Whereas BARB made faster progress in integrating SVOD and social platforms by leveraging its co-regulatory status and advertiser-driven incentives, AGF's framework evolved more fitfully. At the time of writing in 2025, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ are part of the cross-media measurement approach and YouTube was integrated. However, YouTube measurement includes TV-viewing only and only 200 selected channels are included. Therefore, this thesis argues that it is pivotal to review what is part of the cross-media measurement approach when and how it changes. AGF's measurement authority is confined by stricter privacy regulations under the German and European data protection regimes. The reluctance of major platforms to share granular user data without maintaining proprietary control has led to a standstill, highlighting the asymmetrical power dynamics between national measurement bodies and transnational platforms (Napoli, 2016; Loosen, 2019). Furthermore, the institutional architecture of German media regulation, grounded in federalism and pluralistic negotiation among stakeholders, may hinder the agility required for rapid methodological adaptation. AGF functions as a joint industry committee (JIC), comprising public service and commercial broadcasters, media agencies and advertisers, all of whom must reach consensus on measurement frameworks. An early example was the initial agreement with YouTube in 2015 for cross-media measurement (Broughton-Micova and Jacques, 2020: 534) which was

abandoned after a three-year test phase. Ten years later, AGF joined the newly established Audience Measurement Coalition (AMC)⁷ to collaborate at the European level on comparable measurement frameworks, regulatory alignment, and policymaking (BroadbandTVNews, 2025). In contrast, BARB's smaller governance circle and greater reliance on market incentives have arguably facilitated faster responses to shifting audience practices (Ofcom, 2023; Doyle, 2018). At the time of writing, BARB had not become part of the European Joint Industry Committee.

From a theoretical perspective, AGF's challenges reflect a deeper contradiction in contemporary audience measurement which is the need to balance methodological standardisation with platform diversity. In this context, the absence of robust cross-media measurement can be regarded as a deficiency in unified metrics and quality standards (Broughton-Micova and Jacques, 2020). This aligns with Andrejevic's (2013: 3) observation that audience metrics are not neutral reflections of user behaviour. Rather, they may be interpreted as social constructs, shaped by a trajectory that extends from the technicalities of metrics implementation to broader institutional choices. This suggests that the data used to measure audiences is inherently laden with the strategic priorities of the measuring body. In AGF's case, the absence of platforms such as YouTube and Netflix from the measurement during the time of writing reveals the limits of consensus-driven models in the face of platform capitalism. In comparison to the UK, Germany's approach displays both methodological rigour and institutional inertia. Despite its technical sophistication, AGF's multi-panel fusion model yields data compromised in completeness and comparability due to its dependence on voluntary partnerships and its exclusion of key global players. The resulting measurement framework remains structurally fragmented – both technically and politically – limiting its capacity to function as a true cross-media currency in the eyes of advertisers and regulators alike.

AGF's X-REACH initiative may be interpreted as a site of negotiation between precision and inclusivity. While the organisation has made notable advances in fusing linear and digital broadcaster data, the exclusion of major SVOD and social video platforms reflects broader structural and regulatory barriers. As Lobigs and Neuberger (2018: 272–273) observe, the

⁷ Alongside AGF, the Audience Measurement Coalition (AMC) brings together national measurement bodies such as Médiamétrie (France), ARMA (Romania), MMS (Sweden), Mediapulse (Switzerland), and NMO (Netherlands), as well as international research firms including Comscore, Gemius, Ipsos, Nielsen, Kantar Media, and GfK.

rise of platform intermediaries has blurred traditional boundaries of media power, exposing the limits of national measurement systems. Further, Webster (2014: 107) argues, broadcasters now compete not for scheduled slots but for attention within an economy of abundance, further eroding the coherence of national measurement regimes. Accelerating audience fragmentation increasingly challenges the viability of national measurement systems like AGF. This thesis contends that unless national bodies proactively seek innovative models of cooperation, its long-term viability is genuinely at risk, regardless of its historical importance within the industry. Despite joining the AMC, the AGF might continue to face difficulties in securing data access from dominant global platforms, frequently framed as 'walled gardens', 'data silos' (van der Vlist and Helmond, 2021: 8), or 'platform capitalism' (Srnicek, 2017: 3). The standardisation of metrics across heterogeneous viewing experiences remains a persistent methodological challenge. Since Kosterich and Napoli (2016: 262) linked this issue primarily to accompanying television-related activity on social media platforms such as Twitter, audience measurement practices have continued to evolve. Attempts to integrate such divergent forms of audience behaviour remain constrained by the scale of investment required and the organisational coordination involved in cross-platform measurement infrastructures. Hence, cross-media measurement still does not fully capture an expanded system. It remains shaped by nationally oriented broadcasting models, even as digital and social video distribution operates within a 'deterritorialized' global media environment (Flew, 2018: 181).

Public Service Media (PSM) Responses to the Demands of Datafication

Public service media (PSM) organisations such as the BBC and ARD/ZDF face specific and intensified challenges in an era increasingly defined by harvesting user data (Iosifides and Andrews, 2020; Michalis, 2018). Unlike commercial broadcasters, which often use audience data to gain strategic advantage and drive profit, PSM navigate a more complex landscape shaped by their normative commitments and institutional constraints. Their public remit prioritises goals such as universality, diversity, cultural value, and democratic citizenship. Consequently, the role of PSM could be interpreted as a form of 'critical media infrastructure' that safeguards democratic citizenship within a fragmented digital ecosystem (Doyle, Barr and Boyle, 2025: 1135). As publicly funded institutions, PSM are also subject to higher expectations of transparency and accountability in their use of data and algorithmic systems (Sarikakis and Trappel, 2007). They also face additional responsibilities regarding user privacy, which require particularly careful and ethical management to prevent technological datafication (Couldry and Mejias, 2019: 102). These normative pressures are further shaped by structural limitations. In contrast to global technology companies, many public service

media organisations operate within financial and technological constraints that can limit the development of advanced in-house analytics. As a result, they rely to varying degrees on external measurement systems.

These institutional and operational dynamics unfold within a broader critical discourse on the societal implications of datafication, particularly since the acceleration of this phenomenon in the post-2010 digital phase. Recent scholarship across media studies, critical data studies, and political economy interrogates not just the mechanics of measurement, but the wider ideological and structural power embedded in data-driven systems. This research provides crucial context for understanding how television production cultures are shaped by and respond to emerging data imperatives. For example, Zuboff's (2019) concept of surveillance capitalism critiques how digital platforms extract behavioural data to predict and influence user behaviour for profit, framing this as a new mode of capitalist exploitation. Couldry and Mejias (2019) build on this critique through the lens of data colonialism, arguing that global tech infrastructures reproduce extractive relationships akin to colonial systems, appropriating human life as data for commercial gain. These frameworks challenge industry claims that data simply enhances user experience, revealing instead how datafication consolidates corporate power and introduces new forms of social control. At this more foundational level, some scholars draw attention to the epistemological dimensions of data. Kitchin (2014: 2) argues that '*data analytics seek to gain insights "born in data"*'. Furthermore, boyd, and Crawford (2012: 663) question whether data analytics serve to illuminate online communities or be misused to suppress them. These critiques complicate the use of audience analytics in television production, urging caution in equating data volume with accuracy or objectivity.

3.4 Evolving Audience Metrics and Datafication in PSM Organisations

This section critically reviews literature on how television institutions internally negotiate the strategic, organisational, and cultural dimensions of audience datafication. Building on previous discussions of regulatory frameworks and cross-media measurement, it examines scholarly debates around institutional processes of audience construction and data integration. Key topics explored include evolving conceptions of audience engagement, the operationalisation of viewer insights through persona-building and audience-modelling techniques, and the tensions arising from embedding data-driven methods within established media production cultures. By analysing these internal negotiations, the literature reveals underlying power relations and highlights contested understandings of audiences within contemporary television institutions.

Table 3-10: Comparative Table of Key Video Metrics: UK vs Germany

Metric	UK (Ofcom / BARB)	Germany (AGF / ARD)
Watch Time / Viewing Duration	Measured via BARB VOD Audience Measurement, includes average viewing time across devices.	Tracked via AGF Smart Meter and Video-on-demand Panel, records total minutes per person per day.
Audience Retention	Not publicly available in traditional BARB stats; typically platform-dependent (e.g., BBC iPlayer, YouTube).	Measured in AGF Streaming Panel and ARD Mediathek, with retention curves available for editorial use.
Completion Rate	Not standardised across broadcasters, internal reports include percentage completed, especially for BBC iPlayer.	Used internally within ARD/ZDF Mediatheken
Interaction Metrics	Limited in BARB; relies on third-party data (e.g., YouTube, social platforms). Ofcom reports social engagement.	AGF does not include likes/shares/comments, ARD uses them as internal metrics.
Reach and Impressions	BARB reports weekly and monthly reach. VODAM tracks total impressions for cross-platform content.	AGF publishes Netto-Reichweite (net reach) and Bruttokontakte (gross contacts) per content.
Follower/Subscriber Growth	Not included in BARB/Ofcom, but platforms like BBC iPlayer and ITVX track user accounts and logins growth.	ARD/ZDF platforms do not track registered user accounts, no standards via AGF.

Sources: ARD and AGF Measurement Document (2022); Overnights TV (2025)

The key metrics of AGF were not just part of industry standards. Some of them have become a reference point during the workshop discussions analysed in Chapter 6, highlighting their practical relevance in production and strategic settings. Consultants and producers use these metrics to assess content performance and understand audience preferences. They are also used to demonstrate value to advertisers or funders. This is also important for public service media, which are expected to represent the nation while operating within systems of programme export and import (Bignell and Woods, 2023: 4). The UK follows a developer-led, export-oriented model, marked by entrepreneurial risk-taking commissioning and development processes (Chalaby, 2016; Lee, 2018). Germany, by contrast, has a buyer-led, adaptation-focused model. It prioritises proven international formats and reflects more risk-averse commissioning strategies (Moran, 2009; Becker, 2020). This dichotomy reflects deeper structural differences in market size, historical development trajectories, and cultural proximity to dominant format markets (The Wit, On Demand Report, 2024).

The expansion into video dominated social media platforms has also extended third-party measurement practices beyond individual services such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or TikTok. Internal documentation provided by interviewees confirms that both the BBC and ARD utilise specialised third-party analytics providers, specifically Tubular and Quintly to collect data beyond the official measurement system. I contend that the adoption of these tools represents more than a technical upgrade. It rather marks a fundamental shift toward the datafication of cultural production. Every third-party tool comes with its own complexity and has to adjust to individual social platforms' metrics. Moreover, social platforms such as TikTok come with their own recommendation algorithms and metric definitions, and they not only drive advertising revenue but also shape the platform's public discourse (Sujon et al., 2025: 5).

Datafication and Proxy Measures Through the Lens of the '8 Vs'

Data scholars such as Boyd and Crawford (2012) researched the challenges to aggregate, process and analyse data. They refer to the 5 V's as a holistic data approach in the digital age: volume, validity, veracity, velocity, and value. These paradigms are not only used to demystify the complexities inherent in harnessing vast amounts of data. They also delineate the multifaceted challenges and prospects of employing such data to strategic concepts within the broadcasting industry and elsewhere to captivate audience behaviour. Their collective understanding thus serves as a cornerstone in the critical evaluation of data-driven strategies in the media landscape of the digital age. Later, this framework got expanded by variety and validation. However, Gupta et al. (2016: 46) add another dimension, namely vision. I agree with the articulation of presenting vision as key dimension of having impact on the other V's and as key for fulfilling organisational targets (Davenport, 2014). The addition of vision as an eighth dimension emphasises the strategic foresight required to effectively harness and interpret big data (Kitchin, 2014). I utilise the framework of the 8 V's as it underscores not only the technical aspects of data management but also the strategic thinking inherited in digital production to extract actionable insights. Collectively, these dimensions interrelate to form a comprehensive understanding of big data challenges and opportunities. Volume, Velocity, and Variety establish the fundamental nature of big data. Veracity and Value focus on its quality and usefulness and Vision brings a strategic perspective to its application. Thus, I consider the '8 V's' as a multifaceted lens through which the complexities and potentials of big data can be navigated in contemporary data-driven environments. How these dynamics can be applied to understand big data, and particularly its aggregation, can be illustrated through Netflix's audience measurement and reporting strategies. Netflix, long criticised for restricting access to detailed audience figures

for its Top 10 programmes, released a more expansive dataset at the end of 2023 containing over 18,000 entries under the title *What We Watched: A Netflix Engagement Report* (Netflix, 2023). The dataset detailed aggregated viewing hours per programme season. While framed as an ‘engagement report’, the release relied primarily on a single cumulative metric, namely total hours watched, and did not provide episode-level data or broader contextual information. This demonstrates how a highly aggregated metric can be strategically presented as a significant act of transparency while still limiting meaningful interpretability. As Lotz (2023) and other scholars argue, metrics such as total hours viewed remain difficult to interpret in isolation because they do not account for contextual factors including episode count, release strategies, marketing intensity, or algorithmic prioritisation. A series with eight episodes and a series with twenty episodes, for example, cannot be meaningfully compared through cumulative viewing hours alone. Equally absent is information concerning how recommendation systems, homepage visibility, or promotional campaigns may have shaped viewing behaviour. Furthermore, the absence of nationally differentiated audience data restricts the ability of broadcasters and competitors to compare Netflix performance against domestic programming markets and local audience preferences.

This example can be understood through Mulvin’s (2021) concept of ‘data proxies’. Mulvin uses the term to describe indirect, simplified, or substitute forms of measurement that stand in for complex social realities which cannot be fully captured through data systems alone. Within contemporary media infrastructures, institutions increasingly rely on proxy indicators because direct observation of audience attention, cultural engagement, affective response, or long-term social influence is technologically limited, economically impractical, or epistemologically impossible. As a consequence, measurable traces such as clicks, viewing duration, engagement rates, impressions, rankings, retention curves, or demographic classifications become operational substitutes for far more nuanced audience experiences and practices. Proxy measures therefore simplify complexity in ways that render audiences calculable, comparable, and actionable within industrial workflows, as demonstrated by the Netflix example. However, this process of simplification also introduces significant distortions and exclusions. What becomes measurable through platform infrastructures is frequently prioritised institutionally, while dimensions that remain difficult to quantify, including emotional resonance, cultural value, informal viewing practices, social discussion, or long-term societal impact, are marginalised within decision-making processes. Mulvin (2021: 15) further argues that proxy systems derive authority precisely because they appear objective, neutral, and quantifiable. Once embedded within dashboards, rankings, recommendation systems, and audience reports, these metrics begin to structure industrial practices across commissioning, advertising, content distribution, discoverability, and platform visibility. In this

sense, proxy metrics do not merely describe audiences. They actively shape institutional understandings of audiences and influence how success, relevance, and value are defined within datafied media environments.

The Netflix engagement report therefore illustrates a broader epistemological issue within contemporary audience measurement systems. Metrics such as watch time, completion rates, click-through data, engagement rankings, or Top 10 charts function as proxy indicators through which organisations infer attention, popularity, and cultural relevance. Yet these systems remain dependent upon selective and interpretive categories that inevitably reduce complex cultural practices into measurable abstractions. The authority of such metrics lies less in their ability to fully represent audience behaviour than in their capacity to produce operational forms of knowledge that can circulate across industrial decision-making processes. Consequently, data proxies do not simply measure audiences. They participate in constructing institutional realities about what counts as visibility, engagement, and success within platform-based media economies.

Persona Building as an Interpretive Practice

One framework frequently implemented during the format development stage is persona building. This concept has emerged as a foundational method over decades for representing users within design and development processes (Cooper, 2004; Pruitt and Grudin, 2003). Personas are commonly defined as fictional characters or memorable representations of real people within a target group (Pruitt and Adlin, 2006: 5) or as Barbour et al. (2014) have labelled as 'micro-publics' (Barbour et al., (2014)). Since the inception of persona building in the 1980s, it appears to have evolved from a rudimentary segmentation tool into a sophisticated mechanism for humanising data. This development appears to reflect a shift away from simple categorisation towards attempts to abstract audience metrics into narrative forms that are more readily interpretable. When refined during the 1990s, personas can be understood as strategic archetypes (Nielsen, 2019: 7). They are typically based on demographic attributes and behavioural tendencies to construct narrative profiles. This synthesis aims to render complex user data more accessible to practitioners by translating abstract metrics into fictional yet research-informed characters (Salminen et al., 2021). Although initially confined to design departments, my study demonstrates that the application of personas has since extended into format production and organisational strategy (see Chapter 6). At the same time, the methodology underpinning persona construction remains subject to variation. Nielsen (2019: 149) illustrates this through an example in which personas were developed primarily on the basis of stakeholder assumptions rather than

systematic empirical research. Such an approach suggests that persona building can function as a communicative device within organisations, while also highlighting the limitations that may arise when profiles lack grounding in analytics. This may not imply that such approaches are ineffective. Rather, it indicates how the nature of the underlying evidence can shape the role personas play in guiding decision making.

Within the remit of public service media (PSM), persona building appears increasingly relevant to both format development and commissioning. PSM organisations operate within a complex landscape shaped by commitments to inclusion and public value. In this context, personas can function as interpretive bridges between aggregated audience data and editorial judgement. By offering structured representations of specific audience segments (Nielsen, 2019: 51), personas may assist creative teams in anticipating patterns of engagement without reducing audiences to abstract data points. As workflows incorporate expanding forms of analytics, personas may also offer a means of integrating audience behaviour insights into creative processes while remaining attentive to narrative and cultural considerations. Nielsen (2019: 10–11) further emphasises that knowledge dissemination is a prerequisite for ensuring that all project team members understand what it entails to work with persona building. From this perspective, persona building can be interpreted as supporting development, production, and commissioning by activating audience knowledge in narrative form. In my study, I argue that persona building can reflect both audience diversity and the normative responsibilities of the public sector (see Chapter 6).

Further, the above mentioned process of humanising aggregated data resonates with Kotliar's (2020) analysis of algorithmic identity, in which he identifies a return of the social within data analytics. Kotliar argues that raw data clusters are insufficient on their own and require transformation into epistemic amalgams (Kotliar, 2020: 1153). These can be understood as contexts in which qualitative human meaning is reapplied to quantitative outputs to render them socially intelligible. Such representations aim to support researchers and content developers in forming more nuanced understandings of intended users, as demonstrated in Chapter 6. Kotliar's work can therefore be interpreted as indicating that algorithmic systems, rather than merely aggregating demographic data, may contribute to the construction of symbolic identities that shape user experiences. In constructing audience personas, broadcasters increasingly rely on inferred preferences and behavioural analytics. While these processes may be efficient, I argue that they also risk reinforcing stereotypes and reducing audience diversity to simplified data friendly categories. These tendencies raise questions of authenticity, inclusivity, and bias in strategic decision making.

In the UK and Germany, public service media are explicitly tasked with representing a wide demographic spectrum. This mandate necessitates a critical approach to the design and use of data driven audience representations. Algorithmically generated profiles therefore require careful handling, as they may not only reflect but also distort the social realities they seek to represent. To operationalise such representations, scholars and media professionals frequently employ audience typologies, which group audiences according to shared characteristics, lifestyles, or values (Papacharissi, 2015). A prominent example is the Sinus Milieus model, developed by the German market and social research institute SINUS Institut. This model segments populations according to social status and value orientation, identifying milieus such as traditional, adaptive pragmatic, or expeditive groups (SINUS Institut, 2023). They provide an ethnographic lens into audience motivations and everyday lifeworlds, offering a richer understanding than broad demographic categories alone. In digital contexts, similar typologies focus on patterns of online behaviour, levels of engagement (e.g. lurkers, contributors, creators) or platform preferences. These classification models enable more nuanced forms of segmentation, which can inform editorial, promotional and distribution strategies.

According to Pruitt and Grudin (2003) and Salminen et al. (2021), personas synthesise demographic traits, behavioural tendencies and user goals into concise narrative profiles. They reflect the motivations and frustrations of real users and, in doing so, support more inclusive and effective design processes (Adlin and Pruitt, 2010; Nielsen, 2013, 2019). Personas are now widely used across media, design and educational contexts to guide content development and audience strategy. Persona building builds upon these segmentations by creating detailed, semi-fictional portraits of typical individuals situated within specific audience groups. Originally developed in the context of software and interaction design (Cooper, 1999), personas have since been adopted in media studies and broadcasting to guide audience-centred development. For example, broadcasters may construct personas such as a 'critically engaged documentary viewer' or a 'digitally native news user' to inform decisions about content tone, channel selection and narrative structure. These representations, grounded in behavioural and demographic data, help institutions to align their strategies with audience expectations. They also promote more intentional and effective communication with specific groups, enhancing the potential for impact and engagement (Adlin and Pruitt, 2010). The interplay between audience data, typologies and persona building is often framed as cultivating a shared audience understanding when addressing a diverse audience. In the context of convergence culture, where audiences move across platforms and participate in the circulation of content (Jenkins, 2006), engagement can extend beyond one-directional communication. Instead, it involves building

reciprocal and sustained relationships with diverse and evolving publics. Livingstone (2005) has examined how mediated participation reshapes civic engagement and the dynamics of the public. In this context, audience design strategies informed by deep understandings of audience composition and interpretation – as developed in earlier television and media research (Brunsdon and Morley, 1978/1999; Morley, 1992) – remain essential.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has critically examined the historical development and contemporary complexities of audience measurement and conceptualisation, with a focus on the UK and German contexts. The study of audiences is characterised by conceptual and methodological fragmentation, as different research traditions prioritise distinct understandings of media consumption. Contemporary developments in platformisation and datafication have further complicated the field by bringing together cultural, institutional, technological, and computational perspectives that were previously examined separately. However, data collected from social media platforms are often shaped by affective and non-conscious processes that cannot be fully captured through quantitative metrics alone (Sampson, 2020). Using a periodised approach and drawing from audience studies, media theory, industry practice, and critical data studies, it has traced the shift from early broadcast surveys to today's datafied, multi-platform measurement approaches. Consequently, the preceding review charts the evolution of audience measurement and the profound impact of datafication, particularly within the UK and German contexts, highlighting shifts in both audience conceptions and cross-media measurement practices. However, while existing literature outlines the what and how of these transformations and the challenges faced by Public Service Media (PSM), there is less in-depth understanding of the internal negotiations and cultural shifts occurring within television institutions as they adapt their operational logics and power structures to these datafied platforms. Therefore, this study examines how these new data cultures shape UK and German television formats, focusing on the use of engagement metrics and evolving audience segmentation. Much of the literature has positioned audience agency in opposition to institutional control, often framing participation as a zero-sum dynamic (Livingstone, 2004; Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013). While these perspectives have contributed to non-media-centric thinking (Couldry, 2011), they risk excluding forms of everyday engagement that fall outside normative definitions of participation.

This chapter has provided a historically and theoretically informed analysis of audience measurement, tracing its evolution over the past 75 years. The central argument is that

measurement strategies and professional conceptions of the audience are co-constitutive. Measurement tools do not merely discover an audience but rather shape specific ontologies that inform how formats are valued. Both the UK and Germany pioneered electronic audience measurement and have transitioned into a phase of digital formalisation seeking to encompass a hybrid landscape that integrates linear, digital and social video data. This ongoing evolution suggests that the words of Ang (1991: 8) remain relevant as the audience continues to be an entity that requires continuous pursuit through the accumulation and synthesis of ever more information (Ang, 1991: 8).

Regarding RQ3, this chapter has established that professional conceptualisations of the audience are not static but are continuously reshaped by the measurement regimes in which they operate. The historical mapping suggests that in the UK linear television, streaming and social video measurement is to a larger extent integrated into a cross-media currency approach. By late 2025, the UK market had advanced substantially through strategic frameworks such as BARB's integration of YouTube channel data and TikTok video measurement, both of which seek to unify deduplicated reach across broadcast and digital platforms. Germany has made similar approaches but still lacks the full integration of global streaming services such as Netflix or social video platforms like TikTok into a single daily currency. Furthermore, applied approaches to audience conceptualisation, such as persona building, have been reviewed to demonstrate how professionals translate abstract data into humanised archetypes to guide content creation. However, both countries maintain a significant focus on national data due to the geographic restrictions inherent in broadcast licenses and domestic funding structures. This focus on national datasets ensures that even as digital distribution expands, the measured audience remains anchored to a specific territorial and regulatory framework. Further, the review revealed that the transition toward cross-media measurement has reconfigured decision-making by introducing a state of methodological stress. This chapter answered the question by identifying that decision-making is moving away from separate measurement metrics toward a cross-media logic of reach and engagement. While this reconfiguration in the UK is driven by a need to demonstrate global scalability across various platforms, in Germany it is motivated by the attempt to maintain institutional relevance across fragmented digital platforms within the national sphere. Thus measurement formalisation acts as a pivotal site of negotiation where legacy broadcast traditions meet emergent platform logics.

This chapter has provided a historically and theoretically informed analysis of audience measurement, tracing its evolution over the past 75 years. Starting with analogue measurement establishment (Phase 1), followed by analogue measurement consolidation

(Phase 2), digital measurement emergence (Phase 3), and digital measurement formalisation (Phase 4), the evolution of audience measurement has exposed both the potential and limitations of contemporary regimes. It has argued that audience measurement is not a neutral process but a mutually constitutive force that both shapes and is shaped by institutional, technological, and ideological dynamics. This historically grounded and theoretically informed review provides the conceptual foundation for the empirical chapters that follow. It has established key frameworks for understanding how audience measurement practices shape television production and institutional strategy in the UK and Germany. Within these production cultures, data does not operate in isolation. Its authority is shaped through negotiation. The next chapter outlines the methodological approach used to investigate how these tensions are experienced and navigated by professionals involved in television, digital, social, and hybrid format development.

Chapter 4: Methodology, Research Design, and Analytical Framework

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter I delineate the methodological framework used to investigate the transformation of television production in the UK and Germany. Grounded in a social constructivist stance, my study examines television as a field in which practices, meanings, and power relations are continuously negotiated. I employ a qualitative design combining Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) and Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) to capture both the organisational logics and symbolic dimensions of production practice. A multi-method approach was used to generate data. This primarily comprised semi-structured expert interviews and workshop observations at ARD/BR. Additionally, I analysed keynote speeches at major television industry conferences such as MIPCOM, where ‘television executives from more than 100 territories’ convene (Chalaby, 2023: 8). This was expanded through organisational document analysis, including strategic reports. My study followed a systematic, multi-stage process. Following verbatim transcription, I explain in this chapter how I conducted manual inductive coding and clustering to derive initial themes. This framework was subsequently imported into NVivo to facilitate the discovery of latent connections and ensure analytical rigour. The resulting framework provides the foundation for the findings and discussion. The chapter concludes by outlining data management procedures and the measures taken to ensure validity, trustworthiness, and ethical integrity. Together, these choices provide transparent and robust justification for generating context-sensitive insights within contemporary production cultures.

4.1 Research Philosophy

This section outlines the research philosophy that guided the study. Philosophical assumptions shape how research questions are framed, how data are analysed, and how conclusions are drawn (Creswell and Poth, 2024: 21). The study is grounded in a social constructivist paradigm informed by critical realism, which views knowledge as produced through social interaction while acknowledging the existence of enduring institutional and structural conditions. This perspective is particularly suited to the study of television production, a field characterised by ongoing negotiation of professional practice, organisational power, and market constraints. Adopting this stance enables an examination of how media professionals interpret and mobilise audience data within specific organisational and structural contexts.

Ontological and Epistemological Stance

While positivist and post-positivist paradigms were initially considered, their emphasis on objectivism and causal explanation (Creswell and Clark, 2018; Bryman, 2016) was deemed misaligned with the research aims. The core phenomena under investigation, namely audience conceptualisation, professional judgement and organisational practice, are inherently contextual, relational and socially constructed. Accordingly, this study adopts a critical realist ontology that distinguishes between the existence of objective institutional structures and the subjective interpretations through which these structures are known (Bhaskar, 1975). From this perspective, phenomena such as format development and production are neither reducible to individual agency nor fully determined by structure. Instead, they emerge through the interaction between the two. Epistemologically, the study is aligned with realist social constructionism, which holds that knowledge is actively constructed through inquiry while remaining oriented towards explaining underlying generative mechanisms (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Sayer, 2000). In this context, I draw on a constructivist notion of reality, as presented by Lincoln et al. (2023: 76). From this perspective, reality is understood as stratified and constituted by material conditions, co-constructed institutional logics and power relations that pre-exist individual actors, yet are continuously experienced and negotiated through practice. Participants' subjective accounts are therefore treated as empirically valuable, not as ends in themselves, but as entry points for identifying the structural and institutional forces within media environments that shape them.

The analytical process does not conclude at the micro-level of participants' subjective accounts. Instead, it moves from these empirical findings – the lived experiences of professionals developing formats across UK and German linear, digital, and social short-form markets – through the meso-level of institutional contexts (e.g., public service mandates, platform algorithms, advertiser-funded models). This helps to identify the macro-level structural mechanisms that generate the conditions for those experiences. Further, this synthesis produces a critical explanation that integrates, for instance, a developer's creative rationale with the structural imperatives of platform economics. By doing so, it meets the requirements of both interpretivist and critical realist perspectives. Applied to this study, this means that methods such as pre-talks, interviews, and workshop observations are not conceived as neutral techniques of data extraction. These are dialogic events through which the researcher and participants collaboratively generate insights into the practices, challenges, and dynamics of television format production. The objective is to understand production from participants' perspectives while simultaneously interpreting those accounts

to identify the underlying structural and institutional forces at work. This epistemological commitment means that findings are understood as theoretically informed interpretations. They are shaped by the interplay between the researcher's analytical framework, derived from organisational sociology and critical political economy (CPE), and the lived experiences of the participants. The methodological design that follows from this orientation is detailed in the next section.

Social Constructivism and Discursive Institutionalism as Guiding Philosophical Frameworks

Social constructivism, as articulated by early theorists such as Vygotsky (1978) and Berger and Luckmann (1966), provides a guiding philosophical lens for this study because it is well suited to examining how meanings, categories, and practices are produced and negotiated within organisational settings. This orientation is consistent with the constructivist paradigm outlined by Lincoln et al. (2023), who conceptualise reality as socially constructed through interaction, while acknowledging that such constructions are shaped by pre-existing institutional and material conditions. From this perspective, professional knowledge is understood as emergent, contextual and co-produced through practice rather than as a fixed or purely individual attribute. This constructivist orientation is complemented by discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008), which offers an analytical means of examining how ideas, norms and values are articulated, contested and stabilised within institutional contexts. In this study, social constructivism provides the epistemological foundation for exploring how professional meanings and forms of expertise are generated through collaboration and communication, while discursive institutionalism adds a further analytical layer by situating these processes within broader organisational discourses and power relations. Together, these frameworks enable an examination of how media professionals within broadcasting organisations adapt and reinterpret format development practices across linear, digital and social platforms. This combined framework allows format development to be approached as a socially embedded and institutionally situated process, shaped by ongoing negotiation between professional norms, organisational structures and evolving media markets. As these processes share key characteristics with project-based work, the study also draws on Jackson and Klobas (2008), who emphasise the temporary, goal-oriented and execution-focused nature of projects. Similarly, format development and production teams are typically assembled over a limited period to deliver specific creative outputs. Within such contexts, knowledge is not static but continually socialised and redefined through collaborative practice, as individual intuition and professional experience are integrated into collective discourse, contributing to the generation of innovation in format creation.

Comparative Approach

This study employs a comparative research design to analyse format development across the United Kingdom and German markets. The rationale for this approach lies in its capacity to examine how distinct institutional configurations, market structures, and professional cultures shape development practices (Doyle, 2022; Almond, 2018). This methodological strategy enables the identification of both convergent global trends and divergent market-specific strategies (Esser, 2010; Chalaby, 2016). Further, it highlights how shared professional norms and transnational production practices interact with national institutional settings. Through comparison, the study identifies both convergences and divergences in how development teams negotiate creative autonomy, respond to data-driven decision-making, and adapt to cross-platform demands. In doing so, the research contributes to a broader understanding of how formats evolve beyond traditional national television, within diverse political-economic and organisational contexts, offering an empirically grounded account of media production.

The Researcher's Positionality: Field Access, Insider/Outsider Dynamics

A crucial aspect of constructivist research is acknowledging the researcher's role in the co-construction of knowledge. This necessitates a reflexive examination of the researcher's positionality (Bell and Singh-Sengupta, 2022: 7). For this study on television format development, the researcher navigates a complex insider/outsider role, a positionality that offers both advantages and challenges (Bell and Singh-Sengupta, 2022: 31).

As an insider with direct experience of television production, particularly within the ARD/BR context, the researcher gained an in-depth understanding of industry practices, cultural nuances and organisational dynamics. At the same time, Charmaz (2017: 39) reminds us that 'standpoints emanating from our status and positions are ideological'. This necessitates a careful balance, as while insider status can facilitate access to specific settings, internal meetings, and restricted information, it needs to be managed to maintain analytical distance from the phenomena under investigation. However, it can also foster a greater degree of trust with participants, as they may perceive the researcher as having a shared understanding of their professional world (Bell and Singh-Sengupta, 2022: 162). Trust is a sensitive element that requires careful judgement regarding the publication of potentially sensitive information. In this study, trust proved particularly valuable during periods of significant constraint, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when restrictions precluded physical access to workshops and made the process of building trust more challenging. Concurrently, an 'outsider' perspective is maintained, particularly concerning aspects such as

commissioning strategies, broader storytelling trends, and distribution choices where the researcher has no direct operational involvement. This outsider stance is vital for preserving academic objectivity and critical distance, preventing findings from being unduly influenced by personal biases or ingrained industry norms (Bryman, 2013). It allows for a critical evaluation of practices and trends from a more detached viewpoint, essential for balanced and comprehensive academic inquiry. The fluidity of this insider/outsider identity is acknowledged, as it can shift depending on the specific context, organisation, or individuals involved (Bruskin, 2019). This dual positionality, when managed reflexively, enriches the research by enabling a multi-faceted engagement with the subject matter. It supports a nuanced exploration of both micro-level (individual practices, cultural shifts) and macro-level (industry-wide structural changes) aspects of transformation within the broadcasting sector, particularly in the face of digital innovation. Throughout the research process, reflexive journaling and peer debriefing, discussed in Section 4.5, were employed to critically monitor how this positionality might shape interactions, interpretations, and the overall research narrative.

4.2 Methodological Approach

Having established the philosophical bedrock of interpretivism and social constructivism, the discussion now turns to the specific methodological strategies chosen to operationalise these principles in the empirical investigation. This section begins by justifying the selection of a qualitative research paradigm, followed by an in-depth exploration of Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) as the core methodology and Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) as the chosen analytical strategy.

Rationale for Qualitative, Empirical Inquiry in Television Production Studies

Given the research aim of exploring the nuanced processes, experiences, and meanings associated with television format development in a rapidly evolving media landscape, a qualitative research approach was selected as most appropriate. Qualitative methodologies are designed to facilitate a deep, interpretive analysis of social phenomena within their natural settings (Creswell and Poth, 2024: 5; Deniz and Lincoln, 2018a: 10). Unlike quantitative approaches that focus on numerical data and statistical generalisation, qualitative research seeks to understand the 'how' and 'why' behind human actions and social interactions. This approach generates rich, descriptive data that captures complexity and context (Miles et al., 2020: 8).

This study aims to understand how television professionals co-construct meaning, navigate power dynamics, adapt to market fragmentation, and respond to evolving creative and technological pressures. Such objectives necessitate an approach that can capture the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals in the television industry. Qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews and observational case studies, allow for the flexibility required to explore emergent perspectives. This renders qualitative methods essential to the inductive theory-building process. While acknowledging the 'essential tensions' inherent in qualitative research (Cardano, 2020: 26), its strength lies in its capacity to provide contextually rich and holistically intricate understandings. This makes qualitative methodology ideally suited for investigating the dynamics among professionals within different positions.

Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) as an Emergent Strategy

Grounded Theory (GT) was originally developed in sociology (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1997) and later applied in organisational research (Bryman and Beynon, 2013) and healthcare studies (Levitt et al., 2017). More recently, it has gained relevance in management and technology studies (Pinnington et al., 2016). Over time, three major strands of grounded theory have emerged, reflecting distinct philosophical orientations.

Table 4-11: Emerging Grounded Theories

Dimension	Glaser (Classic GT)	Strauss and Corbin (Straussian GT)	Charmaz (Constructivist GT)
Philosophical Paradigm	Post-positivist (objectivity, discovery, neutrality)	Constructivist: Pragmatist / symbolic interactionist with post-positivist elements	Constructivist-interpretivist
Ontology (Nature of Reality)	Critical realism: reality exists independently; researcher uncovers patterns	Relativist but pragmatic: reality is socially constructed but can be systematically studied	Relativist: multiple realities constructed through interaction
Epistemology (Nature of Knowledge)	Realist / Objectivist: researcher discovers theory; theory emerges from data with minimal researcher influence	Contextualist: Modified objectivist-interpretivist: researcher co-constructs meaning, applies systematic coding	Subjectivist / co-constructivist: knowledge co-produced by researcher and participants; reflexivity central
Methodology (Research Practice)	Inductive discovery; emergent coding	Systematic coding; axial coding; verification	Inductive; 'iterative, comparative, interactive, abductive method' (Charmaz, 2011: 361)

Source: Adapted from Charmaz (2011, 2014, 2021)

The table illustrates a shift within grounded theory. It presents transitions from discovery (Glaser, 1978) to systematisation (Strauss and Corbin, 1997) to co-construction (Charmaz, 2014). Glaser viewed theory as objectively emerging from data, Strauss and Corbin introduced structured coding, and Charmaz repositioned the researcher as a co-constructor of meaning, emphasising reflexivity and flexibility. These constructive elements led her to establish the Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) approach.

Constructed Grounded Theory

This study employs CGT, as developed by Charmaz (2006, 2011, 2021), as its primary methodological framework. This is because it offers a systematic yet flexible approach to generating theory that is grounded in empirical data. However, it is important to recall what Corbin and Strauss (2008: 103) observed: 'concepts alone do not make theory. Concepts must be linked and elaborated with detail in order to construct theory out of data'. Although CGT has emerged from broader methodological debates within the grounded theory tradition, it remains underutilised in media studies. However, I regard CGT as helpful for the

purposes of this study, since it reconceptualises the theory-building process by positioning theories as constructed rather than discovered (Glaser, 2002; Thornberg, 2012: 248). This establishes the researcher as an active interpreter rather than neutral observer (Charmaz, 2014). Further, while induction remains the core process, deductive reasoning is applied as questions develop and structured insights emerge, facilitating progression from generalisation to theory (Charmaz, 2014). This aligns with social constructivist principles that emphasise the iterative nature of knowledge construction through researcher-participant interaction and relationship building (Charmaz and Keller, 2019: 403). Generally, CGT insists on inductive approaches to theory generation rather than verification, reflecting its commitment to emergent understanding (Charmaz, 2006).

The epistemological shift necessitates a structured analytical framework comprising open, focused, and theoretical coding phases. It simultaneously advocates preliminary literature engagement to establish existing knowledge boundaries (Thornberg, 2012). However, this approach generates methodological tension. Critics argue that CGT's constructivist orientation produces descriptive rather than explanatory theoretical outcomes (Hernandez and Andrews, 2012). These debates reflect deeper epistemological questions concerning the researcher's interpretive role. They highlight the contested nature of knowledge production in qualitative media research. This study addresses these critiques by combining CGT's descriptive insights with critical political economy perspectives. This generates more robust explanatory frameworks for understanding television industry dynamics.

CGT and Coding

For this study, data analysis commences with the first piece of data, informing subsequent data collection efforts such as refining interview questions or pursuing emergent leads through theoretical sampling. This iterative nature allows for the gradual emergence and refinement of conceptual categories and their relationships. Indeed, within this research, such iterative quality profoundly shaped the analysis stage itself. For instance, during my initial open coding of the interview transcripts, several provisional codes, including 'audience metrics anxiety', 'KPI pressure' and 'creative intuition vs. numbers', initially emerged. As the analysis progressed and these codes were comparatively revisited, I began to discern a higher-order pattern. In this study, a higher-order pattern refers to an abstract conceptual category that emerges through the comparison and synthesis of multiple lower-level codes. Rather than simply describing surface-level themes, higher-order patterns capture underlying processes or logics that help explain how participants navigate complex phenomena. For example, through constant comparison, the category 'Negotiating Data-

Driven Creative Tensions' was developed to represent a recurring process observed across interviews and case studies, whereby professionals actively manage the tensions between creative autonomy and institutional demands for audience responsiveness. The establishment of new categories subsequently prompted my re-examination of previously coded data to ascertain whether other instances aligned with this broader theme, a process which, in turn, often led to the merging or re-definition of the initial codes. This iterative nature, therefore, allowed for the gradual emergence and refinement of conceptual categories. Such insights emerged through sustained analytical engagement with the data, and constructivist grounded theory (CGT), as developed by Charmaz, provides a practical pathway for generating middle-range theory in Merton's (1968) sense. Middle-range theory refers to theoretical explanations that operate between narrowly empirical descriptions and highly abstract grand theory. These theories are designed to explain specific social processes through concepts that are sufficiently abstract to travel beyond individual cases, yet closely anchored in empirical observations. Rather than seeking universal laws, this approach aims to generate analytically precise explanations that can be cumulatively developed and empirically scrutinised. Since the 2000s, scholarship has reaffirmed the value of middle-range theorising, particularly in qualitative and process-oriented research. For example, Hedström and Udehn (2009) emphasise its capacity to identify social mechanisms and patterned relations without overextending claims of generality, while Swedberg, (2014) underscores its importance for theory construction grounded in empirical research practice. In media and communication studies, this orientation resonates with the work of Couldry (2012, 2019), whose analyses of media power, institutions, and practices exemplify conceptually ambitious yet empirically grounded explanations operating at the middle range. In this study, middle-range theory is operationalised through constructivist grounded theory (CGT), following Charmaz (2014), as an inductive and iterative process of coding and constant comparison. Initial and focused coding are used to move from data-proximate interpretations towards more abstract categories that capture recurring patterns in how audiences are constructed, valued, and segmented within format development practices. These categories do not aspire to universal explanatory status; instead, they function as middle-range theoretical contributions that account for observed practices across comparable institutional and organisational contexts. In this way, the study aligns middle-range theorising with CGT's emphasis on interpretive analysis while maintaining analytic rigour and theoretical portability. Within the CGT tradition, coding is understood as an interpretive act rather than a purely technical procedure. Charmaz and Bryant (2019: 549) stressed that researchers co-construct meaning with participants, making reflexivity central to how codes are generated, clustered, and developed into themes. Bryant (2017) similarly

emphasises that coding should be seen as a creative process of theorisation, where researchers identify patterns of agency, structures of power, and narrative logics. In this context, codes are not only regarded as descriptive labels but also as analytic tools that support interpretation and theorisation. In practice, this means that coding with attention to agency highlights how participants articulate their capacity to act, decide, and resist. At the same time, coding for power surfaces the asymmetries and constraints within which agency is exercised. This echoes Bryant's insistence that grounded theory must grapple with social structures. Finally, coding for narrative involves examining how participants structure their account. This includes turning points or resolutions situated within broader cultural and institutional contexts.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) for Coding and Map Meaning-Making

The overall excellence and trustworthiness of the research 'rests in large parts on the excellence of the coding' (Strauss, 1987: 27). This forms the foundation for subsequent theme development and interpretation (Braun and Clarke, 2021: 236). Within the overarching framework of CGT, Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), as developed by Braun and Clarke (2020), is employed as the specific strategy for analysing qualitative data. RTA is a widely used method for identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes found within a dataset. According to Braun and Clarke (2021: 12), it offers a theoretically flexible approach that enables researchers to identify inconsistencies and make appropriate corrections. Hence, this approach can be adapted to different epistemological positions, making it particularly compatible with the social constructivist orientation and the CGT framework adopted in this study.

The 'reflexive' aspect of RTA appears pertinent. It emphasises the researcher's active and thoughtful role in the identification and interpretation of themes (Braun and Clarke, 2021: 287). Themes are not seen as passively emerging from the data but are actively constructed by the researcher through deep engagement with the data and a continuous process of interpretation and refinement (Braun and Clarke, 2021: 138). This aligns with CGT's view of the researcher as an active participant in knowledge production while minimising pre-conception. Braun and Clarke (2021: 34) outline a six-phase process for conducting RTA, which provides a clear and systematic guide for analysis. In this study, Braun and Clarke's six phases of RTA are operationalised as outlined in the table below, demonstrating how each phase was adapted to the specific context of this television production study.

Table 4-12: Application of Braun and Clarke's Six Phases of RTA in this Study

Phase (Braun and Clarke, 2006)	Brief Description	Application in this Study
1. Familiarisation with the data	Immersing in the data through transcription, repeated reading, and noting initial ideas.	Transcripts from interviews, fieldnotes from conferences/workshops, and organisational documents were transcribed, read repeatedly, and annotated with initial reflections on production practices and data use.
2. Generating initial codes	Systematically coding interesting characteristics across the dataset, often inductively.	Key characteristics of commissioning, development and production practices, data-driven decision-making, and professional identities were coded inductively, maintaining sensitivity to the field context.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes and examining relationships between them.	Codes were grouped into themes such as 'data as authority', 'creative negotiation', and 'risk management', reflecting tensions in format development.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking whether themes work across coded extracts and the dataset as a whole.	Themes were refined against the full dataset, ensuring coherence across interviews, documents, and observations, and revised where overlap or gaps appeared.
5. Defining and naming themes	Refining and clearly articulating each theme's scope and focus.	Themes were sharpened to highlight their essence, e.g., 'audience data as cultural currency', capturing how data circulate as symbolic and organisational resources.
6. Producing the report	Writing up a coherent and compelling account, supported by extracts.	Themes were contextualised within the broader analysis of television production, with illustrative extracts used to substantiate claims in the findings chapters.

Source: Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006)

In this study, RTA followed the six-phase process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019). The first phase involved familiarisation with the data through transcription and, where necessary, translation of interview material. This was followed by repeated reading and initial note-taking to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives. During the second phase, I generated initial codes by systematically identifying meaningful categories across the dataset. Coding was primarily inductive, allowing patterns to emerge from the data rather than being guided by predefined categories. In the third phase, I searched for

themes by grouping related codes and exploring how they could be combined to reflect broader processes and meanings relevant to format development practices. The fourth phase involved reviewing these preliminary themes to ensure that they accurately represented both the coded extracts and dataset as a whole. At this stage, thematic maps were developed to visualise relationships between themes and subthemes. The fifth phase focused on defining and naming themes. Here, I refined the analysis by identifying the central concept, or 'essence', of each theme and clarifying how each contributed to understanding professional practices within the television and streaming industries. The final phase involved producing an analytical report and presenting an integrated and interpretive account of the findings. This write-up combined thematic interpretation with illustrative excerpts from the interviews, highlighting how participants negotiated the interplay between creative, institutional, and data-driven logics in their work. The systematic yet flexible nature of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), coupled with its emphasis on researcher reflexivity, makes it a valuable analytical complement to Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT). Some researchers integrate RTA's coding and theme development techniques within a broader CGT framework, particularly when their focus lies in generating conceptually rich interpretations rather than fully developed middle-range theories as explained in Section 4.2.

4.3 Research Design and Implementation

This section transitions from broader methodological strategies to the practical execution of the research. It details the sampling strategy employed to select participants and data sources, and the diverse data collection methods used to gather rich, multifaceted empirical material. Based on these considerations, a conceptual model has been developed for this study which conceptualises the journey of a format as a multi-stage pipeline where various practitioners strategically navigate institutional constraints and market demands. A core focus of this model, and therefore this study, is to understand how various forms of value – creative, cultural, and economic – are defined, negotiated, measured, and articulated at critical junctures. The 'mediated' dimension of the framework specifically addresses how streaming platforms, audience data, and applied methodologies shape these processes. The application of this model (see Chapter 7) facilitates a systematic comparison of these dynamics within and between distinct UK and German contexts (see Chapter 2).

Sampling Strategy: Purposeful Access to Industry Actors and Artefacts

Consistent with the qualitative methodology employed, which prioritises depth and context, the approach of gathering empirical material was carefully considered. The selection of

participants and data sources was guided by the principles of purposive sampling supplemented by snowball sampling to ensure the inclusion of information-rich cases relevant to the research questions (Patton, 2015: 298). The primary strategy involved purposively selecting senior practitioners and key informants who, due to their roles and experience, could provide deep insights into television format production, research, commissioning, and distribution in the UK and Germany. This includes individuals in roles such as producers, commissioners, executives, and media consultants. Initial contact was often facilitated through attendance at major television industry conferences, providing opportunities for preliminary, informal 'pre-talks'. Registration for the major television industry conferences MIPCOM and MIPTV provided me with access to a complete attendance list. The list was subsequently categorised by title, organisational affiliation, job category, and country. This categorisation supported my preparation, enabling me to identify and reach out to some potential interviewees ahead of the conferences. While not all responded, and some were unsuitable given their professional background, others were approached and interviewed during the conference. Over 55 pre-talks, typically lasting between five and fifteen minutes, were conducted to explain the research and identify suitable candidates for in-depth interviews. From these, 22 full interviews were conducted.

To access harder-to-reach individuals or those in highly specialised roles, snowball sampling was employed (Patton, 2015: 298), where interviewed participants recommended other potential interviewees. However, in practice, this method yielded limited success. Several individuals declined to participate for various reasons. Some did not consider themselves sufficiently knowledgeable about the specific focus of the study – namely, the influence of data on format commissioning/development/production – emphasising that their expertise lay strictly within production or commissioning, not data-informed decision-making. Others expressed hesitation in discussing internal processes within their organisations, citing concerns over confidentiality or corporate policy. In certain cases, participants either declined without explanation or were unavailable because of time constraints. Additionally, a number of suggested contacts had to be excluded from the sample because of their junior professional status, which was deemed misaligned with the study's focus on decision-making authority. In other instances, organisational restrictions prevented individuals from participating altogether. To mitigate these constraints and enrich the contextual grounding of the study, 55 informal pre-interview conversations were conducted with professionals during major industry events. These pre-talks enabled scoping of key themes and identification of knowledgeable participants for follow-up interviews. A breakdown of the conferences attended is provided below.

Table 4-13: TV Industry Conferences Attended

Conference/Event	Location	Year
MIPCOM	Cannes	2018
Edinburgh TV Festival	Edinburgh	2018
Media Production Show	London	2019
MIPTV/MIPFormats	Cannes	2019
Medientage (Media Days)	Munich	2022

Saturation

Data collection, particularly for interviews, continued until a point of theoretical saturation was approached, meaning new data no longer generated new theoretical insights and existing categories were well-developed (Charmaz, 2006, 2019b; Patton, 2015: 409). For instance, within this study, after approximately the 18th interview, it was observed that while participants continued to provide rich experiential accounts, the emerging conceptual categories – such as ‘perceived versus actual influence of audience data on commissioning decisions’ or ‘navigating creative autonomy within data-informed frameworks’ – were consistently being reinforced rather than expanded with new properties or fundamentally different perspectives. Subsequent interviews, while valuable for confirming the robustness of and variation within these established categories, did not generate substantially new core themes. They also did not challenge the interrelationships that had been identified between them, indicating that further data collection on these central aspects was unlikely to substantively alter the development of theoretical understanding. The final sample of 22 in-depth interviews was deemed adequate for this purpose.

In contrast, gaining direct interview access from senior executives at the highest level of broadcasting organisations has often proved difficult. Interview requests were typically managed and frequently declined by secretaries or press departments acting as gatekeepers. Consequently, industry talks were selected as a valuable supplementary data source. These public presentations provided access to the perspectives and strategic pronouncements of otherwise less accessible executives, offering important institution-level insights into innovation discourses and market strategies that complemented the more practice-oriented interview data. The selection of these talks was guided by the seniority of

the speakers and the direct relevance of their presentations to the study's core themes. For example, at MIPCOM 2019, a keynote session by Max Conze, the relatively newly appointed CEO of ProSiebenSat.1, offered a timely opportunity. Given his recent appointment, his presentation and the subsequent Q&A session were particularly focused on his vision for the strategic direction (*strategische Ausrichtung*) of the German commercial broadcaster, addressing pertinent questions regarding which genres he prioritised, and what buying and distribution strategies he considered viable for the channels within the group. Such talks were selected based on the seniority of the speaker and the direct relevance of their presentations to the study's core themes.

The selection of case studies for workshop observations required careful consideration due to the prevailing circumstances (see Chapter 6). Even in 2022, residual COVID-19 restrictions continued to impede research access, with many broadcasters declining requests for in-person attendance at internal workshops and strategic meetings. The foundation of trust necessary for qualitative research was difficult to establish remotely with new contacts, particularly during a period of considerable operational pressure across the industry. Given these constraints, I decided to approach two distinct divisions within ARD, the organisation where I was employed at the time. Importantly, while I had an existing professional affiliation, I was not involved in the development or production of any of the specific formats under observation within these selected divisions, thus maintaining an appropriate degree of researcher distance. The two case studies involving workshop observations were therefore selected opportunistically based on access granted by the ARD in 2022, providing focused contexts for observing developmental processes. This multi-pronged sampling strategy aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives from different segments of the television industry in both the UK and Germany.

Data Acquisition at broadcasters and TV Productions

This study adopts a qualitative multi-method design, drawing on the distinction made by Clark et al. (2021: 557) distinction between mixed-methods and multi-method qualitative research. While mixed-methods research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, multi-method qualitative research integrates several qualitative strategies within a single study. The present research follows the latter, bringing together interviews, observations, document analysis, and the analysis of industry talks. This design enables different sources of qualitative evidence to complement one another, thereby producing a richer and more credible account of television production practices. It also makes it possible to capture how professionals construct the meaning of audience data and negotiate power.

For this research, four methods were employed. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with producers, commissioners and consultants. Second, participant observation took place during two strategic workshops. Third, keynote industry talks from major conferences in London, Cannes and Munich were analysed. Finally, selected documents provided by interviewees and audience measurement institutions were examined. Together, this multi-method design was intended to address the research questions in a comprehensive and robust manner. Such an approach, widely endorsed in research practice, facilitates a more robust and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2012: 627; Flick, 2018). Further, this combination allows for comparative analysis between the UK and Germany. This allowed to contrast articulated perspectives from interviews with observed strategic decision-making in workshops and professional interactions. Furthermore, it considers discursive constructions and nuanced appreciation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) from high-profile industry presentations. In a multi-method design, such divergences are not treated as weaknesses but as opportunities to generate richer insights, since they expose how different methods illuminate complementary aspects of the same phenomenon (Bryman, 2021: 556). By leveraging these diverse data sources, the study aimed to mitigate potential biases linked to any individual method. Concurrently, the research methodology was extended to incorporate the analysis of selected organisational documents (Chapter 5 and 6) thereby fostering a richer, multi-faceted perspective.

Interviews with Producers, Commissioners, and Consultants

Semi-structured interviews constitute a core data collection method, facilitating in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives. Fifty-five short pre-interview talks were carried out to inform the selection and scheduling of participants. On this basis, twenty-two in-depth interviews were conducted with senior practitioners directly involved in format development: thirteen working at UK broadcasters and production companies, and nine at German broadcasters. To ensure a multifaceted perspective on industry practice, the sample was purposively structured to include a range of professional roles. Eleven participants were employed directly by broadcasters, seven worked for large production companies, three were former broadcast practitioners working for a television consultancy, and one was a freelance director-producer. The participants from production companies were selected from those characterised by large in-house production and international distribution units. This method offers a balance between focused inquiry and flexibility (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009), using an interview guide with open-ended questions but allowing for deviation to

explore emergent themes. This aligns with social constructivist epistemology, viewing the interview as a site of co-construction of meaning (Charmaz, 2000: 307), following constant construction and reconstruction (Clark et al., 2021: 29). Participants, as detailed in Table 4-14, held diverse roles across various media organisations in the UK and Germany.

Interview questions were developed iteratively, informed by a literature review and insights from pre-talks. The questionnaire (see Appendix B) was tailored to each participant's expertise, focusing on format innovation, audience engagement, data utilisation, and organisational changes. Seventeen interviews were conducted face-to-face, while five were conducted online after a short personal meeting during a conference. Interviews typically lasted 60–90 minutes, were audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. German interviews were translated into English by the researcher with careful attention to nuances. Field notes were used to capture contextual details. Two pilot interviews were conducted but excluded from the final dataset due to their limited relevance to the study. Nevertheless, they proved valuable in refining the interview guide.

Prior to the interview, participants confirmed their willingness to share this information for the purposes of the study and provided informed consent. To de-identify them, I often refer to them as 'line manager' or 'project leader' to avoid any identification issues. If a participant provided full consent and agreed to be identified, their professional title was included. However, names and further details are still withheld to protect the respondents

Table 4-14: Interview Participants

Title	Affiliation	Year
Channel Controller	Broadcaster (UK)	03/2018
Head of Content Strategy	TV Consultancy/Social Agency (Germany)	03/2018
Head of Strategy	TV Consultancy/Broadcaster (Germany/Switzerland)	04/2018
Managing Director	TV Production Company (UK)	05/2018
Commissioning Editor	TV Production Company (UK)	03/2019
Commissioning Editor	Broadcaster (UK)	03/2019
CEO	TV Production Company (UK/US)	05/2019
Head of Development (Line Manager)	TV Production Company (UK)	05/2019
Head of Digital Strategy (Line Manager)	Broadcaster (Germany/Switzerland)	06/2019
Media Consultant	TV Consultancy (UK)	06/2019
Media Consultant	TV Production Company (Germany)	10/2019
Vice President (Line Manager)	TV Production Company (UK)	10/2019
Line Producer (Line Manager)	Broadcaster (UK)	10/2019
Commissioning Editor	Broadcaster (UK)	02/2020
Commissioning Editor	Broadcaster (UK)	02/2020
Director/Producer	Freelancer (Germany)	03/2020
Head of Acquisitions (Line Manager)	TV Production Company (UK)	03/2020
Producer/Executive	Broadcaster (UK)	03/2020
Head of Digital Development	Broadcaster (Germany)	03/2022
Head of Digital Production (Line Manager)	Broadcaster (Germany)	03/2022
Head of Editorial Production	Broadcaster (Germany)	04/2022
Head of Editorial (Line Manager)	Broadcaster (Germany)	10/2022

The integration of these data collection methods provided a comprehensive view of the internal workings of broadcasters. Through a thematic analysis of the rich, multi-dimensional data gathered, several key themes emerged, providing insights into the practices, processes, and relationships within media organisations. The practice of attending television trade fairs and listening to the discourse of key leaders within the broadcasting industry in France, UK and Germany offered invaluable insights into the strategic orientations of media

organisations as they navigate the confluence of streaming and traditional broadcasting. These discursive forums often reveal the shifting market dynamics and evolving priorities of format development and sales strategies. Nonetheless, it is relevant to acknowledge that these discussions seldom constitute in-depth evaluations. The articulated visions at such gatherings often paint a vivid portrait of the industry's position – whether it is the BBC's strategic emphasis on storytelling that resonates across demographics, or ZDF's dedication to maintaining a robust presence in a marketplace saturated with streaming. Nonetheless, it is crucial to approach these public pronouncements with a critical eye. I also recognise that the narratives constructed and disseminated at such events are often intended to cast these organisations' strategies in a positive light. They may not fully divulge the complexities and challenges inherent in adapting to rapidly changing technological landscapes and audience expectations. Furthermore, the portrayal of these strategies should be considered within the broader political and economic context that influences the operations of public service broadcasters. As such, the information gleaned from trade fairs contributes to the understanding of broadcaster strategies.

Incorporating the methodological insights provided by Thornberg (2012: 252), which in turn reference the work of Strauss and Corbin (2008), my ethnographic exploration of trade fair discourses deliberately adhered to three pivotal analytical strategies. These comprised a) systematically engaging in comparative thinking across different presentations and industry contexts, b) actively soliciting multiple viewpoints on a given industry event or trend through subsequent interviews or informal discussions, and c) consciously accumulating data pertaining to the same overarching themes from various angles. This structured approach underpinned the critical examination of public pronouncements made by broadcasting leaders at such industry forums. For instance, if a senior executive from a public service broadcaster publicly championed a new digital-first strategy at a trade fair, emphasising audience reach among younger demographics, this assertion was not taken at face value. Instead, it was subjected to comparative analysis against the perspectives offered by commissioning editors and producers from the same institution during in-depth interviews (who might have highlighted internal resource challenges or differing priorities) and potentially contrasted with observations from internal strategy workshops. These accounts encompassed public-facing strategic vision, insights from on-the-ground practitioners, and internal operational discussions.

Industry Talks at Television Conferences as a Form of Field Discourse

To supplement the interview data and capture broader industry discourses, eight presentations by senior media executives at major television conferences were analysed. In these contexts, industry leaders frequently articulate strategic visions and position themselves as particular types of social actors (Fairclough, 2003: 146). For example, executive managers were constructed by conference hosts and constructed themselves as visionary leaders or industry changers (see Chapter 5). Such labels not only framed them as distinct actors but also legitimised their authority in shaping the field's future trajectory. Yet these designations can be understood as rhetorical constructions that serve to reinforce professional hierarchies and consolidate symbolic power. In addition, insights gained from attending trade fairs informed the research, allowing for comparative reflection across keynote talks and interview data. This selection ensured that the study engaged with authoritative voices and captured how industry leaders sought to shape professional discourse in public settings.

Table 4-15: Speakers Analysed from Industry Talks

Name	Affiliation	Role	Conference/Event	Year	Location
Patrick Holland	BBC Two	Channel Controller	Edinburgh TV Festival	2017	Edinburgh
Kevin Lygo	ITV	Director of Television	Edinburgh TV Festival	2018	Edinburgh
Max Conze	ProSiebenSat.1	CEO	MIPCOM	2019	Cannes
Shona Fraser	RTL II	Head of Entertainment	MIPTV	2019	Cannes
Simon Downing	Discovery	VP Original Content, UK - Eire	Content London	2022	London (Online)
Zai Bennett	Sky	Managing Director, Content	Royal Television Society	2023	London
Ralf Rückauer	ZDF Studios	Vice President Unscripted	MIPCOM	2023	Cannes Online
Sumi Connock	BBC Studios	Creative Director of Formats	MIPCOM	2023	Cannes Online

The selection of these speakers was purposive, guided by their senior status and influential positions within the industry hierarchy. As key decision-makers, their public statements are not merely individual commentary, but powerful articulations of institutional strategy. Consequently, their perspectives are crucial for understanding how strategic agendas are set and disseminated at the highest levels in the media landscape.

The Situated Practice of Format Development: Insights from Digital Participant observations

Another method employed in this study was digital participant observation during two workshops. In this study, digital participant observation was employed as an additional element to complement the previously outlined methods and was situated within a broader digital ethnographic approach. Digital ethnography can incorporate a range of theoretical perspectives, yet it is most commonly associated with anthropological and sociological traditions as noted by Pink et al. (2015: 5). They identify five key principles of digital ethnography – multiplicity, a non-digital-centric orientation, openness, reflexivity and unorthodoxy – which align closely with the design of this study. This approach permits attention to multiple sites and media, situates digital practices within wider organisational and material contexts, and supports a flexible and reflexive engagement with the field as production practices and data uses emerge over time. Here, digital participant observation was used to investigate the situated practices of format development within the production field. Both digital participant observations for this study focused on how editors, product specialists and managers negotiate priorities, invoke audience and performance data, and translate institutional strategies into content decisions. However, the second workshop I observed focused on experiences of digital format processes and their translation into wider departmental processes. These environments were not ‘natural settings’ in the traditional ethnographic sense but constructed organisational spaces where interactions, practices, and meanings unfolded in the digital fields of broadcasters (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019: 139).

During both workshops, I acted as a field observer rather than an active participant. I was invited as an external researcher, held no formal role in decision-making and did not contribute to the discussions, aside from occasional clarifying questions before or after the meetings. This position enabled me to concentrate on how editors, product specialists and managers framed problems, invoked audience and performance data and translated institutional strategies into concrete content decisions. Field notes were taken discreetly during the workshops and expanded shortly afterwards, accompanied by reflexive memos to

distinguish descriptive accounts from my own interpretations. Furthermore, data collection involved the production of detailed field notes capturing discussions, demonstrations, and informal interactions among participants. These records were supplemented by relevant organisational materials made accessible during and after the workshops, which provided additional contextual information and supported the interpretation of observed practices. Particular attention was paid to documenting how collective decision-making and meaning-making unfolded within the workshops, and how these practices related to wider dynamics in the television production field. All observations were conducted in accordance with established ethical protocols. Confidentiality was preserved, informed consent was secured from participants, and care was taken to ensure that the documentation process did not interfere with or unduly influence the workshop proceedings. However, this method is subject to limitations. The observations are confined to a small number of meetings, provide only a situated snapshot of practices and may be affected by participants' awareness of being observed. These constraints were mitigated by embedding digital participant observation as part of digital ethnography within a multi-method design and connecting it with interview data, keynote speech analysis, and documents (see Section 1.3).

Analysis of Strategic Organisational Documents Pertaining to Format Development

As Bowen (2009) and Prior (2003) suggest, and as Chand (2025: 303) elaborates, documents can yield insights into formal strategies and institutional histories that are not always explicitly captured through interviews or observations. Within this analysis, a particularly salient piece was the ARD/BR 'Zielgruppenlandkarte' (Target Group Landscape), a comprehensive audience segmentation map (see Section 6.1). This document provides useful insight by delineating not only the audience segments currently reached by public broadcasters' programming but, more critically, identifying specific societal groups that are under-reached. The 'Zielgruppenlandkarte' further articulates strategic imperatives, offering perspectives on for whom new formats need to be developed to bridge these engagement gaps. This study aims to understand how broadcasters are attempting to innovate in response to declining youth engagement with television. This map offers direct evidence of how that specific demographic is identified as a priority, what characteristics are attributed to them, and potentially, the initial strategic thinking behind developing formats intended to recapture their attention. Consequently, the examination of this document extends beyond its content to explore how its insights are communicated and integrated into internal meetings and strategic discussions surrounding future format development. Hence, it provides a clearer understanding of how audience intelligence practically informs creative and strategic decision making within the organisation. For example, the audience

segmentation map offered concrete evidence of how target groups were conceptualised, as illustrated in Figure 4. Document analysis is also limited by the selective availability of materials, as organisations typically release only partial or curated records, which may not fully reflect internal practices. Only a few documents on workflows, practices and applied theories were shared, but they were integrated to complement interviews, observations and industry talks.

4.4 Data Management and Analytical Integration

This section explains how the data was managed, stored, and analysed to ensure consistency, transparency, and credibility throughout the research process. Beginning with data preparation and organisation, it outlines the processes of transcription, translation, and secure storage that formed the foundation for subsequent analysis. The section then demonstrates how these preparatory measures supported the development of coding frameworks and NVivo-assisted analysis across multiple data sources. Finally, it shows how these methodological steps collectively established a robust analytical framework across all four methods of qualitative analysis while maintaining ethical standards for data handling and participant confidentiality.

Language Considerations, Transcriptions, and Translation

Robust qualitative analysis depends not only on the richness of the data but also on the integrity of its management. Prior to engaging in detailed interpretation, the dataset required systematic preparation to ensure consistency, transparency, and analytical rigour. This means that my steps taken during the different stages of data collection and analysis were clearly reflected, since 'clarity around process and practice is vital' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 7). As Bazeley (2013: 407) highlights, tracing the steps leading to results and conclusions in a transparent manner is crucial. In this study, the transformation of audio-recorded interviews and relevant portions of industry talks into textual data constituted a critical interpretive step. To facilitate this, a primarily verbatim transcription approach was adopted to accurately capture spoken content, with particular attention to material relevant to the research questions. Minor utterances – such as stutters or excessive fillers - were typically removed unless they conveyed notable hesitation or meaning. Similarly, unrelated interruptions were omitted to maintain clarity. Decisions about the level of detail included in transcripts were made reflexively, guided by the analytical focus of the study. The focus was to interrogate how professionals talk about audiences and data (e.g. on language, metaphors, framing) and focus on decision-making processes (who is taking part, who

dominates, who authorises). Where statements were particularly significant, they are presented as direct quotations to preserve their original nuance and ensure a higher degree of interpretive accuracy. Most transcripts are produced manually because transcription software trials often yield imprecise results. Background noise, particularly during interviews conducted in public or semi-public settings, made it difficult for automatic transcription tools to produce accurate output. Only three interviews were partially transcribed using automated tools, followed by meticulous manual review and correction of the original audio. In cases of ambiguity, audio segments were replayed and cross-referenced with handwritten field notes. To ensure participant anonymity, pseudonyms and generic descriptors were assigned from the outset of the transcription process.

A significant portion of the data was collected in Germany. I first transcribed the German interviews verbatim and then translated them into English. As a native German speaker with advanced proficiency in academic British English, I was able to work closely with linguistic nuances and context-specific meanings that might be lost in outsourced translations, focusing on conceptual rather than literal equivalence (van Nes et al., 2010). When complex phrasing occurred, bilingual online dictionaries were consulted. A particular terminological challenge concerns the term 'Produkt'. In the German broadcasting context, 'Produkt' and 'Produktmanagement' can refer both to digital products (such as apps, websites or platform functions) and to programme brands or formats that are managed as 'products' within a portfolio. In English, however, 'product' is often associated primarily with digital or technology-oriented product management. In translating interview material, I therefore render 'Produkt' contextually: when interviewees referred to apps or platform functions, it is translated as 'digital product', whereas references to programme brands or strands are translated as 'format' or 'programme brand'. Another example is the phrase 'Wir müssen das intern abstimmen' which was translated as 'We need to align internally' rather than the more literal 'We must coordinate this internally', to better reflect the strategic connotation of internal consensus-building common in corporate settings. Similarly, 'Das ist Chefsache' was rendered as 'This is a senior management matter', instead of the literal 'This is the boss's business', to accurately convey hierarchical implications without colloquial ambiguity. Another illustrative instance involved the term 'Senderspezifikationen,' which refers to broadcaster-specific format requirements. Rather than using the literal 'broadcaster specifications', the term was translated as 'network deliverables', a more idiomatic industry equivalent in English-language media production contexts. Such decisions were made with the aim of preserving the intended meaning and context of participants' responses. Throughout the analysis, awareness of linguistic variances was maintained by focusing on

core concepts and interpretive themes rather than relying solely on keyword equivalence across languages.

Secure Data Storage, Organisation, and Digital Archiving

Systematic organisation and secure storage of data are crucial. Each interview, observation, and analysed document was stored as a separate, clearly labelled file. Audio files, transcripts, and field notes were stored in organised folders. As detailed in Section 4.3, all digital data were stored on encrypted hard drives and password protected university-approved cloud services. Physical notes were kept securely on a password protected USB stick. Once transcribed and translated, textual data were imported into NVivo (Version 12/2020), a qualitative data analysis software (QDAS). NVivo was used primarily as an organisational tool to manage large datasets, facilitate coding, and explore relationships across the data. Attributes were assigned to each data source to enable comparative queries. The software supported a structured yet flexible analytical process, enabling both inductive and deductive explorations of themes (Bazeley, 2013: 336). This systematic approach ensured data were accurate, accessible, securely stored, and handled ethically.

The Coding Process with CGT and RTA

RTA was applied as it supports reflexive awareness of 'prior frameworks and pre-existing knowledge' (Bazeley, 2013: 147). This made it well suited to my study's aim of examining professional practices, meanings, and power dynamics in a production context. The analysis followed the six phases set out by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2014) as presented in Section 4. During this process, aspects such as allowing a certain degree of contradiction and tolerating uncertainty are accepted as part of the analysis Braun and Clarke (2021: 7). My process began with data familiarisation. I thoroughly read and revisited my interview notes and summaries. Next, I generated initial codes manually. This allowed for the incremental creation of new codes and the inclusion of additional information. Coding can be manual or automatic. Manual coding requires meticulous reading of each response and assigning appropriate labels (Gibbs, 2018: 67). These codes are not just simple labels, but conceptual ones (Bryant and Charmaz, 2019: 168). The six-phase process was chosen in conjunction with coding, as it provides researchers with what Saldaña (2021: 19) frames as 'deeper control' and helps to capture complex meanings that algorithms may miss. Automatic coding, by contrast, employs computer algorithms to analyse data and assign labels automatically (Gibbs, 2018: 153). Although it is significantly faster, it may lack the subtlety and accuracy of human interpretation. For this reason, it should be considered merely an initial step (Basil,

2003: 145). For this study, coding proceeded in stages. First, all data were coded manually without the use of software. The material was then imported into NVivo and the initial manual coding scheme was applied and further refined. Only after this manual coding process was complete did I use NVivo's automatic coding tools as an additional layer to check for consistency, verify patterns, and identify possible gaps. Automatic coding was therefore not used as a starting point but as a secondary, technology-assisted check on the manually generated codes. This technology-assisted coding facilitated the management of large volumes of data and complemented, rather than replaced, the initial manual coding framework. The final steps of coding also followed a manual process to cluster different descriptions related to the same aspect. For example, accounts of 'iterative format development', 'seeding accompanying productions', and 'content validation' were clustered under a broader category 'digital-data-informed', which itself was grouped into the theme 're-visioning storytelling', all of which were established through manual coding. In this study, categories are understood as 'broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea' (Creswell, 2013: 186). The number of themes emerging from codes and categories remains relatively small, although there is no fixed or ideal number that must be achieved (Saldaña, 2021: 140). In line with Creswell's guidance, each text segment was assigned a single code rather than multiple overlapping codes (Creswell, 2015: 160).

The combination of manual and assisted automatic coding capitalised on the respective strengths of each approach, in line with the idea that 'coding evolves to handle the data over time' (Bazeley and Jackson, 2019: 65). The analytical process was not strictly linear but involved moving back and forth between data collection and analysis, a defining characteristic of CGT (Charmaz, 2014). The analysis began after the first interview, allowing emerging insights to inform subsequent data gathering. RTA provided the structured framework for systematic coding and theme development across different research methods within this iterative CGT cycle. For example, at MIPCOM 2019, a keynote session by Max Conze, then CEO of ProSiebenSat.1, emphasised the strategic use of audience segmentation and streaming viewership data in content commissioning. This framing of data as a commercial asset was further echoed in interviews with commissioning editors and in internal workshop discussions at ARD, where similar discourses around audience optimisation emerged. The multi-method approach of insights across different data sources enabled the refinement and expansion of themes in response to emerging conceptual categories. Throughout the process, the researcher's interpretative role was acknowledged through sustained reflexive engagement.

Addressing Bias and Researcher Reflexivity

The interpretative nature of qualitative research brings to the fore the critical consideration of potential researcher bias (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Far from viewing subjectivity as a flaw to be eliminated, the constructivist paradigm underpinning this study acknowledges its inescapable presence. Especially reflecting on the idea that ‘researchers, not participants, are obliged to be reflexive about what we bring to the scene’ (Charmaz, 2014: 27). I recognised the importance of critically examining my own assumptions, professional background, and positionality throughout the research process. This reflexive stance ensured that my interpretations were not treated as neutral but understood as situated, shaped by my insider knowledge of the television industry as well as my academic framing of the field. The imperative, therefore, is not to pursue an illusory objectivity, but to cultivate a sustained awareness of one’s own predispositions. This is connected to the need for systematic strategies that reduce undue influence. In turn, such measures strengthen the analytical integrity and trustworthiness of the findings (Saldaña, 2021: 354). The process of peer debriefing and supervisory dialogue added another critical layer to this reflexive process. Regular discussions with academic supervisors, each possessing expertise in qualitative methods, provided an external check on my interpretive work. These engagements offered a space to test emerging interpretations, question assumptions, and identify potential blind spots. Such collegial dialogue functioned not only as a form of analytic accountability but also as a means of enhancing depth and critical distance. Finally, the commitment to transparency in articulating the analytic process, as demonstrated throughout this chapter, represents an essential strategy for addressing bias. By clearly documenting the methodological decisions, interpretative pathways, and reflexive considerations, the study enables critical engagement with its knowledge claims. This openness reinforces the principle that qualitative research is situated and contingent.

4.5 Validity, Trustworthiness, and Ethical Integration

Ensuring validity and trustworthiness is a central concern in qualitative research, particularly when investigating professional practices within complex organisational settings. This section outlines the three measures taken to uphold the integrity of the study. It starts with credibility (approximating internal validity), followed by transferability (approximating external validity or generalisability). This is followed by dependability (approximating reliability) and confirmability (approximating objectivity). Ethical approval and informed consent procedures

are discussed first, followed by strategies employed to establish the plausibility and substantiation of claims. Attention is then given to the extent to which insights generated from this study can be meaningfully applied in broader contexts. Finally, the section highlights the importance of reflexivity, understood here as an ongoing critical engagement with the researcher's role, assumptions, and positionality throughout the research process.

Ethical Approval and Consent Procedures

Ethical integrity has been a paramount concern throughout this research project. The study initially received ethics approval from the University of East London (UEL) on 31st October 2017. Following the researcher's transfer, this approval was reviewed and subsequently endorsed by the University of the Arts London (UAL) in October 2020. No significant alterations to the research protocol would require additional ethical clearance. However, the unforeseen emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic required pragmatic adaptation. Specifically, workshop observations for case studies, originally planned with some in-person components, were transitioned to an online format where necessary to comply with public health regulations and ensure participant safety. This methodological shift was undertaken with meticulous attention to maintaining research integrity and ethical standards, particularly concerning participant anonymity and data security in digital environments.

Key ethical protocols observed throughout the study included meticulous attention to informed consent. Potential participants were provided with comprehensive information sheets detailing the study's aims, the nature of their involvement, data handling procedures, their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty, and how the findings would be disseminated. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. For industry talks, consent was generally implied by the public nature of the presentation, but analysis focused on publicly available recordings or transcripts where possible. Furthermore, confidentiality and anonymity were paramount. To protect participants' identities, all interview transcripts and observational notes were anonymised, using role descriptors rather than real names or specific company affiliations. Even when explicit consent for naming was granted, anonymisation was still applied.

Data security was another critical aspect, with all audio recordings, transcripts, field notes, and other sensitive data stored securely on a password-protected device. Data will be retained according to university policy and destroyed securely thereafter. Careful attention was given to participants' potential vulnerabilities, with measures taken to ensure a safe and respectful environment. In line with ethical principles of autonomy and informed consent, participants were explicitly reminded that they could end the interview at any time without

consequence. The power dynamic between researcher and participant was acknowledged and managed reflexively. The COVID-19 adaptations were also managed ethically by re-confirming consent for virtual observation and implementing secure communication platforms such as Microsoft Teams. Further details regarding the ethical approval process and the informed consent form can be found in Appendix A. These measures reflect a steadfast commitment to conducting research that is not only academically rigorous but also ethically sound.

Credibility: Plausibility and Substantiation of Claims

Credibility in qualitative research refers to the confidence that can be placed in the authenticity of the findings. It reflects the perspective of participants and the context in which the research was conducted. Further, it is about ensuring that the researcher's interpretations accurately represent the participants' subjective realities, meanings, and experiences (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Sandelowski, 1986).

Three primary strategies were implemented to enhance the credibility of this study, ensuring the findings accurately reflect the complexities of the field. The first strategy is prolonged engagement and persistent observation. I invested a sustained period (from 2017 to 2023) immersed in the field of television and digital format development. Beyond formal data collection activities, it included continuous monitoring of trade press and major market changes of the television and streaming industry. Such prolonged engagement facilitated a deep understanding of the nuances of industry culture. It also enabled the building of trust with participants, which was crucial for eliciting authentic accounts. The inclusion of direct, verbatim quotations from participants in the reporting of findings (as will be evident in Chapter 5 and 6) serve as a key mechanism for demonstrating credibility. These extracts allow readers to access participants' voices directly and to assess for themselves the extent to which the researcher's interpretations are plausibly supported by empirical data. The second strategy is a multi-method approach of data sources and methods. As detailed in Section 4.3 this was a core design element. Data was continuously collected from multiple sources. The convergence of findings across these varied data types and methods served to strengthen the credibility of emerging themes and interpretations. However, where data did not align, the study remained sensitive to contradictory evidence. For example, a divergence occurred when an executive at a British broadcaster framed measurement regimes as tools for 'meeting viewer expectation', while commissioners simultaneously framed them as 'restrictive metrics' that stifled risk-taking. Following Denzin (2023: 58), this discrepancy was not treated as a contradiction to be resolved, but as a revealing complexity that exposed the

tension between top-down digital formalisation and bottom-up methodological stress. The third strategy employed was the systematic exposure of the methodological framework and emerging findings to expert scrutiny. This process involved regular sessions with my supervisory team and some peer groups. In addition to these sessions, preliminary findings were presented at several peer-reviewed conferences, including ECREA, as well as at doctoral colloquia. Such engagement provided a valuable external critique of the research process, prompting the refinement of the study's conceptual boundaries. Through dialogue with senior scholars and peers, the analysis developed towards a more robust and sociologically grounded interpretation of the phenomena under investigation.

Transferability: From Situated Insight to Broader Application

Transferability addresses the extent to which findings can be applied to other contexts. In qualitative research, the aim is not statistical generalisation but to provide rich, contextualised insights that may resonate with or be meaningfully applied in other settings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 14). To facilitate this, the study provides what Geertz (2003: 165) frames as 'thick description' – moving beyond abstract coding to offer detailed accounts of the research context, participants, and processes. This allows readers to make informed judgments about applicability. While not statistically representative, it sought to reflect a diversity of perspectives across seniority levels, organisational types (public service, commercial, and independent), and national contexts (UK and Germany). For instance, participants ranged from commissioning editors and producers to senior executives and media consultants, allowing for a more layered understanding of how data-driven practices manifest across institutional and cultural settings. Notably, the cross-national dimension of the study further enhances the potential for transferability. By drawing on data from two structurally and culturally distinct television markets, the analysis can illuminate both commonalities and contrasts in practice. This may prove relevant to media scholars and practitioners operating in other national contexts undergoing similar transitions.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the philosophical, methodological and analytical foundations of the study, presenting a rigorous and reflexively informed framework for exploring contemporary television format development across the UK and German media industries. It began by outlining the ethical principles that guided the research – emphasising informed consent, participant confidentiality, data security, and the flexible yet ethically sound adaptation to unforeseen circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The research philosophy was

situated within an interpretivist ontology and a social constructivist epistemology, further enriched by insights from Bourdieu's structuralist constructivism. This theoretical orientation enabled a nuanced engagement with the interplay between structure and agency within the media field. Researcher reflexivity – especially in relation to insider/outsider positionality – was identified as a critical element of this philosophical stance, shaping both the generation and interpretation of knowledge throughout the study.

Methodologically, the rationale for adopting a qualitative, inductive approach was established through the selection of Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) as the overarching framework, supported by Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) as the primary analytical tool. This combination was selected for its capacity to accommodate complexity in the lived experiences of media practitioners. The transparent structure of RTA offers a systematic method for identifying and developing themes while remaining theoretically congruent with CGT's co-constructive ethos. The research methodology aimed to provide a clear rationale for the multi-method strategy. This approach integrated semi-structured interviews, industry talks, case studies, and strategic documents to construct a rich and diverse dataset. The chapter also detailed the integration of CGT and RTA in the analytical process. This included initial data familiarisation, iterative coding cycles, and theme development, culminating in the emergence of key themes such as 'Power Flow'. The use of NVivo software was selected as a practical aid for data management, rather than a substitute for interpretative analysis. Crucially, the study's commitment to trustworthiness was demonstrated through multiple strategies addressing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In sum, this chapter has aimed to present a robust, transparent, and theoretically grounded methodological framework that underpins the empirical analysis presented in the subsequent chapters. This framework sets the stage for these analytical chapters, in which the identified dynamics are explored in depth through the voices, practices, and perspectives of industry participants.

Chapter 5: A Field in Conflict: The Politics of Format Strategies and Decision-Making

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of empirical material drawn from interviews conducted between 2018 and 2022, analyses of selected industry keynotes, and documentary sources provided by media professionals to examine the evolving dynamics of television format development. It explores how shifts in production landscapes and institutional boundaries are reshaping professional practice and authority within the broadcast sector. Using the original dataset, the analysis adopts a critical realist perspective to identify the mechanisms and structural conditions underpinning these transformations, focusing particularly on the increasing salience of audience data. By tracing how practitioners negotiate their roles in the face of emerging power dynamics and contested hierarchies, the chapter offers insight into the reconfiguration of professional logics within television production.

The chapter proceeds in three sections. First, it maps the key ‘power clusters’ within the development process, examining how authority is distributed and contested between different professional groups (Section 5.1). Throughout, power is conceptualised not as a static property of individuals but as relational and productive, enacted through organisational routines, resource allocation, and control over information. Subsequently, the analysis focuses on the role of audience data as a principal site of this contestation (Section 5.2). This section explores how data is mobilised to justify decisions and how its perceived value and meaning vary across professional roles. Finally, the chapter investigates the tangible consequences for production workflows and strategic decision making (Section 5.3), demonstrating how data-informed routines and distribution strategies reconfigure the entire development process from conception to delivery.

5.1 Reconfiguring Power Clusters in Television Production

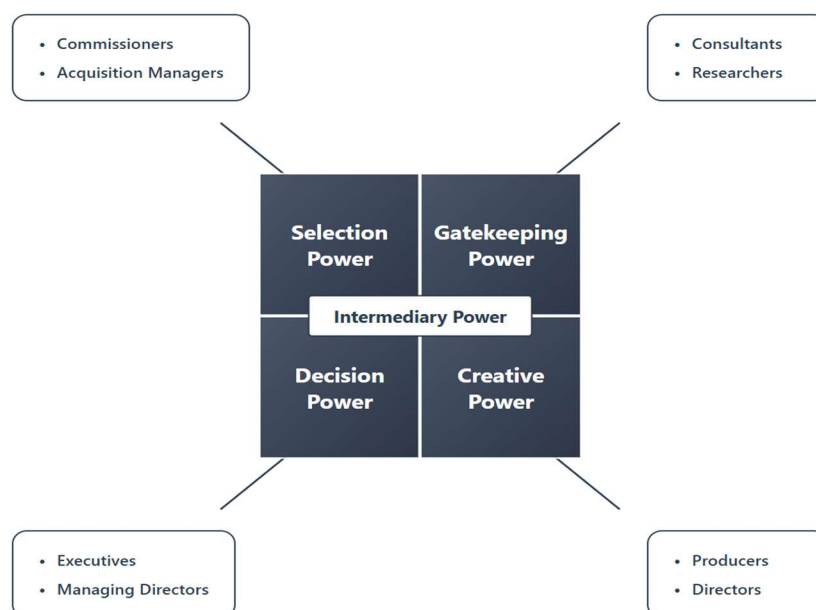
This section examines how influence is structured and enacted across the production ecosystem. As outlined in Chapter 2, the analysis draws on Bourdieu’s field theory, extended by Atkinson’s critical realist interpretation of role theory (Atkinson, 2022, 2025). Power is not conceived as a property of individuals but as something produced through positions, relations, and role performance. It is sustained by institutional routines, field-specific norms, and habitus. Practitioners operate with varying degrees of autonomy and constraint,

depending on their organisational position and the forms of capital they hold. The following section considers these dynamics through the lens of power clusters in broadcasting, where influence becomes concentrated and negotiated.

Identifying Power Clusters Across Professional Roles

To capture these dynamics, interviewees were organised into five clusters according to their position and relative influence (see Figure 3). To structure this, I developed a set of conceptual clusters based on the findings to capture how professional authority is enacted and negotiated within the development process. Of the five power clusters identified, selection and decision power were inductively derived from the thematic analysis of participant accounts. A further two categories, 'Gatekeeping' and 'Creative' power, were adapted from existing theoretical frameworks in media sociology but have been refined to reflect the specific institutional logics of the broadcasters. Finally, the 'Intermediary' power cluster emerged as an original construct to describe the unique power cluster of practitioners navigating across multiple, often overlapping, fields. Each cluster reflects distinct responsibilities and forms of authority that shape practitioners' agency within production contexts. The analysis explores how members of these clusters conceptualise power, engage with audience data, and navigate the balance between creativity and strategic demands.

Figure 3: Power Clusters in Linear and Digital Television



The graphic illustrates a conceptual framework for organisational power dynamics within broadcasters, segmented into four quadrants of influence: selection, creative, decision, and gatekeeping power. Selection power is attributed to commissioners and acquisition managers, who identify and select potential formats for production. Gatekeeping power is held by consultants and researchers, who evaluate and filter information and opportunities, thereby determining what is considered or discarded. Decision power is exercised by executives and managing directors, who make high-stakes strategic and financial choices. Creative power is the domain of producers and directors, who generate and develop content, shaping the creative direction of projects.

Although presented as distinct, these quadrants are interconnected. Influence circulates dynamically across roles, reflecting the collaborative and cyclical nature of decision-making in development and production contexts. Yet my interview findings also reveal the emergence of new roles that enforce interdisciplinary collaboration. This intermediary power roles are introduced to address changing dynamics and are held by those at the forefront of technological and process innovation. In my interviews, positions such as Head of Innovation, Head of Digital Development, and project manager emerged as key holders of intermediary power. For instance, the Head of Innovation promotes novel ideas and business models, encouraging experimentation and problem-solving. The Head of Digital Development integrates digital technologies into existing frameworks, ensuring organisational adaptability in a rapidly changing environment. Project managers coordinate across domains, enabling strategic goals to be realised through planning and collaboration. Intermediary power is therefore central for bridging traditional hierarchies with the demands of modernisation. Situating these findings within Bourdieu's framework, the clusters can be read as positions within the wider field of power, where actors draw on different forms of capital to assert influence and authority (Bourdieu, 1996b; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1993). This interpretation extends earlier analyses of media industries, which emphasised how structural power is embedded in ownership and organisational routines (Wasko and Mosco, 1994; Bennett and Strange, 2011), by showing how practitioners themselves experience and negotiate these dynamics in practice. As such, the findings foreground questions that resonate with the literature: Do professional groups employ audience data in the same way, or are there systematic differences? Who ultimately holds authority, and for whom are audience metrics a powerful resource? How do power holders interpret data in decision-making, and how do they locate themselves within wider industry transformations? The following sections examine each cluster in detail.

Intermediary Power: Negotiating Innovation and Organisational Change

In Figure 3, the different power clusters are introduced, illustrating how forms of influence are negotiated within and across linear and digital television. It highlights intermediary transitions of power from established legacy broadcasting to digital formats and the resulting effects on format development. To make sense of these changes, the study applies a framework that clusters professional roles into distinct categories of power. This schema provides a structured lens through which to interpret how practitioners perform their activities within an evolving digital paradigm.

This study foregrounds intermediary power as a critical mechanism through which organisations adapt to structural transformation. Shifting economic and institutional logics alter field dynamics and redistribute symbolic and material capital. Unlike established domains of gatekeeping or creative authority, intermediary power is exercised by professionals in newly emergent roles. The data identifies hybrid positions such as Head of Digital Formats, Head of Audience Engagement and Innovation Manager. These roles traverse institutional boundaries and negotiate between competing professional logics. In practice, this was evident in organisations such as the BBC, ITV, Channel 5, and ARD, where newly established innovation and audience units were tasked with mediating between established legacy production cultures and emerging digital strategies. Importantly, intermediary roles were not limited to internal organisational positions. External actors such as consultants and specialist researchers also operated in this space, advising on digital transition and shaping strategic decision-making from the outside. A consultant at a British public commercial broadcaster explained: ‘The executives want me to translate. They want me to deliver. They need confidence that a new show will deliver, so I check stories and ideas in terms of market evidence and performance indicators’. This example demonstrates that the authority of consultants derives less from formal hierarchy and more from the capacity to translate between normative worlds. In practice, this entails negotiating between the symbolic capital of production traditions and the metric-oriented rationales embedded in platform systems. Such translation generates tensions, requiring practitioners to reconcile professional values with data-driven imperatives. These dynamics reflect broader contradictions captured in Atkinson’s reformulation of role theory. Atkinson (2010, 2015, 2022) extends Bourdieu’s field theory by showing how role performance is conditioned by structural class positions and institutionalised moral economies. Intermediaries operate at this intersection. They are compelled to navigate the tension between a public service ethos, grounded in cultural and social value, and the growing demands of platform metrics. Their influence lies in their ability to reframe creative intuition through the legitimating discourse of

data, turning abstract audience insights into actionable strategies. In doing so, they subtly shape commissioning and decision-making processes without necessarily holding ultimate authority themselves. The rise of intermediary power is therefore a key indicator of the changing architecture of influence within format development. These roles do not simply facilitate communication across organisational silos but actively reconfigure symbolic and strategic priorities. Atkinson (2022: 27), drawing on Bourdieu (1996b) and Bourdieu and Wacquant (1993), argues that all fields of production are situated within a wider 'meta-field' of power. My findings suggest that hybrid roles such as Head of Formats, innovation managers, consultants and researchers operate precisely in this space, mediating between editorial symbolic capital and the metric rationalities of platforms. In this sense, intermediary power is both a symptom and an agent of institutional transformation. As Bourdieu (1993) reminds us, structural shifts are most visible at points of mediation, where competing principles of legitimation are brought into temporary alignment. Hybrid roles embody this process by bridging traditional and emerging expertise, driving innovation, and fostering audience-centred approaches. They play a crucial role in enabling organisations to evolve and adapt to the digital age.

A Line Manager at the EBU remarked:

In the context of TV, culture is interwoven with data and power because it shapes and is shaped by the content that is produced, which is informed by audience data and preferences, and this in turn influences who has the power to dictate narratives, represent identities, and ultimately, influence public discourse.

This quotation suggests that those who control or have access to data acquire increasing influence over the narratives and representations of identities within the public sphere. Such authority can shape, constrain, and privilege particular forms of storytelling and representation, influencing how cultural, social, and political identities are constructed and understood. Nevertheless, the extent of this influence is not uniform. The power wielded by strategic line managers is less constrained compared to that of line managers within specific formats or entities. Hence, power dynamics are not solely dictated by hierarchical structures but can also be challenged by those occupying emerging intermediary positions, who are mandated to transcend traditional departmental boundaries. Within these dynamics, roles with emerging intermediary power underscore the mutable nature of power structures, which can shift through reversed power dynamics. These roles are predominantly observed in emergent professional capacities such as managers for content, audience, or digital

production. The designations for these roles and the scope of their responsibilities appear to vary across different organisations and formats. My examination of the job descriptions provided by interviewees illustrates that digital roles extend beyond the traditional domains of content development and production, incorporating functions that were previously regarded as peripheral, such as audience management, UX management, social media management, and community management. However, the influence of power can also be seen as a 'relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favour the empowered actor's will, interests, and values' (Castells, 2010: 10). This dynamism echoes the interaction and transformation of power and organisational culture in the digital era. Further, it underscores the diverse ways power is exercised within these groups, which form part of a broader field.

Selection Power: Commissioning and Acquisition Authority

Within the institutional structure of television production, selection power has traditionally been concentrated in the role of the commissioner. As the principal gatekeepers, their institutionalised authority is enacted through the 'greenlighting' process (Chalaby, 2022). Commissioners evaluate proposals and grant approval for projects to proceed from development to production. The normative expectations of this role demand deep, genre-specific expertise, with commissioners typically holding jurisdiction over distinct content areas such as scripted drama, comedy, or documentary. This specialisation serves as the primary basis for their legitimate authority to make selective judgements on behalf of the broadcaster.

However, this study's findings indicate that the commissioner's established role is undergoing a significant contestation, leading to a perceived erosion of its power. This is not universally apparent across public service media, yet a prevailing view among some participants was that the role is becoming increasingly precarious. This view was articulated most directly by a commissioner at the British broadcaster Channel 5 in 2018, who predicted that within five years the intermediary function of commissioning may become obsolete as pitching processes evolve. This perception is driven by an observable structural shift. Producers increasingly engage directly with broadcasters, reconfiguring traditional lines of communication and challenging the commissioner's exclusive jurisdiction over selection. This dynamic suggests a fundamental reconfiguration of power relations, whereby the once-centralised authority of the commissioner is becoming increasingly diffused and the professional boundaries of the role are becoming more ambiguous. The exercise of selection power by a commissioner appears to be contingent on their professional context and the

prevailing market logic. The normative criteria for a traditional broadcaster were articulated by one commissioner at Channel 5, who stated:

When commissioning a new show, I carefully consider factors such as its potential appeal to our core audience, its uniqueness in the current market, the credibility of the production team, and how well it aligns with our channel's brand identity.

Similarly, the role of a digital commissioner encapsulates the power of selection and influence over the digital content landscape. The digital commissioner's decisions are guided not just by the evaluation of the content and its adaptability for multi-platform distribution. They are also influenced by the strategic incorporation of influencers, reflecting emerging trends and audience preferences. A line manager at a German/Swiss Broadcaster noted:

There is so much going on in my head, when assessing a new show, I not only look at the show's content and its adaptability for distribution across various platforms, but also the potential involvement of influencers. Their role in driving engagement and attracting a broad, digitally active audience is a significant factor in my decisions.

This example shows that selection power is no longer based only on content quality. It is also shaped by market-driven factors such as distribution potential and influencer reach. These strategies can extend audience engagement but they also create tensions. Creative evaluation is increasingly subordinated to data logics and promotional imperatives. This highlights the resource-intensive and high-risk nature of format development, where success rates remain low and structural disparities in economic power persist (Zoellner, 2022: 586). Based on these findings, selection power in both linear and digital-first productions is shaped less by storytelling judgement and more by market logics. In linear broadcasting, these logics continue to privilege established celebrities as safe investments for mass audiences. In digital-first contexts, they increasingly elevate influencers to celebrity status, making visibility and engagement metrics decisive factors. Yet elite decisions are not immutable. Emerging voices can unsettle executive authority and broaden the range of narratives that reach audiences.

Decision Power: Strategic Leadership and Resource Allocation

The television industry has always relied on gatekeepers. These are individuals, groups, or institutions that determine which shows are produced, which stories are told, and how they

are framed. Such decisions influence the content audiences consume and therefore have profound societal impacts. Over time, gatekeeping power has differentiated and occupied several niches. The endorsement or criticism of gatekeepers can decide whether a show progresses, is adapted, or is abandoned. Salonen et al. (2017: 374) conceptualise gatekeeping as 'shared between multiple (f)actors'. Although their analysis focuses on journalism, the same argument applies to television, where institutional cultures are also shaped by distributed forms of decision-making. This traditional framework of institutional gatekeeping is increasingly challenged by the 'platform society', where curatorial power migrates from established legacy institutions to socio-technical ecosystems of networked platforms (van Dijck et al., 2018).

My findings indicate that a significant aspect of gatekeeping does not occur at the point of commissioning. Rather, it begins earlier through the strategic management of information flows. This function is performed by professionals in research, audience engagement, and social media departments. Their work centres on the production and dissemination of audience intelligence. While interviewees often framed access to data as routine, closer analysis shows that access is mediated. Market researchers, social media analysts and audience managers interpret, and translate findings before these are shared within the organisation. Their authority is not only technical but also symbolic. Hence, I argue that research and analytics roles are often positioned as actors who translate audience signals into institutionally legible forms. This informational gatekeeping is a specific modality of power. It can be read as consistent with Atkinson's (2010; 2025) account of role-conditioned agency in stratified institutional fields. These professionals mediate between competing logics. These include editorial judgement, public service mandates, and market responsiveness. Their ability to translate audience behaviour into strategic metrics gives them considerable influence over commissioning agendas. In my view, this influence often remains unrecognised by colleagues who tend to treat data as neutral or objective. In Bourdieusian terms (1993), researchers and analysts control a form of informational capital. Although it is not always visible, it carries significant weight in shaping institutional direction.

Gatekeeping may also be shaped by hierarchies of informational access. Only a small group of staff have unrestricted access to primary data, such as pilot studies, audience commentary, and benchmarks. Most staff receive filtered summaries, as a line manager at ARD/BR remarked informally. This strategy may contribute to the maintenance of institutional coherence. It can enable senior figures to manage narratives about performance and audience response with greater ease. A broadly consistent pattern appears to have emerged. Positive findings tended to be circulated more widely, which could support existing

strategies and contribute to a sense of alignment. By contrast, critical or ambiguous results were sometimes reframed or redirected. This selective disclosure can be understood as more than cautious communication. It may function as an embedded organisational mechanism that helps protect reputational capital and maintain authority. This practice becomes evident in some protocols. For instance, pilot test results are typically limited to line managers and selected production and strategic staff, a researcher at a British commercial public service broadcaster mentioned in one of my pre-interview talks. She indicated that 'sensitive show data, or reports with detailed information, usually require approval before their initial internal release. We handle such reports really cautiously'. By contrast, the researcher noted that lower stakes studies, such as A/B testing of thumbnails or analyses of social media data, tend to circulate more freely. Gatekeeping therefore appears more pronounced in contexts where institutional pressures or financial risk are more concentrated. From this perspective, information can be understood as a resource of power that is shaped by expertise, field position, trust networks, and practices of risk containment. These findings align with Caldwell's (2008) analysis of production cultures. He shows that the absence of empowered middle management can foster autonomy but undermine strategic coherence. Similarly, Evens and Donders (2018) argue that digital transition within PSBs requires new layers of gatekeeping. These layers manage content flow and align experimentation with organisational goals, as illustrated by the cases of BBC Three and funk (Chapter 1). Both linear and digital production cultures can shape how data are communicated and distributed. In some organisational settings, strong gatekeeping cultures may embed inherited norms within peripheral units such as research or social media departments, which can contribute to the reproduction of organisational culture (Sehl and Cornia, 2021). In more digital oriented environments, however, new gatekeeping practices appear to be more formalised.

A consultant at ARD/BR explained that departments were once free to experiment with formats, provided they stayed within budget. Over time, these practices were restructured and new roles were introduced to centralise control of digital commissioning. Another consultant at the EBU confirmed that this represented a re-centralisation of authority above the departmental level. He argued that the earlier arrangement gave producers autonomy to initiate projects while bypassing several stages of pitching. The subsequent establishment of these gatekeeping roles curtailed producer autonomy and reinforced hierarchical control. My interview findings also highlight ambiguity between the perceived and actual functions of research and consulting departments. Many interviewees valued these units as partners and referred to them as validators of rational decision-making. Yet this appreciation should be treated with caution. A distinction should be drawn between their symbolic role in conferring strategic legitimacy and their practical capacity to shape strategic change. For example, a

researcher who worked on ITV's *Love Island* in 2019 stated during a pre-interview conversation that she had limited knowledge of how her studies were interpreted. These accounts reveal the varied levels of influence within gatekeeping entities and highlight the complexity of power relations in these organisations. Many professionals involved in gatekeeping did not identify themselves as gatekeepers. Instead, they posited their role as explaining, guiding, or providing services. As one media consultant remarked, this was particularly the case for those in technical roles, where the emphasis lay on support rather than visible authority.

Researchers and consultants are grouped into one category because both exert influence through information rather than direct commissioning or creative authority. Their power lies in translating ambiguous signals into legible knowledge for the organisation. They frame audience data, provide strategic insights, and validate decisions already made. Their contractual positions differ, but their gatekeeping function is similar. Both shape which ideas progress and which are blocked. By curating knowledge to fit institutional logics, they reinforce strategies and maintain coherence. It is therefore appropriate to treat them as one cluster, since both convert informational capital into symbolic authority within production.

Creative Power: Authority in Content Development and Storytelling

The chosen categorisation of power resonates with Murdock's (1982) framework. It highlights an overarching form of authority, exercised by executives, which I call decision power. This category also includes line management. Operational power, in this sense, relates to budgets and content boundaries allocated from above. Line managers have some freedom of choice, but only within these frames. Murdock (1982: 122) identified operational power as a lower level, involving 'the effective use of resources already allocated, and the implementation of policies already decided upon at the allocative level'. Freedman (2014: 274), drawing on McChesney (2000) and Mosco (2009), elevated this distinction to the level of media conglomerates, arguing that 'the media's political economy, in other words, gives them their privileged position in the world'. A British line manager emphasised the preparatory and advisory nature of their role:

We always prepare several scenarios, but the final call comes from above. Our role is to present the numbers, the risks, and the creative potential in a way that makes sense to executives. They listen, but in the end, it is their decision whether a show moves forward.

A London-based television executive underlined the ultimate responsibility that accompanies final authority in the following way:

At this level, we carry the weight of the final decision. Input from researchers, producers, and managers is essential, but the risk is ultimately ours. When budgets and reputation are on the line, we have to decide what the organisation can stand behind.

These two perspectives highlight the asymmetry of decision power. Line managers frame options and provide evidence. This evidence is generated by researchers, consultants, and social media managers who translate audience behaviour into institutionally legible forms. Yet their contribution is often misrecognised. Executives convert this informational capital into symbolic capital, presenting final decisions as their own authority. In Bourdieusian terms, decision power rests not only on formal hierarchy but also on the capacity to appropriate and reframe informational capital produced by others. This dynamic situates executives within the broader field of power, where symbolic authority depends on the selective recognition of contributions made by subordinate actors (Atkinson, 2022; Bourdieu, 1993).

Gatekeeping Power: Regulating Access and Institutional Boundaries

Within the production process, creative power traditionally resides with producers and directors, who exercise it through critical decisions regarding storytelling, aesthetics, and narrative direction (Caldwell, 2008). However, the interviews reveal a significant distinction in how this power is exercised depending on the production context. While producers and directors retain their influence over storytelling, aesthetics, and casting across all distribution channels, in digital and social media productions, their creative process is more integrated with audience data. This trend appears to reflect a wider 'datafication' of formats, where real-time analytics seem increasingly central to creative development rather than being limited to post-publishing analysis (Kennedy, 2016: 29). Within this context, data appears to function as a continuous feedback loop that can inform decisions throughout the development, production, and distribution lifecycle. In both contexts, producers often conceive initial ideas and oversee their execution, a role that requires constant negotiation between financial, logistical, and creative demands. Their decisions shape the visual and emotional impact of programmes and drive innovation. The role of the executive producer is typically associated with what Hesmondhalgh and Zoellner (2013: 575) call 'the highest degree of creative autonomy', yet this autonomy may remain contingent on institutional and regulatory

constraints. Internal creative dynamics can be further complicated by external sector pressures. Research by Bennett and Strange (2014) suggests that aspirations towards media independence are often accompanied by market pressures and emerging forms of commercial accountability. In this context, processes of industry consolidation and the expansion of a global format market may generate economic pressures that can constrain creative autonomy and shape approaches to risk taking. This account illustrates how creative power is experienced as deeply personal and emotionally invested, distinguishing it from the more outcome-focused accounts provided by other professional groups. At the same time, it points to how authority is exercised through the ability to 'call the shots' in areas that blend artistic and operational control. Producers and directors make decisions across a wide spectrum, including the casting of actors, hosts, judges, and contestants. These choices can shape both the artistic direction and the market positioning of a programme. As Buscombe (2003: 56) observed, this is where 'television breaks free from its status as product or commodity and rises to the condition of art'. Yet this artistry is inseparable from negotiation, as producers and directors constantly collaborate with creative and technical staff to define scenes and aesthetics. A deeper examination of these collaborative dynamics lies beyond the scope of this thesis, as the focus here is not on the micro-processes of creative negotiation but on decision-making authority. Building on this, it appears that while producers and directors hold distinct responsibilities, their influence often converges at the point where creative decisions are enacted. Producers are typically responsible for conceiving and developing concepts. Directors are usually tasked with realising these concepts on screen. Both roles require negotiation with multiple stakeholders, and both shape the final format through artistic and operational decisions. Grouping them in this category reflects how creative authority is exercised collaboratively, even where their day-to-day functions differ (Caldwell, 2008; Bennett et al., 2012). As one UK producer working across digital and linear formats explained:

At the end of the day, we make the choices that give a programme its character. The executives sign it off, but it is us who decide how it looks, sounds, and feels. This perspective illustrates the affective dimension of creative power, which cannot be reduced to institutional hierarchy alone.

Furthermore, a British commissioner reflected that creativity is rooted in a personal passion for an idea, its characters, and the ways in which it comes to life and evolves: 'For me, the best stories always start with fun and passion. If we are not excited about the idea in the room, the audience won't feel it on screen'. Yet, many formats continue to be conceived with a single-platform perspective rather than designed as cross-platform projects from the

outset. Expansion to other platforms is often an afterthought, not embedded in the initial development strategy. In traditional television, format development typically followed a linear sequence: creative teams generated ideas and concepts, while strategic teams undertook market analysis, audience research, and scheduling. This became particularly clear during an interview with a UK commissioner, who explained: 'We usually think about one channel or platform first. If it works, then we consider adapting it elsewhere, but that comes later'. Such an approach reflects the separation between creative and strategic responsibilities, a division that frequently created a disconnect between creative vision and market realities. By contrast, the iterative approach of digital production blurs the line between creativity and strategy. Data-driven insights shape creative decisions, while innovative ideas feed back into strategic direction. This interdependence allows formats to be continuously refined and kept relevant. Producers in digital contexts often referred to increased autonomy, reflecting the belief that creativity flourishes when individuals are free to test and evolve ideas. One digital producer put it succinctly: 'We don't just hand over stories or ideas we want to see produced. We test our ideas, we are open to feedback, we adapt them... and we feed the results straight back into the process'. This empowerment extends beyond the concept stage, as digital producers become directly involved in audience testing and iterative refinement. Their hands-on engagement produces insights that shape the format's ongoing evolution. However, several commissioners voiced concern that such reliance on metrics risks narrowing the creative field. One commissioner at the BBC explained: 'The danger is that you only produce the same thing over and over again. I look for exciting stories with a twist, new ideas and those are not found in reports. You lose the surprise'. This contrast highlights the contested nature of creative authority in digital production, where iterative practices promise innovation but can also reinforce numbered outcomes. This tension underscores how data-driven iteration, while enhancing responsiveness, can also entrench formulaic outcomes and limit experimentation, revealing the contested nature of creative authority in digital production.

5.2 Data Influence and Audience Engagement across Divisions

This section analyses the empirical findings to interrogate the reconfiguration of power, practice, and value within television production. The analysis draws on the typology introduced in Chapter 2, but for clarity, the findings are divided into *linear* and *digital* categories, as the data collected indicated two primary clusters for organising the emerging themes.

Negotiating Power in a Datafied Production Environment

The advent of digitalisation has accelerated a process of datafication, in which practices once managed in analogue terms are increasingly structured through digital systems. In television production, this shift has produced ever larger volumes of data that serve as key resources for monitoring performance. Within my study, these dynamics frame how power is exercised and contested across organisations, as data becomes both a tool of coordination and a site of negotiation. This aligns with Zuboff's (2019: 14) assertion that we are 'subordinated to an increasingly complex and comprehensive means of behavioural modification'.

My findings indicate that organisations are endeavouring to cultivate data literacy as a broader competence extending beyond researchers and data analysts. Project managers and line managers have reflected that data necessitates correct interpretation to prevent its inappropriate use and erroneous decisions. This supports Kitchin's (2014: 4–5) perspective that data requires a human element as it does neither speak for itself nor is it 'free of human bias or framing'. While data literacy is manifest in fields like media consulting and social media, as my interviews demonstrate, it often remains confined to these specialisms. The wider technical competence continues to reside primarily within research and consulting fields. This was further evidenced during the interview recruitment process. Professionals from digital backgrounds were more comfortable discussing how they apply data, what they expect from it, and how they use different metrics. By contrast, senior figures at the top three levels of large broadcasters (C-level, Director-level, Head of Programme-level) were generally less open to participating in interviews.

The relation between power and data adopted by executives provides a blurred picture. Some expressed discontent with the overwhelming power of ratings. One commissioning editor from a British commercial broadcaster likened it to 'heroin', exclaiming that 'they' [the executives] are using it like drugs. This assimilation to addiction intentionally mirrors executive behaviour that prioritises ratings while ignoring other valuable aspects of a show. Other practitioners did not share such a negative impression. Some respondents discussed managerial decisions descriptively without positive or negative assessment. However, antagonism was revealed in several ways, and I assume conflict is an inherent part of the negotiation process that intersects departments. Some interviewees preferred to keep these issues private or neutrally refer to them as 'common sense problems', as a Head of Strategy at a UK broadcaster did. This approach seems to stem from internal tensions where any leakage is avoided and is, therefore, beyond the scope of this thesis. An Executive Producer at a British commercial broadcaster emphasised the value of the individual characters:

I keep my eye on the ambition and the quality. It is about making sure that we are looking years and years ahead, given how long it takes to build the tentpoles of drama, but we still need the dynamics of the right characters for the right audience at the right time. One of our examples currently under production is *The Day of the Jackal*, and it is an example of this kind of thinking.

This statement illustrates how contemporary commissioning cultures continue to balance long-term creative ambition with increasingly audience-oriented forms of strategic planning. While management discourse increasingly foregrounds audience data and performance metrics, the quote also demonstrates the enduring importance of cultural intuition and temporal forecasting, particularly within high-value drama production.

Quantifying Audience Value: Micro-Metrics and the Datafication of Engagement

The findings reveal a fundamental epistemological shift in how audience value is constituted and legitimised within the industry. This shift can be understood as a process through which the relational and affective notion of ‘audience engagement’ is operationalised and materialised into quantifiable data points. A critical realist stance is essential here, as it allows me to assert that performance metrics are real structures with independent causal power. They directly determine commissioning, renewal, and cancellation decisions (Showers, 2015; de Pablos, 2020). However, it simultaneously demands a constructivist investigation into the social agency of their interpretation.

A clear distinction is drawn between macro-level metrics, such as ‘overall viewership’ or ‘market share’, and micro measurements derived from digital audience feedback. The latter, integrated directly into the development and production process, provide producers with granular insights into specific viewer behaviours, enabling a form of perpetual content optimisation (Showers, 2015). In contrast, macro metrics are leveraged for high-level strategic planning and competitive positioning at the organisational level (de Pablos, 2020). A Head of Editorial at a German PSM articulated the strategic necessity of this dual perspective:

Before releasing a format, we want to understand the overall market – national and international – but also our target audience, so we analyse their world, their behaviour, their interests and what makes them tick. We analyse historical viewership patterns, popular themes, and audience demographics

from similar content or from our own previous releases. And we also ask for market trend reports and monitor competitors shows.

This empirical reliance on historical and behavioural data is not a neutral act. From a political economy perspective, it represents a significant material constraint towards systemic risk-aversion. The systematic privileging of known audience patterns inherently militates against innovation, potentially fostering formulaic or derivative content and foreclosing avenues for originality. This institutionalisation of risk-aversion is crystallised in the practice of A/B testing even programme titles, as reflected by a line manager at a German broadcasting entity in 2021: 'we even started to conduct A/B testing on titles to optimise how appealing a title is to viewers. But, we also do surveys and sometimes we ask [participants] to suggest titles'. The line manager described A/B testing as an experimental method in which alternative versions of short videos are tested with audiences. In these tests, one cohort of participants is presented with a specific title, while a different title is shown to another group. Both cohorts view the same video and initial image. The objective of this approach is to ascertain which title garners a higher number of clicks and to evaluate the duration for each video. The shortcoming here is that clear information on participant selection criteria was not received. This practice exemplifies the subordination of creative intuition and expertise to the logic of data-point optimisation.

Furthermore, participant responses frequently did not demonstrate evident critical contemplation on the nuanced definitions of the metrics they employed. Despite the absence of a coherent comparative framework across platforms, a compelling inclination towards prioritising high numerical values was often evident, seemingly without thorough consideration of their intrinsic significance or construction. This tendency across the field is exemplified in the statement of a digital line manager: 'I analyse data such as views, likes, comments, shares, watch time, audience retention, and click-through rates to evaluate how well our format has performed'. This operationalisation of a plethora of metrics, without evident critique, reveals a widespread reification of audience value. However, the ideographic nuance emerges in the commissioning editor's comparison of ratings to 'heroin', which reveals a subjugated yet critical awareness of the addictive and potentially destructive power of these quantitative structures. This variance confirms the field as a site of conflict over the meaning and use of data.

Organisational Transformation: New Roles and the Decentralisation of Power

The integration of data analytics has catalysed a profound reconfiguration of internal power dynamics within production ecosystems. Bourdieu's Field Theory has been chosen for mapping this shift, as it provides the conceptual tools to analyse the struggle for capital and the repositioning of actors. The occupational data consideration serves as primary empirical evidence of this restructuring. The diagram is divided into segments, each of which represents a specific type of data associated with a particular professional role. It illustrates that audience researchers and consultants are positioned as the central 'informers' to all other groups. They are considered as possessing the unique capital which means skills to collect, analyse, and integrate all data sources. This signifies an elevation of their position within the field. Their possession of this new cultural capital (data literacy) and symbolic capital (the perceived objectivity of data) grants them influence that now rivals that of traditional creative agents (e.g. directors and producers). This may be understood as democratising aspects of the development process, while simultaneously initiating a new struggle for dominance over what constitutes legitimate knowledge.

This transformation is empirically evidenced in the evolution of specific roles. The reconfiguration of power dynamics within audience engagement and research has instigated substantial transformations in the TV format development process. Broadcasters have re-evaluated their engagement strategies, shifting from passive viewership models towards models of active audience participation. Livingstone (2019: 174) claims that 'audiences are not so gullible as popularly feared, precisely because they are neither homogeneous nor unthinking'. In their respective roles, audience managers and researchers have increasingly assumed more visible roles within production processes. They operate both as gatekeepers and as facilitators of dialogue, shaping how audience input is interpreted. This dual function can support more responsive formats that may adapt to audience feedback and, in some cases, bring audiences closer to co-creative positions, although this varies across operational contexts. Conversely, researchers have evolved from mere data collectors to interpreters of audience behaviour and sentiment. Integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies has enabled a more nuanced understanding of audience preferences (Asamen, 1998), thereby informing the development of TV formats better aligned with viewer expectations. This transformation has redefined power dynamics. Audience managers and researchers, once considered peripheral, now wield increasing influence. Furthermore, this shift has democratised the content creation process, acknowledging audiences as active contributors, a view emphasised by all digital experts and only some linear staff (Thyroff, 2015). This macro-struggle for capital and position may be experienced at the micro-

sociological level as a renegotiation of professional identity and responsibility, a process elucidated by Atkinson's Role Theory (2016, 2025). The quote from a producer at a British commercial public service broadcaster exemplifies the resultant role conflict and hybridisation:

In my role as a producer, it's essential to strike a balance between managing diverse perspectives and nurturing a collaborative atmosphere. Simultaneously, I have a responsibility to make sure that the final thing is in sync with the strategic objectives of the broadcaster. This balancing act can be challenging, but it's a key part of what I do.

This reflects the self-awareness of a practitioner whose traditional role-identity as a 'creative' leader has been hybridised with the new requirement to be a 'mediator' and 'stakeholder manager'. Producers now navigate input from multiple departments while remaining accountable to the broadcaster's strategic and economic objectives. This situation can generate tensions between economic and cultural power, the opposition that Benson (2019: 3) identifies as structuring the field. Within this tensions, producers may exercise agency as they negotiate competing demands and seek to shape creative outcomes.

The Working Culture

Broadcasters have long faced continuous transition, particularly since the rise of the internet intensified competition and uncertainty. Within the television sector, interviewees from a digital or social media background often viewed transitions within their work as a shift towards what they label 'product thinking'. Küng (2023: 163) suggests that the concept of 'product' is linked to the digitalisation of the film industry. This development can be viewed as a strategic response to entrenched cultural barriers and the demand for greater organisational autonomy. Furthermore, she notes that a 'creative team needs autonomy in terms of deciding how they will meet their goal' (Küng, 2023: 145). In this sense, product thinking appears to facilitate a departure from established norms. This approach may enable organisations to adapt more effectively to evolving market dynamics. A German digital line manager who participated in several transformation projects underlined this dynamic:

I firmly believe that the integration of product management methods within our operational tasks significantly contribute to fostering an entrepreneurial spirit among team members. This shift fundamentally alters the way we perceive our roles and our responsibilities, and it created an open culture where everyone can feel welcome to add something.

The adoption of product thinking can thus be understood as a strategic measure to overcome the rigidity of long-established processes, particularly within public service media contexts. In these new units, practitioners increasingly combine creative development with applied data and research. Practitioners frequently stressed the role of labs, describing them as essential spaces for experimentation that help organisations avoid ‘lagging behind industry advancements’. The findings also highlight the fluidity of content, particularly in distribution strategies. This reflects what Bolin (2003: 240) identifies as shifting boundaries of content. Such fluidity is intensified by platform dynamics, which, as Gillespie (2018), Van Dijck et al. (2018), and Poell et al. (2022) argue, compel organisations to renegotiate their intermediary role and reconfigure relationships with partners. Another pattern concerns the role of audience feedback. Practitioners underlined its direct influence on production decisions, while also noting that it balanced the dominance of management-led ideas. Finally, interview accounts of ‘product thinking’ were critically examined. These were assessed against observed practices to avoid an overly idealised representation of this shift (Fairclough, 2013: 261).

5.3 The Fracturing Field of Data, Power, and Role Conflict in Decision-Making

This section analyses the profound and contested integration of data into the television industry’s decision-making processes. The findings reveal that this is not a simple technical adoption but a site of intense struggle, fracturing the field along a new fault line defined by the valuation of data capital. The analysis is guided by a critical realist ontology, which acknowledges the objective power of data-driven structures (e.g. algorithmic systems and performance metrics), and a constructivist epistemology, which focuses on how agents interpret, resist, and enact these structures. This position allows for an investigation that avoids technological determinism while taking seriously the material and discursive power of data.

Data as Economic Imperative

The findings first elucidate the powerful external forces pushing the field towards a data-centric logic, a shift aligned with the heteronomous principle where economic imperatives dominate. From a political economy perspective, data is framed as an indispensable material resource for survival and growth in a competitive global market. This is most starkly articulated by those in senior business roles, for whom data is synonymous with strategic intelligence. A Vice President (VP) of Content Acquisitions in the UK explicitly linked data to global economic ambition:

In search for a global distribution, data is a necessity to understand the market, how to connect and what to offer in Europe and beyond. It's essential for us to understand the market, connect with our audience, and figure out what exactly they want. We're all about producing content that really resonates with our viewers. We want that global appeal, you know? We wanna keep it traditional, but we gotta be realistic too. To stay on top of our game and be ahead of the pack, we need all the market and audience data we can lay our hands on. It's the secret sauce to our success!

This statement can be understood as a clear attempt to impose a new principle of hierarchy within the field, where value is accorded to those who possess and can leverage data capital. The resistance from platforms like YouTube and Netflix to traditional linear-first audience measurement systems further highlights this shift. The reluctance of streaming platforms stems from a fundamental disparity in measurement philosophy, highlighting the necessity for a new, mutually agreed method that reflects the contemporary digital reality. This struggle over measurement standards is a quintessential field struggle over whose rules and whose capital will define the game. However, there is a notion to serve the national and regional audience especially at PSMs. A producer at the BBC put this forward:

We must authentically represent and portray the people and British communities through our formats. We cannot simply produce the most commercially appealing international shows. By increasing investment in homegrown storytelling, we strengthen our distinctive value, and we also see this reflected in the audience feedback.

This statement reflects the continued importance of public service broadcasting logics within contemporary commissioning cultures, where cultural representation and national relevance are positioned as institutional priorities alongside audience performance.

Habitus, Cultural Capital, and the Defence of Creative Autonomy

In direct opposition to the heteronomous pull, the findings reveal a strong defence of the field's traditional autonomous principle, where value is determined by creative intuition, experience, and established cultural capital. This is embodied in the habitus of linear-era practitioners, whose dispositions and skills were formed in a different competitive landscape. The most vehement resistance comes from those whose role-identity is most threatened. A line producer of a British PSM expressed a view emblematic of this defence:

Yeah, that's a load of hype, if you ask me. I mean, who needs all this digital mumbo-jumbo to tell us what people want to watch? We've been doing just fine without it for ages! I trust my gut instincts and years of experience over some fancy algorithms any day. Let's stick to TV programming and leave the online stuff to the tech geeks.

This quote is more than scepticism. It is an act of symbolic violence, dismissing digital practices in order to maintain the perceived superiority of traditional creative capital. A more nuanced, yet equally revealing, expression of this autonomous principle is the delegation of data-related responsibilities to specialists. A BBC Controller praised the research team but maintained a clear boundary: 'they are using it'. This distinction – 'they are using some data tools' – is a recurring motif among linear creatives. It suggests an attempt to acknowledge the presence of data while also implying that its interpretation is not central to their creative role. Their capital appears to remain grounded in the capacity to judge 'good format ideas' for 'prime-time', as the controller noted, rather than in the routine interpretation of analytics dashboards. This defence is also rooted in a belief in intrinsic creative value, as lamented by the managing director of a London-based production company:

There is a feat of revolutionary ideas. Scared of shaking things up a bit, are we? History's shown us that telly's biggest smashes didn't just mimic the success of the year before, but were properly fresh and innovative. Think about it – Big Brother, Millionaire, Strictly, and the first Popstars, they all dared to be different rather than just follow the herd.

Here, the argument is that data, by its reliance on historical patterns, inherently stifles the innovation that is the hallmark of cultural excellence. This tension can be understood in relation to Benson's (2019: 3) 'basic opposition between "economic" and "cultural power"', which is reflected in the everyday practices and orientations of agents within the field.

5.4 Conclusion: A New Professional Settlement and Its Contradictions

This chapter examines the intricate dynamics of power within the arena of format development at the organisational level, addressing the structural and professional shifts identified in research question four. It delineates various levels of authority, from gatekeepers and decision-makers to creative contributors and advisors, each exercising distinct forms of influence within the developmental hierarchy. In line with this, the analysis focuses on the evolving structures in both linear and digital television production, as well as the methods, institutional logics, and impacts these have on individual work practices.

Findings related to RQ4 highlight how practitioners working in digital productions articulated a sense of fluidity and indeterminacy, closely aligned with Bauman's (2005: 2) notion of 'constant uncertainty'. As Bauman suggests, the act of extricating takes precedence over acquisition. Within this logic, disciplinary boundaries are dissolved and established hierarchies disrupted. This dynamic was clearly visible across British and German broadcasters, where linear genre experts and digital format developers were brought together into unified teams with the intention of optimising development outcomes. My research suggests that these collaborative efforts often appeared unsustainable. This shift frequently led to a return to more segmented approaches. This was evident in the creation of new labs, working groups, and specialised departments.

Empirically, the interview excerpts used in this analysis are not representative in a positivist sense. They were selected to illuminate recurring discursive patterns and field-specific struggles evident across the wider 2018–2024 dataset. In this approach, interviews are not treated as transparent accounts of industrial reality but as situated articulations shaped by professional habitus and broader transformations within the media field. I construct the analytical synthesis relationally by interrogating interview narratives against trade discourse and institutional strategies. Hence, this chapter maps the field's shifting dynamics. This grounded comparative study of German and British television professionals enables a more precise examination of how competing forms of authority are negotiated within contemporary production cultures. The conflicts identified here represent the organisational manifestation of these broader structural shifts. Further, they highlight a new professional settlement marked by contradictions: datafication offered opportunities for innovation but also introduced conflict, anxiety, and contested forms of capital. To situate these organisational tensions in everyday practice, the next chapter explores how these tensions are enacted in practice through two case studies based on my observations at ARD/BR workshops.

Chapter 6: The Transformation of Public Service Media

6.0 Introduction

Building on the findings presented in Chapter 5, this chapter analyses two workshop observations conducted at ARD/BR. The findings illuminate established dynamics of organisational learning, collaboration, and cultural adaptation. It is important to note that the workshops took place in late 2022 and early 2023, a period immediately preceding the accelerated integration of artificial intelligence into development and production processes. This temporal positioning provides a useful vantage point for documenting practices that may represent the final iteration of pre-AI production cultures. This chapter addresses two key questions related to format development. First, in relation to RQ2, it examines how format development practices at public service media organisations have evolved since 2010, highlighting differences between television, digital, and social video development and production departments. The findings show that development practices vary significantly across these areas, particularly in terms of workflow structures, degrees of iteration, and the use of audience data. A key tension emerged within this storytelling model, as public service aims are pursued amid the commercial and aesthetic logics of global platforms. Second, addressing RQ3, the chapter explores how the audience is conceptualised within digital and social video development. The analysis demonstrates that the audience is treated as an integrated element that is actively reflected upon throughout the development process rather than as a passive endpoint.

Based on ethnographic observation of the two workshops, I argue that digital format development at ARD/BR should not be understood as a purely technical transition. Instead, it emerges as a socially negotiated process in which established public service values are brought into tension with algorithmic, aesthetic, and data-oriented logics associated with global platforms. The findings point to ongoing negotiations that reveal a central tension within this emerging model of storytelling, namely the effort to pursue public service aims within commercial and platform-driven environments. In line with Constructivist Grounded Theory, as outlined in Chapter 4, the workshops are treated as sites where professional realities are actively constructed and contested. Therefore, Wyngaarden's (2018: 298) Medienmodell (media model) is applied to both workshops, as it helps to demonstrate that digital organisations are structured around continuous processes. The first workshop focused on the process of digital format creation and enabled an examination of how participants collectively articulated and reflected on development practices. The discussion addressed successive stages of the process, moving from early ideation and preparation

through prototyping and development to launch and distribution. Throughout the session, the role of audience data emerged as a recurring point of discussion, shaping these socially negotiated stages. The second workshop adopted a broader organisational perspective and examined the social dynamics of departmental reorganisation. It explored how work practices, strategic orientations, and professional cultures were collectively evaluated and redefined. These workshops, alongside additional documents shared during the sessions, offer empirical insight into how development practices are negotiated within the workplace setting and how audience knowledge and professional expertise are mobilised within contemporary public service media organisations.

6.1 Case Study 1: The Redefinition of Practice in Digital Format Development

The analysis commences by establishing the empirical context of a format development workshop at ARD/BR. This section details the specific organisational setting, the composition of the participant group, and the observed modes of interaction. The composition of this group appears to have been a carefully assembled selection of individuals. As such, it can be read as a microcosm of the organisation's shifting power dynamics, bringing creative, managerial, and analytical forms of authority into relation with one another. This detailed observational account therefore serves a dual purpose. First, it provides the necessary descriptive foundation for the case study. Second, and more importantly, it grounds the theoretical themes from Chapter 4, such as 're-visioning storytelling' within a concrete empirical setting.

The Format Development Workshop as a Site of Negotiation

The workshop was conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams in November 2022 and was convened by a project manager who had assembled a curated group of participants (see Table 6–16) to deliberate on the development of a new digital format. The session spanned from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., initially engaging eleven individuals, though attendance fluctuated with early departures and time-specific arrivals. The fluctuating attendance throughout the day suggested a fluid, project-based mode of participation rather than a fixed committee structure. My positionality as a researcher was that of a non-participant observer (Section 4.5), facilitated by a prior interviewee. This observational stance precluded access to preparatory materials, focusing the analysis solely on the interactions and discourses as they unfolded.

The interdisciplinary composition of the workshop was significant. It created a microcosm of the organisation's shifting power dynamics, juxtaposing creative and managerial authority.

Producers predominantly leveraged their expertise in narrative and storytelling, while line managers foregrounded issues of resource allocation and organisational viability. Other participants contributed specialised knowledge, including user experience (UX) design, social media analytics, and market analysis. This heterogeneity, while ostensibly aimed at overcoming organisational demarcations in development practice, simultaneously surfaced underlying tensions between competing institutional logics and professional jurisdictions. The workshop was not merely a creative session but a site where the very terms of value and authority in format development were being actively negotiated.

Table 6-16: Key Participants of the Format Development Workshop

Role	Description in Workshop Context
Project Manager	Orchestrated the workshop, capturing the event's details and providing insights from experience with conflicts in times of change.
Line Manager	Presented a critical analysis on resource allocation, charting outputs and pinpointing moments of difficulty.
Digital Producer	Contributed expertise from active participation in format development and various production phases.
Consultant	Presented a nuanced overview of the digital transition, comparing strategies and future directions of various media firms.
Usability Designer	Evaluated the new system's design, focusing on user experience and functional design within the digital context.
Researcher	Reported on other format highlights, most-watched shows, and emerging trends, providing a comprehensive view of current market dynamics.
Social Media Manager	Advised on platform trends, highlighted shows, target demographics, and recommended suitable platforms for content distribution.
Editor	Offered expertise in politics and economics, contributing genre-specific knowledge critical to content development.
Director	Provided guidance on the overall vision, ensuring that creative concepts were feasible and executable.

The workshop was orchestrated by the project manager, who explained the agenda and introduced the presenters. In terms of content, the beginning was marked by an introduction from a line manager, who pledged his endorsement for the proposed format, asserting its significance to the gathered participants. The initial presentation was delivered by a

researcher, who summarised the latest findings on viewing habits, the popularity of some shows across platforms, and emerging technical trends. Subsequently, the social media manager presented the current trajectories in social media engagement. This was succeeded by an exposition from a usability (UX) researcher, who unveiled a 'persona' constructed to typify an actual member of the target audience, with the objective of spotlighting previously neglected audience demographics. All presentations were followed by a question and discussion session. Following this procedure, the workshop continued in two breakout sessions, which consisted of two virtual discussion groups, from which I was excluded. Upon reconvening, the collective groups presented their preliminary conceptualisations for a format aimed at young women from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds with an interest in basic scientific knowledge. Further evaluation has been scheduled for an upcoming internal 'pitching session', a quarterly opportunity for internal production teams to compete for the pilot production.

Re-visioning Storytelling for an Underserved Audience through Data-Informed Practices

The first theme to emerge from the analysis is the re-visioning of storytelling, a process driven by a fundamentally data-informed approach. This was clearly observed in this format development workshop, where the central objective was to create content for a demographic perceived as underserved. The process was initiated based on an audience gap that had been identified through prior research: women aged 18 to 35 with an interest in science. The use of personas illustrates how audiences are reduced to simplified categories for decision-making, often embodying demographic or lifestyle traits such as women aged 16–35 interested in science.⁸ In this context, the perceived failure of legacy programmes to engage this demographic presented a strategic opportunity for the development of a niche storytelling format. Consequently, the workshop's remit was to translate this strategic imperative into a tangible, multi-platform concept.

This data-informed approach was evident in a series of staged inputs that constituted a form of research integration. In this context, 'data-informed' refers to the systematic use of audience research and performance metrics from similar formats, complemented by market insights from internal and external trend reports such as the ARD/ZDF Onlinestudie.⁹ These

⁸ This reflects a wider debate in audience studies about whether audiences are primarily constructed through measurement tools, segmentation, and personas, or conceptualised through the imaginaries and assumptions of industry professionals. This distinction will be developed further in the discussion chapter.

⁹ <https://archiv.ard-zdf-medienstudie.de/archiv-ardzdf-onlinestudie/>

inputs appeared to guide, but not determine, decision-making for a young female target group. Further, audience data presentations opened space for discussion and the development of a shared understanding of the target group's lived world, which most participants did not share. Together, these elements constituted a form of research integration that framed and oriented the subsequent discussion on format development. Initially, a consultant presented data highlighting structural gaps in television provision, using audience ratings to frame younger women as an underserved market. This was followed by a social media manager, whose report on existing platform formats operated as a form of preliminary content validation. His analysis confirmed that whilst younger audiences could be reached, it was insufficient to simply migrate existing shows. This reinforced the strategic decision to design the new format as platform-specific, initially for Instagram. A researcher then presented a persona map. This map can be understood as what Kotliar (2020: 1156) calls an epistemic amalgam that fuses algorithmic groupings with qualitative labels to produce a coherent audience identity. Within these epistemic amalgams, the persona presented combined quantitative metrics (such as social media data) with qualitative insights (such as motivations, values, and everyday practices). In doing so, it translated heterogeneous audience data into a personalised character that could be more easily mobilised in creative decision-making. From my observations, I argue that persona presentations are intended to support coordination around a shared understanding of the target audience across development and production. Further, the practical application of the persona in this research was demonstrated when a designer presented examples of the concept in line with Instagram's visual and interactional grammar. This led to a critical discussion about maintaining authenticity. A line manager, for instance, stressed the need for a trustworthy, journalistically grounded tone to distinguish the format from influencer-led content. In contrast, the digital producer highlighted platform constraints, noting that Instagram required short-form content and a flexible programme length. This negotiation illustrates the core tension of this new storytelling model: the pursuit of public service aims within the commercial and aesthetic logics of global platforms. Ultimately, the workshop demonstrated a shift in how data is accessed and utilised. All participants had access to analytics dashboards, but the project manager and digital producer drew upon them actively to substantiate choices. This practice can be termed an 'active data pull', reflecting an intrinsic interest in accessing information through self-service platforms. This approach suggests a move towards an iterative format development model, where data analysis is not a separate stage but is embedded across the entire development and production process as a continuous form of content validation.

I argue that practitioners tend to overlook an additional issue concerning audience data, which, based on my observations, warrants critical reflection. For example, during the workshop, a digital producer cited the high audience figures of a YouTube account featuring physics experiments aimed at women as evidence of success. However, the timeframe, originator, and institutional context of the account were not specified, which limited the comparability of this example with other formats and made it difficult to interpret what these figures signified. This reflects what Livingstone (2018: 179) illustrates as ‘cherry-picking data’, arguing that ‘a critical analysis of audiences cannot be satisfied with sporadic inclusion of disembodied, decontextualized observations of behavior or cherry-picked survey percentages but must engage with audiences meaningfully in and across the contexts of their lives’. This observation points to an important responsibility for practitioners. It suggests the need to move beyond the selective use of metrics to confirm prior assumptions and, instead, to engage with audience data in more contextualised and reflexive ways.

Identifying the Key Tensions in Digital Development

My observations suggest that the development of digital formats at ARD/BR is governed by a complex interplay of competing institutional and professional logics. The official story is about ‘audience power’. But this is shaped by real-world constraints. These include battles over resources, ingrained work cultures, and conflicting views on audience behaviour. The workshop made this tension clear. It showed the ideal of data-driven design struggling against these powerful forces.

A central tension, widely discussed in audience studies, was evident in the competing claims to knowledge about the viewer (Chapter 3). The institutional mandate for data-led objectivity was operationalised through the use of a persona. This formalised audience construct was intended to discipline the creative process, ensuring a focus on the target demographic. This formal mechanism, however, was frequently challenged by the assertion of professional craft knowledge, which manifested as anecdotal evidence drawn from personal experience. A line manager’s reference to his daughter’s media habits, and an editor’s invocation of her daughter’s social circle during the workshop, exemplified this dynamic. However, it also demonstrated the bias explained by some interviewees (see Chapter 5). These interventions highlight a professional scepticism towards decontextualised metrics and underscore a persistent desire within the production culture. It comprehends audience motivations in more qualitative, human terms. The workshop also illuminated the challenges of cross-departmental integration. Rather than framing the issue in terms of ‘trust’, participants discussed it through the lens of personal connections and existing networks. A director

emphasised that scientific knowledge should be bundled and, ideally, best practices shared across departments. However, this suggestion was not universally welcomed. One producer argued that such integration might delay the process, insisting that teams could conduct their own research and only collaborate after the development phase. This divergence underscored the tension between calls for organisational cohesion and practitioners' desire to safeguard autonomy and efficiency. Such tensions may also resonate with broader discussions about organisational silos in the creative industries. My observations revealed that collaboration was often influenced by coordination costs, power asymmetries, and the challenge of balancing shared resources with individual creative control. These tensions speak to what Hesmondhalgh (2018: 6) frames as the 'interweaving of change and continuity' as a central dynamic of cultural production. Organisational attempts to foster cross-departmental integration frequently clash with established professional boundaries and competing logics of practice. Linear production teams, for instance, may resist data-driven input that threatens their editorial autonomy, whilst digital teams struggle to gain recognition within traditional hierarchical structures. Within this context of contested collaboration, format development can be understood as a site of negotiation involving not only internal professionals but also audience data. The shift to digital television positioned audiences as intermediaries whose engagement data and feedback could ostensibly bridge competing production logics. However, this framing warrants critical scrutiny. Bennett (2011: 353) argues that architectures of participation do not operate in isolation but actively shape community formation and patterns of interaction. When applied to production contexts, this suggests that audience participation should be distinguished from audience metrics. Participation refers to modes of engagement and interaction, whereas metrics translate such engagement into quantifiable indicators. From this perspective, audience participation may function not simply as a neutral conduit for inclusion but as a mechanism through which particular production logics acquire institutional visibility and legitimacy. Where audience engagement is primarily articulated through metrics, participation can become a resource mobilised by data-oriented teams to support their position within the field. In such cases, practices framed as collaborative or democratising may nonetheless reproduce existing asymmetries, as audience input is selectively interpreted in ways that align with established power relations rather than redistributing creative authority in substantive terms.

As discussed in Section 5.1 on intermediary power, project managers and innovation roles often acted as coordinators in these contested spaces, but their capacity to overcome entrenched silos appeared limited. The process remains fragmented, reflecting the persistence of organisational barriers. A usability manager's question about the format's integration into the on-demand player pointed to a disconnect between content development

and broader platform strategy. Similarly, a brief intervention from a marketing manager, who sought clarity on timelines and raised concerns about a siloed social media strategy, exposed significant procedural and communicative gaps. Her limited involvement further suggested that a holistic marketing perspective was not yet embedded in a workflow still dominated by production priorities. Finally, discussions surrounding talent and budget exposed the political economy of the production process, where creative autonomy is circumscribed by economic and institutional constraints. The debate over talent, which weighed established presenters against social media influencers, invoked the broadcaster's public service remit to cultivate its own talent. This stood in tension with market-oriented pressures to leverage the pre-existing capital of influencers. Crucially, the project manager framed these creative possibilities within the restrictive budgetary logic of a 'digital production', explicitly noting its financial limitations compared to television. This classification predetermined both the project's resource allocation and its organisational structures. These preliminary observations establish the key points of friction that characterised the workshop. The following sections will now analyse these phases in greater detail, using specific examples to build a more granular interpretation of the redefined practices of digital format development.

The Reconfigured Workflow: From Silos to Collaboration

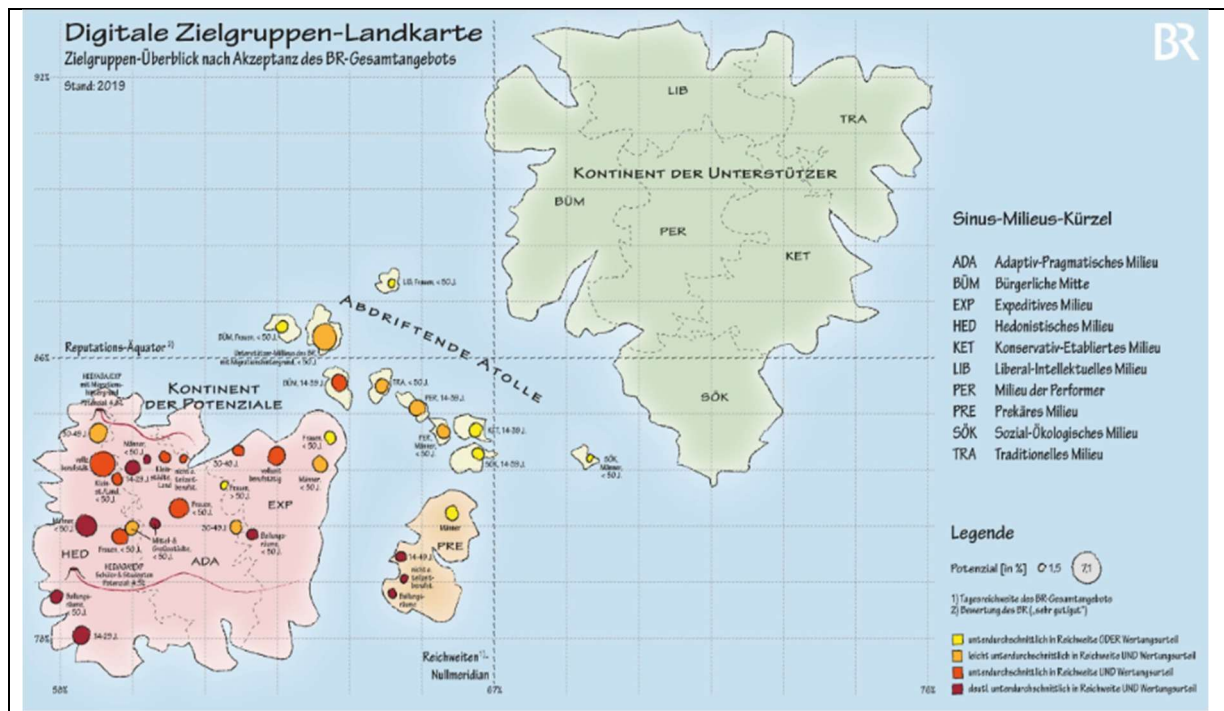
The workshop I observed formed part of a series of workshops designed to refine and develop a new digital format. As one of the initial gatherings, it is laid the groundwork where core ideas were generated, initial concepts were discussed, and the overall vision for the format was established. In this early phase, participants were encouraged to brainstorm within a predefined framework, explore various creative directions, and identify potential challenges and opportunities. The aim was to create a broad palette of ideas from which the format could evolve. A consultant emphasised at the beginning of the workshop the importance of alignment across various units. She noted that without it, 'we end up duplicating work instead of building on each other's strengths'. My aim here is to demonstrate how a format is initiated from its early stages and what the discussions are around it among different professionals in an interdisciplinary setting. These insights arise at an early stage of production and highlight the factors that influence decision making. Further, they illustrate what drives the conversation and where tensions arise in order to contextualise the outcome. As I observed only one workshop in the series, rather than the longer-term discussions, these three phases are derived from that workshop and a limited set of documents, including the 'digital target group map' (see Figure 4). The development process begins with an inception and preparation phase, in which the planned format is

reviewed and its integration into the workflow is assessed. Upon completion of this formative period, the workflow evolves from prototyping into development discussions, eventually facilitating its structural embedding as a normative component of the organisational system.

Phase 1: From Inception to Preparation

In the initial phase, the process begins with a comprehensive discussion of the topic. The observed workshop falls within this stage. The discussion examined various dimensions to ensure the digital format's relevance and appeal. This is followed by a detailed evaluation of audience segmentation, aimed at understanding the potential target groups and their preferences. With the audience in mind, the next step is to define the storytelling aspects, which include narrative techniques and content styles that will resonate with viewers. The culmination of this phase is the selection of a distribution platform, chosen strategically as the place where the target audience is most likely to engage with the format, ensuring optimal reach and impact. In this case, the decision had already been made for Instagram and was communicated beforehand. During the workshop, a world map with several groups of the society was mentioned by line managers (and also by some interviewees), called the 'digital target group map' (German: digitale Zielgruppen-Landkarte). It is a model of social segmentation that classifies groups of people based on their lifestyle, social status, and fundamental values. This model is designed to transcend traditional demographics by considering factors such as attitudes, behaviours, and preferences, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of different societal groups and their consumer habits. In the presented map, people are grouped into categories such as performers, traditionalists, and hedonists. The full list is provided in Figure 4, but a comprehensive exploration of it is beyond the scope of this work, so it is introduced here as a reference to what digital practitioners often cite. This model was applied to identify which audience were reached by each show, aiming to uncover target group gaps. In digital production, this map was utilised to determine which groups had not yet been reached by science and political programmes. The final report indicated that young women seldom watch major science or political shows. Following this revelation, the discussion centred on how to produce a science show that specifically appeals to young women. The workshop I observed was predicated on this gap identification, with the briefing for the workshop being to brainstorm content ideas for this target group.

Figure 4: Digital Target Group Map



Source: ARD/BR Workshop Presentation (2022)

The target group map operates as a reference point during the first phase of development. Based on my observations, it appears to fulfil two key functions. First, it supports a comprehensive reading of society and reinforces ARD/BR's public service remit, including commitments to cultural diversity and societal participation. Second, it creates a shared frame of reference for teams developing a new format. In practice, it functions as continuous guidance for decisions on content, selection, aesthetics, and language. However, a tension remains. While it coordinates work, it can narrow perspectives and entrench a single target identity, reducing plurality (Steemers, 2010; Hesmondhalgh, 2013). In a public service media context, it can be understood as a reflection of the living conditions and needs of all licence fee payers. A reminder for the project participants was provided during the workshop and pinned to a virtual whiteboard, focusing on three formulated questions: *Whom do we already reach? Which type of content should be developed for which format? And how do we evaluate the work?* Based on my observations, the questions appeared to be designed to maintain the team's focus on a predefined target audience. For example, the discussion was steered towards 'hedonists' and 'precarious milieus'. In the observed format session, this focus was then narrowed to young women within these groups. The reframing helped coordinate decisions, but it also curtailed scope by sidelining adjacent publics. On the map, the continent of supporters, called *Unterstützer*, is already well engaged by the

organisation's programme, including segments such as liberal intellectuals (LIB), traditionalists (TRA), the bourgeois middle class (BÜM), performers (PER), the conservative-establishment (KET), and socio-ecological (SÖK) groups. Conversely, the continent of potentials, called Potenziale (in red) denotes the groups scarcely reached by ARD/BR's programmes, comprising hedonists (HED), adaptive-pragmatics (ADA), and expeditives (EXP). Positioned between these two continents are entities referred to as drifting atolls, called abdriftende Atolle (in yellow and orange). They shift focus from the audience groups that have been reached to those that have not. In Figure 4, these primarily include the precarious (PRE) group. This 'target group map' is often used in digital format development for strategic reorientation at ARD/BR and has been adopted across several channels, programmes, and formats. Line managers of channels also use it for their own profiling in the company's internal system to demonstrate their success if they can prove that they reach their target group. The primary aim is to identify which societal groups are fully reached by a specific show, which are over-represented ('over-reached') relative to their share of the population, which are partly reached, and which are not reached at all. It prompted discussion, as two of the presented formats indicated an over-representation of one target group (50+ male traditionalists).

Observations from the workshop show how over-representation is produced in routine practice. First, content choices and scheduling tended to align with the habits of particular groups, reinforcing patterned exposure. Second, teams reported relying on platform recommendation systems that magnify existing audience clusters and limit serendipitous reach. Third, the marketing tactics discussed in the session, including creator tie-ins, were likely to skew appeal towards specific niches. Fourth, access conditions, notably registration and device constraints, filtered who appeared in the data, echoing established patterns of digital inequality. Finally, a side discussion acknowledged measurement effects. A researcher explained panel weights, small cell sizes, and device-level tracking that can inflate a group's apparent share. It should also be noted that third-party measurement firms, such as Nielsen, are involved and often align outputs with societal typologies such as Sinus. Data artefacts can arise during aggregation, particularly when heterogeneous sources and category systems are reconciled (Napoli, 2019).

Phase 2: From Prototyping to Development

The phase of transitioning from prototyping to development is the most crucial, as it marks the evolution from conceptual ideas and designs to tangible creation. This is where the mock-up format is rigorously tested and the format's core attributes are refined, ensuring its

viability and potential for success upon full-scale production. In this workshop, this phase refers to a production setup featuring high-quality professional equipment, access to selected locations throughout the production process, and the involvement of expert associates who contribute to the format without participating in daily production tasks. The core team usually consists of a maximum of ten participants. In an informal setting during a workshop break, a digital producer articulated his subjective interpretation of this phase of the process: 'We visualise ideas and progress with sticky notes and photograph all walls after each workshop day. That's the way we can have a look at it ourselves and it is also a way to be transparent'. This can be read as an additional criterion through which practitioners articulate their field as distinct and comparatively more transparent than linear format development. A consultant added during a workshop break that:

We have the main findings on a whiteboard in our main office, so everyone is passing can see our results and what we accomplished so far. Sometimes it even shows how we got there – at least we want to show some major steps and we also keep the discussion going. It is to recognise our work as a team and everyone can be proud of it.

Prototyping serves as a critical laboratory for innovation, allowing for the exploration and iterative refinement of the format's characteristics (van Wyngaarden, 2018: 286). This is where the initial ideas are moulded into prototypes that embody the programme's intended experience. This phase also plays a balancing role between creative exploration and practical feasibility, requiring a nuanced understanding of audience expectations, narrative structure, and production logistics. Transitioning into the development part of this phase, the prototype undergoes scrutiny and enhancement. Here, the format's scripts are drafted, and the production design is finalised. The development phase consolidates the research and feedback garnered during prototyping, translating them into a detailed blueprint for production. This includes casting, budgeting, and scheduling – each element methodically orchestrated to align with the strategic vision of the format. In essence, this transition from prototyping to development encapsulates a meticulous process of maturation for a television or digital format. It is an embodiment of the collaborative endeavour of creatives, strategists, development managers, and producers working together to fine-tune the format for its intended audience. The phases of the agile format development workflow also follow a strict timeframe. In this sense, format development is not only iterative but also time-boxed according to certain aspects. A project manager remarked during an informal exchange:

We develop formats iteratively. So, there is no complete plan in advance, but we want to be able to react flexibly. These guidelines apply to our own formats as well as to those that are developed together with other departments and have to be anchored in the linear.

During the development stage, measurable and verifiable targets are established. Observations suggest that this process serves as a mechanism through which a shared understanding is negotiated between the core project team and the stakeholders. The initial tangible outcomes seem to be pivotal for this phase, and strategic compartmentalisation for certain formats is employed. The comprehensive appraisal of the project is contingent for the final format. Even if it was not directly mentioned during the workshop, it became clear that there is a negotiation between audience interests and stakeholder interests. The project team aims to develop a format that appeals to both groups, and the launch-to-distribution phase, outlined in the next section, serves as the reality check.

Phase 3: From Pre-Launch to Launch

The transition from pre-launch to launch represents a critical phase in the format lifecycle, marking its initial public presentation and its entry into a highly competitive media landscape. This phase entails the strategic planning and execution required to ensure the format reaches its intended audience. While analytically distinct from distribution, the launch is intrinsically linked to it. The long-term dissemination of the format across platforms, from broadcast channels to social media, is defined during the development phase. Consequently, strategies for a sequential release are formulated at this juncture to optimise future audience engagement. However, these strategic decisions are not made in a vacuum. Rather, they may be shaped by economic and structural constraints operating within the production field. One producer articulated during a workshop break that all projects are governed by financial boundaries that circumscribe the creative outcome. These parameters can be understood through a Bourdieusian lens as the 'rules of the game', a set of constraints that actors cannot disregard without risking their position within the field (Bourdieu, 1993). A further and related constraint is the scarcity of available resources, which concentrates power in the hands of key decision-makers (Hesmondhalgh, 2018). Control over these resources is held by 'resource gatekeepers', those individuals who possess the requisite economic and symbolic 'capital'. During an informal break, a digital producer encapsulated the mutual dependency between field structure and the possession of capital as follows:

We can produce a new format or series much faster, cheaper and distribute it independently. In digital, you know, space is not restricted to a single channel and time slot. Everything is available on demand and as long as regulations allow. But, yes, of course, financial means are restricted. It is better to consider it from the beginning.

Drawing on Bourdieu (1993), it can be argued that within any given production field, a specific form of capital predominates. Within the context of these findings, the power to define and operationalise the intended audience functions as the field's most crucial form of symbolic capital. The process of fine-tuning the format is where this power is exercised. Those actors who are assumed to possess such proficiency are empowered to construct a reductive model of the audience, framing it as objective fact. This act of definition is a clear exercise of power that shapes the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 1993) by determining what content is legitimate and for whom it is made. Consequently, those lacking data-centric forms of expertise tended to be marginalised from this phase of decision-making, while the emphasis on narrowly defined target groups often reduced attention to adjacent publics. This dynamic was illustrated during one workshop discussion in which one participant presented performance figures from a randomly selected TikTok format without situating them within a broader comparative or contextual framework. Other participants questioned the relevance of these figures, noting that isolated metrics, when not related to comparable formats or longer-term trends, were insufficient to establish professional credibility. This debate highlights how the dominance of particular forms of capital can, in practice, delimit both whose contributions are recognised and how the scope of development is defined.

Further, this dynamic plays out within public service broadcasters undergoing digital transformation. It can be read as indicating that the shift towards a multi-platform logic necessitates an interdisciplinary exchange between professional groups who possess different, and often competing, forms of capital. This reflects what Caldwell (2008) terms the 'deeply embedded logics' of distinct production cultures. For instance, the craft-based cultural capital of traditional television producers now directly confronts the data-analytic capital of digital strategists. When new hybrid strategies are imposed rather than collaboratively integrated, these established professional jurisdictions are threatened, leading to conflict (Caldwell, 2008). Supporters of this change and opponents who defend established boundaries are brought into direct confrontation. During the workshop, this tension became visible when a proposal was made to prioritise metrics such as engagement rate and reach, drawn from Instagram, as a criteria for format evaluation. A digital producer challenged this approach, arguing that these metrics were not yet established within existing

evaluation frameworks and did not account for public service considerations. The responsibility thus falls to management, acting as 'change facilitators', to navigate these institutional shifts and broker new arrangements. Their task is to renegotiate professional boundaries, aiming to foster greater flexibility. The dismantling of established boundaries is therefore a site of considerable friction, often met with both resistance and deeply held conviction from established professional groups.

Key Outcomes of the Format Development Workshop

The analysis of Case Study 1 reveals the emergence of a new, highly rationalised and data-informed practice for digital format development at ARD/BR. The investigation, centred on an ethnographic observation of a format development workshop, found that this new practice was a direct strategic response to a perceived 'audience gap'. It represents a deliberate shift away from traditional, intuition-driven creative processes towards a structured, evidence-based workflow designed to mitigate the uncertainties of the digital format development. The findings demonstrate that this new practice is organised into a reconfigured, phased workflow, progressing from data-briefing and inception, through prototyping and user-testing, to a data-monitored launch and continued iteration. However, this seemingly linear process was observed to be a site of significant friction. The analysis identified three key tensions. First, a conflict emerged between the use of formal audience data, such as personas, and the assertion of professional craft knowledge, which often took the form of anecdotal evidence. This tension became evident when some participants questioned how a persona was actually built, an issue that was not fully addressed during the workshop and was instead postponed. Therefore, this discussion remained underdeveloped, with no further information being provided. Second, a tension was evident between the broadcaster's public service remit, with its emphasis on value and trust, and the commercial and aesthetic logics of third-party platforms. Finally, organisational tensions surfaced between strategic calls for cross-departmental integration and the pragmatic desire of practitioners to safeguard their creative autonomy and operational efficiency. To conclude these workshop observations, a data-informed workflow could be observed, alongside discussions drawing on cross-platform data and the use of personas as a facilitator for target-group understanding. This may be understood as a micro-level routine that seeks to stabilise a particular response to competing individual logics. By positioning audience data as a key reference point for informing creative decisions on social video platforms, this practice appears to question established hierarchies grounded in seniority or intuitive judgement, rather than replacing them. This may result in a more controlled, project-based workflow that is intended to create a defensible space for digital professionalism.

6.2 Case Study 2: From Format Development to Departmental Restructuring

Building on the micro-level analysis in Case Study 1, this section shifts focus to the organisational and departmental level. To explore this, the research examines a departmental strategy workshop at Puls, ARD/BR's digital-first unit. The central aim here is to investigate how established workflows in digital format development were translated into formal departmental restructuring. My aim is therefore to analyse two interconnected dynamics. First, I examine how media professionals interpret digital format workflows in general. Second, I consider how they assess which elements of these iterative processes are suitable for wider adoption within their existing departmental structures.

An Ethnographic Snapshot: The Workshop Setting and Participants

The strategy workshop under examination was conducted virtually on Microsoft Teams and lasted six hours. It was organised by Puls, a digital-first unit within ARD/BR that occasionally also produces for television, radio, and live events. In this sense, Puls occupies a hybrid organisational position. While formally embedded in a public service broadcaster, its remit, identity, and production practices are strongly oriented towards digital innovation and youth audiences (Küng, 2017). From the outset, the session was framed as a formal strategic review to discuss how established format development processes could be adapted to departmental processes. The Head of Department established the official narrative, characterising the objective as a progression 'from theory to practice and finally integration'. This statement served to frame the intended reorganisation as both a rational and inevitable process, setting a formal tone of managed consensus for the meeting.

Departmental Culture Shift

Contrary to expectations of a traditional, top-down reorganisation, the investigation revealed that a shift towards a decentralised culture carries its own implications. To elaborate on this contested shift, a collaborative and reflective starting point was defined by the department's workforce. A significant portion of the workshop was dedicated to a formalised moment of cultural reflection, centred on the findings of a recent internal employee survey. This survey had been conducted within Puls to diagnose why a previous, radically decentralised approach to work had failed, leading to widespread demotivation. I argue that this transparent discourse indicates a collective impetus to facilitate cultural change, grounded in empirical insights generated by the team itself. This is particularly evident in the survey results, which, when presented and discussed, exposed a critical and unanticipated tension.

The data showed that a flat structure where ‘everyone is the same’ did not work in practice. It had inadvertently allowed certain individuals to assume unofficial project manager roles, which in turn led to frustration and a lack of role clarity. A key insight was that the team did not want a return to rigid hierarchies, but rather actively desired more structure. This surprising finding, that the demand for structure originated from the team itself as a corrective to excessive decentralisation, is a central finding of this case study.

In response, the proposed new operating model was taken directly from the department’s own successful experiences in digital format development, a process detailed in Chapter 5. This agile approach was presented as the practical mechanism for implementing the desired change practices. Its core principles were seen as a direct solution to the problems identified in the survey. The emphasis on structured, cross-functional collaboration and defined feedback loops was explicitly framed as the method for building cognitive trust among team members. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that this transition would necessitate proactive upskilling for the entire team to effectively operate within this new, structured yet non-hierarchical framework.

This context provides a more nuanced interpretation of the managerial narrative. A line manager’s goal of a transformation ‘from theory to practice and finally integration’ was not a generic managerial slogan of control. Instead, it was a specific reference to implementing the proven ‘theory’ of their own agile methodology into the daily ‘practice’ of the entire department. The ‘continuous negotiation process’ one participant reported was, therefore, not a simple resistance to hierarchy, but a complex negotiation about the practical challenges of scaling a successful, project-based culture to a permanent organisational structure. This complex dynamic makes Atkinson’s (2025) reworking of role and field theory highly relevant. As already observed in the first workshop on format development, this workshop also revealed a ‘field-set’ in which practitioners were not simply resisting control but were actively co-creating a new structure based on shared experiences. The negotiation was the lived reality of individuals navigating their meta-habitus as they struggled to reconcile the conflicting desires for both autonomy and clarity in this ongoing organisational culture shift. To make these competing dynamics visible, Table 6-17 maps the key participant roles within Atkinson’s conceptual framework, situating them within their respective cultural logics, field pressures, and the resulting role conflicts. Participants are referred to by generic role descriptions rather than their exact job titles.

Table 6-17: Key Participants in the Puls Strategic Workshop and their generic role

Participant Role	Organisational Logic / Function	Position in the Field-Set	Field Pressure	Illusio Space (investment/belief)	Manifest Role Conflict / Tension
Line Manager	Strategic oversight; sets future-oriented direction	Embeds managerial logic within institutional field	Strong pressure to align innovation with measurable outcomes	Belief in managerial rationalisation and long-term strategic control	Balances institutional authority with symbolic need for participation
Strategic Manager	Translate strategy into routines; efficiency and accountability	Mediating between executives and creatives	Operate within a field demanding continuous control and reporting	Investment in efficiency, standardisation, and legitimisation of managerialism	Conflict between demands of upper management and negotiation with creative staff
Project Managers	Coordinate multi-platform output; ensure delivery on time and budget	Positioned at intersection of managerial and creative fields	High workload pressures; strong accountability metrics	Belief in agile methods and rational workflows	Tension between facilitating creativity and deadlines
Channel Manager	Responsible for audience engagement and cross-platform positioning	Straddles editorial and managerial domains	Strong accountability to performance data and audience metrics	Investment in metrics-driven strategy and audience responsiveness	Conflict between responding to data signals and sustaining creative identity
Producers	Drive creativity, experiments, responsiveness to culture, and vision	Represent professional logic of autonomy	Subject to control from managerial demands for stability	Belief in creativity, experimentation, and audience resonance	Conflict between artistic illusio and institutional rationalisation
Designer / Specialists	Provide technical and aesthetic expertise	Peripheral but symbolically important	Less exposed to greedy fields; accountable to delivery demands	Investment in craft, technical quality, and audience appeal	Balancing innovation with managerial constraints
Consultant	External expertise; brings industry perspective	Positioned between external and internal fields	Moderate pressure: sells authority but not fully embedded	Belief in providing legitimacy and benchmarking	Tension between independence and alignment with managerial agenda

Source: Adapted from Atkinson (2016: 6)

This application of Atkinson's framework was adopted to clarify that the workshop was not only a procedural assessment but also an arena where different fields and role expectations converged. The conflicting logics of managerial rationalisation, professional autonomy, and external validation coexisted in a fragile equilibrium, producing role conflicts that were managed but not fully resolved.

The Transformation Process

Based on my observations, I deconstructed the core components of change at Puls. This encompassed the desired shift in organisational culture and a revised model of power flows to support an agile operational strategy. This transformation can be understood as a practical attempt to institutionalise a new way of working, which resonates with Wyngaarden's (2018: 298) 'Medienmodell'. He conceptualises media development through iterative, interdisciplinary cycles that privilege user agency and networked collaboration. This parallels Puls's recalibrated power flows, which devolve authority to agile squads and erode legacy hierarchies. The model's emphasis on cultural reconfiguration can be understood as mirroring the deconstructed cultural pivot at Puls, thus rendering it a heuristic for embedding participatory norms. Consequently, Puls exemplifies the model's application in transforming structural impediments into generative affordances within a departmental context.

This section now turns from the components of the change to its implementation, analysing the specific, staged process through which the department attempted to embed this new logic. The groundwork for this transformation was laid over several years. Producers recounted how an early 'trial-and-error' mentality in digital production was gradually replaced by the structured format development processes detailed in Section 6.1. Puls, established in 2013, began this systematic development in 2015, producing primarily for its own platforms and social media channels, and only rarely for television. This trajectory represents a crucial shift from editorial-led to process-led thinking. The withdrawal of one of Puls' late-night formats from the linear schedule further accelerated this process, reinforcing the department's digital identity. With opportunities for television exposure becoming sporadic, the team was pushed towards online distribution, supported by ARD's Mediathek and the youth-oriented network funk, which provided platforms for their experimental formats.

This case therefore illustrates how a public service broadcaster restructured its internal processes to compete with online content aggregators. For the Puls team, this involved reorganising their workflows and cementing their mission as a relevant digital entity within the broader ARD/BR framework. Their energy and commitment during the workshop

highlighted the growing self-confidence of a digital unit poised to move from the periphery to the centre of the broadcaster's strategic thinking. As this workshop builds upon the format development workshop discussed previously, certain overlaps are relevant to the format development process and are therefore addressed here.

Problem Determination

The transformation process at Puls began with the results of an employee survey. This identified entrenched structures, unclear responsibilities, lack of communication and transparency, and limited understanding of resources as barriers to productivity and innovation. The survey acted as a diagnostic tool that framed subsequent change, consistent with institutional theory's emphasis on identifying and codifying internal problems as a precondition for reform (Lawrence et al., 2009). A project leader detailed the initiation, highlighting the imperative to attain a comprehensive grasp of the work culture. He underscored the intention to identify elements that cultivated satisfaction and those that precipitated dissatisfaction, and he depicted the inception as follows:

We got involved with a group of employees not only rethinking the overall structure, but ultimately also remodelling their own jobs – that is something special and we are convinced that this is the only way to successfully shape the future.

The employee survey was conducted to assess the prevailing organisational climate and identify barriers to productivity and innovation. These findings precipitated a cultural change initiative, presented in the next stage. This emphasis on a 'bottom-up approach' resonates with role theory as reframed by Atkinson (2025: 5), where every social group has its own internal power struggles and dominant players to gain or maintain their standing (capital). In reality, this is a fundamental effort to find meaning and purpose by earning the recognition of others. Methodologically, I argue that this stage demonstrates how surveys and internal reflection served both diagnostic and legitimising functions, creating a shared narrative of the need for change.

Cultural Change

The cultural transformation did not appear to be straightforward, nor was it confined to format development processes alone. Instead, discussions were held that sought to encourage empowerment, improve access to resources, and promote diversity, awareness,

and empathy. A line manager explained after the survey presentation in the workshop the aspiration as follows:

We want to create an open, diverse work culture, so, yes... where every voice can be brought forward without fear, we want the opposite of fear, to show that the best format can be created with plurality and not singularity or a tunnel view.

She added that, *'We all carry our own bias – believe it or not, we need a force that helps us to escape from it and that's why we value internal and external opinions'*. By 'opinions', she explicitly referred to audience feedback, linking the process of cultural change to the broader integration of audience research into production practices. This reflects earlier findings in journalism studies, where initial resistance to metrics is often replaced by more positive attitudes once practitioners experience their value in guiding decisions (Anderson, 2011; Napoli, 2014).

Within the context of the discussed cultural change for the department, structures, methods, and roles were scrutinised, all subject to potential change. This requires a willingness among a critical mass to actualise a tangible cultural transformation. There is a significant risk that, after lengthy processes, non-acceptance may dominate, causing individuals to revert to their original behaviours. Such initiatives are often supported by process partners, as was the situation in this instance. During the workshop, it was discussed that a project partner facilitates transitions, offers guidance, support, and expertise to ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of the desired changes. A process partner was not part of the workshop itself in order to maintain an internal perspective. However, to provide unbiased external support and assessment, their involvement becomes crucial in the transition process at a later stage.

Change Set-up

The change set-up marked a transitional moment in the transformation process. This involved investments in skill development, the dismantling of inherited hierarchies, and the streamlining of workflows to achieve a leaner and more dynamic organisational model. Yet, as one producer later admitted, the first attempt faltered due to difficulties in reaching consensus and adhering to deadlines. Consequently, more structured processes had to be reinstated, illustrating the challenge of sustaining democratic participation without clear decision-making mechanisms. This also involved identifying training needs, reconsidering how diversity should be operationalised, and scrutinising established communication

routines. New meeting formats were trialled, replacing the traditional model in which a line manager or project manager chaired discussions with a rotating system of hosts. Each participant was expected to report on progress, identify problems, and suggest improvements. While this experiment was designed to embody inclusivity, it soon revealed important limitations: the absence of clearly defined authority or prioritisation mechanisms led to indecision. A project manager explained the ethos underpinning this new approach:

We wanted to get away from the same old ways and start fresh. It was really important to us to include everyone and be respectful, bringing different skills together, talking openly, and making sure we didn't leave anyone out or play favourites with who gets invited to which meeting.

Despite this inclusive ambition, the process faltered because individuals gravitated towards preferred tasks rather than those that had been collectively prioritised. The absence of explicit guidelines meant that prioritisation remained contested, prompting discussions about developing clearer frameworks, which at the time of observation had not yet been finalised. From a theoretical perspective, this stage reflects the tensions between competing institutional logics. On the one hand, the dismantling of hierarchies and emphasis on shared decision-making exemplify a process-oriented logic aligned with Wyngaarden's (2018: 298) *Medienmodell* (media model), in which digital organisations are structured around continuous processes rather than fixed outputs. On the other hand, the reintroduction of structured processes demonstrates the persistence of managerial rationalisation and efficiency imperatives, consistent with findings in organisational sociology that highlight the resilience of bureaucratic structures even under reform.

Atkinson's (2025: 15) reformulation of role theory as social positioning is also useful here: practitioners were positioned between overlapping role expectations, caught between the collaborative illusion of democratic participation and the managerial demands for accountability and delivery. The resulting role conflict illustrates how organisational change is rarely linear but unfolds as a process of negotiation and recalibration. Methodologically, the case underlines the value of ethnographic observation, which captures the gap between formal aspirations (participatory culture) and enacted practices (return to hierarchy when consensus failed).

Change Implementation

The final change implementation was characterised by initiatives aimed at embedding departmental transformation through enhanced digital communication and a culture of

continuous improvement. Several structural and cultural changes were introduced. New digital communication channels and feedback loops were established to enable seamless interaction and regular assessment of progress. Cross-disciplinary teams were created to encourage collaboration across specialist domains, ensuring that meetings and digital channels could harness diverse perspectives. An open planning area was introduced, granting all employees access to schedules and workflows, thereby enhancing transparency and inclusivity in decision-making. Professional development was also prioritised, with staff encouraged to participate in training sessions and conferences to improve skills and share knowledge. Weekly meetings incorporated trend analysis, dedicating time to identifying industry developments and assessing their implications for ongoing projects. In addition, routine format evaluation became a daily activity, instilling a culture of responsibility and reflection by encouraging team members to engage with data on audience behaviour, interests, and needs. Audience engagement was therefore positioned as a central feedback mechanism, informing iterative improvement and adaptability in production strategies. A consultant framed the practical impact of this change as follows:

We can see the full picture now. By looking at the numbers on our platforms, we've got a clearer idea of what our audience likes. This helps guide us, and we also spot earlier if something isn't hitting the mark with them. Now, everyone gets this info – the web designer, the producer, and the co-ordinators.

This quotation illustrates how data was not confined to managerial or editorial elites but became distributed across different roles, reinforcing inclusivity and fostering collective accountability. Similarly, a project manager explained the rationale behind this new orientation: 'Innovation itself embraces data and research as central parts, and we are prepared, we know what the competition is like and what's trending, not just going with our gut feelings'.

Both statements underscore how data and research became integral to everyday practice, replacing individual gut feeling with evidence-based decision-making. Some producers interviewed noted that this gave them greater confidence, since decisions could be justified through data rather than elite authority. In this sense, audience metrics functioned as a levelling tool that widened creative boundaries and allowed greater freedom of experimentation, consistent with Anderson's (2011) argument that metrics can reshape professional autonomy in newsrooms, and Napoli's (2014) finding that data-driven practices increasingly influence creative decisions in broadcasting.

From a theoretical perspective, this stage illustrates a process of institutional embedding. What began as experimental initiatives became codified into everyday organisational routines. This aligns with Lawrence et al.'s (2009) conception of institutionalisation as the stabilisation of innovation into controllable practices. The integration of data across professional roles can also be understood through Atkinson's (2025) field-set and role conflict lens: staff navigated competing logics of creativity, managerial accountability, and audience responsiveness, producing tensions but also new forms of alignment. Furthermore, Van Wyngaarden's (2018) argument that innovation is part of a wider transformation process rather than an isolated event is borne out here: innovation at Puls was framed as a continuous, iterative practice rather than as a discrete moment. Finally, the adoption of data-driven routines reflects the broader cultural shift articulated by Deuze (2023: 1), who argues that 'we no longer live with media, we live in media'. For Puls' practitioners, this meant that media consumption and production were experienced as fluid, anytime-anywhere practices, shaping not only content strategies but also professional ideologies. Integration was repeatedly framed as a decisive factor – 'if done correctly,' as one workshop participant put it – underscoring the fragility and contingency of institutional change.

6.3 Key Outcomes from Workshop Observations

The workshop revealed a clear intention to establish a new departmental ethos, which was primarily focused on enhancing collaboration between previously siloed teams. To achieve this, participants planned to replicate the structural and strategic framework that had proven successful in their prior work on format development. Building on this experience, the department sought to integrate core elements of this framework into its working culture. This new operational strategy included the adoption of specific, structured practices. For instance, the department established a new meeting structure, comprising daily brief meetings, a comprehensive weekly meeting, and a restructured monthly review session. Furthermore, this restructuring incorporated a digital meeting board, a tool designed to make long-term objectives and potential obstacles transparent to the entire team. Participants articulated a self-perception of the department as an 'innovation network', with a stated goal of demonstrating the value of its new processes. Consequently, there were plans to disseminate these experiences beyond the department's own confines, with the objective of influencing the broader organisational framework. This activity reflects a strategic ambition to be recognised not merely for its creative output, but also as a pioneer of new organisational strategies.

The findings presented in this chapter, drawn from two interconnected case studies at ARD/BR, synthesise to reveal a clear trajectory of organisational change. This trajectory progresses from the micro-level experimentation of digital format development to a contested, department-wide transformation. The analysis has consistently shown that this process is best understood within the context of a public service institution facing significant tension. This tension is defined by the fundamental struggle to adopt the agile, data-informed practices of digital competitors whilst upholding a traditional public service remit.

This overarching institutional pressure manifested directly in the findings. The synthesis demonstrates how this external pressure creates significant internal conflict. In Case Study 1, this appeared as a manageable friction over creative methods. The authority of data-informed insights was negotiated against the professional authority of creative intuition within the contained space of a workshop. In Case Study 2, this same latent tension escalated into a manifest organisational struggle. Here, the subtle conflict moved beyond methods to a negotiation over the department's very structure and culture. The desire for a reverse power flow and decentralised decision-making was a direct challenge to the broadcaster's embedded hierarchical norms. Furthermore, this synthesis demonstrates that the new agile practices observed are not neutral technical solutions. They are, more importantly, political mechanisms deployed to navigate this tense public service context. In Case Study 1, the data-informed workflow functioned as a tool to confer endorsement on new formats within an institution historically governed by broadcast metrics. In Case Study 2, the attempt to scale this agile framework into a departmental strategy was revealed as an explicitly political act. It was an attempt to replace old institutional rules with a new set derived from digital culture. This sought to consolidate the power and influence of the digital-first unit.

Ultimately, the findings from these case studies demonstrate that institutional transformation at ARD/BR is neither linear nor uniform. It is instead a hybrid and recursive process of negotiation. The evidence presented in this chapter shows that organisational practices are being fundamentally reconfigured. They are moving from hierarchical to networked structures. Workflows are shifting from rigid to agile. And logics are transforming from narrative-driven to product-oriented cultures where audience data is part of the process. This internal restructuring can be regarded as a direct response to external pressures from platforms and audience shifts. Hence, I argue that the ongoing recalibration is better understood as a continued process of adjustment than as a transition towards a settled endpoint. It indicates how change is increasingly normalised within digital production cultures, particularly in the subsequent AI era.

Chapter 7: Discussion of Production Cultures and the Logics of Linear, Digital and Social Practices

7.0 Introduction

This chapter interprets the findings through the three-dimensional framework of systems, institutions, and individuals, addressing the study's four research questions. It demonstrates how audience data has become embedded in production processes, reshaping professional roles, institutional logics, and regulatory accountability.

The discussion is organised into three parts. Section 7.1 aligns the findings with existing scholarship in television production studies, cultural studies, and audience research, showing how they confirm, extend, or challenge established perspectives. Section 7.2 discusses the implications for institutional practice, individual roles, and academic understanding. Section 7.3 examines the applied implications for public service media (PSM), particularly in relation to strategy, workflow, regulation, and cross-media measurement. By linking empirical findings to academic debates, conceptual tools, and practical challenges, this chapter situates the thesis within wider disciplinary discussions and clarifies its contributions to both scholarship and industry practice.

7.1 Academic Alignment: Situating the Findings in Scholarly Debate

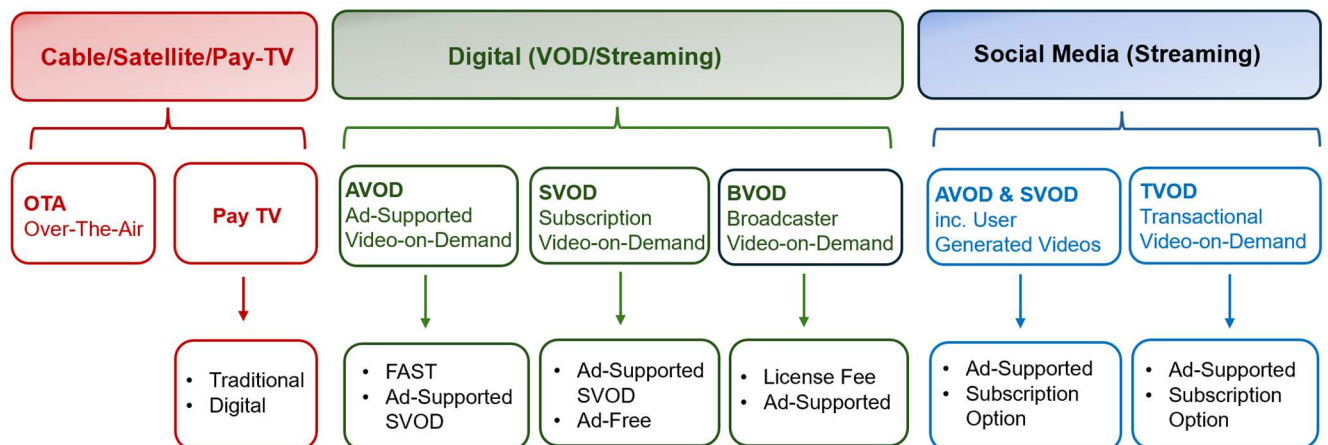
This section positions the findings within the wider scholarly conversation on television production, institutional change, and digital transformation. It builds on the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2 and reflects on how the findings extend, complicate, or challenge existing research. The analysis focuses on three key areas that emerged through the study. First, the coexistence of multiple production logics is examined in relation to debates on continuity and change in media industries. Second, the organisational restructuring observed in response to digital pressures is discussed through the lens of institutional adaptation. Third, the changing role of audience data is considered as a site of epistemic and professional transformation. Together, these discussions show how the findings contribute to understanding production as a dynamic, negotiated, and contested process.

Fractured Logics and the Restructuring of Production

This study's principal finding challenges the idea of a singular transition to digital production. Instead, it reveals a fragmented landscape where different production logics coexist. These logics often operate in tension, shaped by organisational context and platform demands. Rather than signalling a clear break, the data points to a strategic navigation of continuity and change (Johnson, 2024). Although these shifts are not solely the outcome of deliberate planning, they also reflect emergent and adaptive forms of strategic action. Here, responsiveness becomes integral to organisational practice. These reactive and often unplanned adjustments suggest that strategy is not only designed in advance but is also continually reworked in response to shifts in audience behaviour and technological developments. At the same time, traditional workflows tend to persist, particularly within established legacy broadcast teams, although they appear to be increasingly reoriented in light of new forms of competition.

Figure 5 offers a mapping of the contested logic of cross-platform distribution. Crucially, the diagram does not present 'hybrid' as a distinct category, because hybridity is not a separate model but rather the strategic practice of combining elements. This relates to Chadwick's (2017: 8) notion of hybrid media logics, which he conceptualises as a dynamic condition wherein older and newer media logics coexist, co-evolve, compete, and interact. Further, this relates to a patterned way in which media operate, incorporating emerging technologies. The diagram also illustrates the argument that formats can no longer be understood as stable entities. Instead, a format's identity and value are refracted through the specific logics of the hybrid structure in which it operates. This fragmentation is not a neutral outcome of technological change. I would instead argue that it can be understood as a manifestation of the structural power of digital intermediaries. In this context, the proliferation of business models, from FAST (see Chapter 2) to the various tiers of VOD, points to a landscape in which broadcasters are increasingly compelled to operate on terrain they do not own and according to rules they do not set. Furthermore, the diagram reveals the mechanisms of this power. The incommensurable nature of the metrics across these different spheres – from linear ratings to platform-specific metrics – is not a simple technical problem. It can be understood as a field on which struggles over value and authority are played out. Accordingly, this diagram should not be read as a mere visualisation of options, but rather as a political map. It points to a contested field in which contemporary media producers are required to navigate a fragmented landscape shaped by increasing power asymmetries.

Figure 5: The Contested Logic of Distribution Options



Source: Adapted from European Broadcasting Union (2023)

This format distribution diagram also visualises Johnson's (2024) argument that institutional change is rarely wholesale. Instead, new digital logics are layered onto older structures. This layering process is evident in the findings. Digital teams tend to adopt agile and modular workflows, yet these coexist alongside sequential, genre-anchored models. While some departments embrace iterative development, others continue to follow longstanding production routines. From a field theory perspective, this can be related to Bourdieu's (1993) model of structural differentiation. The coexisting production logics may be understood as corresponding to different positions within the field, each associated with varying degrees of autonomy and exposure to market pressures. Linear production often retains symbolic value within institutions, although it may be becoming less central in strategic terms. By contrast, digital and social-first teams tend to operate in closer proximity to the field of power, where practices are more directly shaped by platform governance and metrics-based forms of accountability. This shift aligns with Caldwell (2008), who identifies production cultures as reflexive and stratified rather than unified. Further, the analysis, grounded in CGT, indicates that these patterns were not imposed but emerged inductively from participants' accounts. The divergence of logics was not solely technical. It was often framed as a practical response to institutional volatility and platform pressures. Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) supported the identification of these competing logics not as abstract trends but as organisational dynamics that producers appear to negotiate in their everyday practice.

Strategic Structuring and Organisational Recalibration

The second key finding centres on process transformation. Digital format development beyond 2015 appears to have become more structured and iterative, often drawing on principles associated with agile workflows. This marks a contrast with the more sequenced processes that continue to characterise much linear production. The study suggests that both BBC Three and funk illustrate shifts that took shape between 2018 and 2022, which were not solely driven by technological change. These developments can be interpreted as strategic interventions, through which organisational structures were adjusted to accommodate emerging production logics and regulations (see Chapter 2).

These structural shifts reflect both adaptation and institutional constraint. Innovation units and temporary project-based teams in the UK and Germany were often established not to bypass tradition but to create bounded zones where experimentation was permitted. This was particularly evident from the interviews conducted at the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5, ARD/BR, ZDF, and ProSiebenSat.1. Various newly established units at broadcasters post-2015 allowed practitioners to operate outside dominant genre and organisational norms, while still benefiting from institutional support. This echoes Doyle (2019: 6) and Evens and Donders (2018: 3), who illustrate how broadcasters build flexibility into rigid institutional structures to compete with more agile streaming and social video platforms.

In digital production, processes often involve ongoing loops that incorporate immediate feedback through available metrics and responses. In this context, I also observed a greater degree of dynamism in how processes were adjusted over time. A common response among media organisations to convergence and the growth of the internet has been to migrate towards a multiplatform approach. This aligns with Bruun (2019: 12), who argues that ‘an unexpected event can be a total game changer, and the playlist orchestrating the on-air schedule has to be profoundly re-edited, with all the promotional work already done being, at worst, wasted’. This rigid schedule-driven attitude to which she refers is only interrupted when news stories of high significance occur. In this case, there is power to overrule the schedule. In digital environments, content tends to coexist across platforms and viewers create their own schedules. There were also accusations that some formats, backed by influential agents, were displayed more prominently and therefore dominated the space on a platform’s front page. When I conducted a pre-interview with a managing director of a Canadian production company (who also works in Europe), he confidentially referred to Netflix as showing deceptive behaviour in relation to what is placed first on its homepage. He later argued that Netflix takes money to prioritise certain productions on its platform. I cannot determine the prevalence of this behaviour from the available evidence. However, on

streaming platforms, broadcasters and production companies often appear to prioritise achieving strong visibility and ranking within each platform. Platforms, by contrast, tend to optimise for maximising viewing and retention, with algorithmic systems playing a central role in shaping what is surfaced to users. In both cases, eyeballs are crucial, at commercial broadcasters because of advertising revenue and in PSM because of legitimacy (Lowe and Bardoel, 2007: 57).

This section discussed the principal findings on power, culture, and data. It argued that audience data has not transformed production strategies outright. However, it may still catalyse a shift towards greater audience engagement and more data-informed practice. Yet it cautioned against indiscriminate adoption of data-led methodologies. Further, it advocated a judicious approach that recognised data's complex effects on creative practice, audience interaction, and industry context. The ongoing debate concerning the integration of linear and digital media was illuminated, highlighting current levels of data integration and the need for a considered and multifaceted perspective.

The rise of the data gatekeeper role reflects a broader redistribution of authority. Analysts and audience managers, once peripheral, are now more central to the creative process. Their authority is not grounded in artistic expertise but in data fluency. In the cases I observed, the conditions under which content became visible, legible, and evaluable were determined, in part, by platform infrastructures. This included the formats that were privileged, the metrics that became actionable, and shifts in recommendation and moderation logics that were difficult to anticipate. As a result, audience knowledge appears to be produced through platform-defined interfaces and categories, rather than through fully independent institutional measurement. Digital teams were not only expected to iterate and optimise, but they also framed this as an advantage in addressing the audience gap identified in Chapter 6. Yet, taken together, the interviews and workshops suggest that practitioners could not fully verify what drove reach and engagement, because platforms retained authority over what was disclosed and how performance was rendered meaningful. In this sense, 'the audience' was not simply discovered through research. It was operationalised through platform metrics and platform grammars of success, which reconfigured creative judgement and decision-making within format development.

7.2 Implications for Media Institutions, Practice, and Scholarly Understanding

The findings of this study speak to the wider institutional and epistemic shifts that are reshaping television production in the digital age. They highlight how practitioners and organisations are negotiating multiple pressures while actively reshaping what production

means within contemporary media cultures. This section is structured around two sets of implications. The first relates to industry and professional practice, while the second considers the study's contribution to academic debates and theoretical frameworks. Together, they respond to the research aims by reflecting on what the findings reveal about the reconfiguration of power, value, and knowledge in production contexts.

Implications for Institutional Practice and Professional Roles

The findings show that production transformation is not unfolding through linear or unified progression. Instead, it is marked by the coexistence of distinct production logics, each embedded within different organisational structures and strategic goals. In response to RQ1, which examined the key drivers of television format change, the data revealed some notable national variations. UK broadcasters such as the BBC, Channel 4, and ITV tend to integrate digital workflows more holistically into their commissioning and development pipelines, reflecting a stronger emphasis on cross-platform visibility. In contrast, German broadcasters such as ARD/BR and ZDF retain more segmented organisational structures, where digital innovation is often channelled through distinct units such as funk or national and regional Mediathek teams. Until March 2023, the regional ARD Mediathek services were consolidated into a single main player, alongside the introduction of a more systematised process. New workflows were established, as former teams could no longer define their own procedures but were required to adapt to centrally defined platform rules and operate as content suppliers. Selection processes and algorithmic logics were standardised at the centre, while format development processes themselves remained largely unchanged. Decisions about what content is integrated into the main VOD player, and the degree of its visibility, are now shaped by a central algorithmic system. This trajectory contrasts with the BBC, where the iPlayer functioned as a single, central platform from the outset, embedding unified distribution and visibility logics earlier within organisational practice. My study suggests that broadcasters are therefore not simply adopting digital workflows but are negotiating their integration unevenly across organisational layers. The implications of internal and external platform changes may be far-reaching for departments, as managing plurality across hierarchies, teams, and production cultures appears to have become an ongoing strategic tension.

One mechanism identified in the findings is the use of agile or project-based innovation units by executive managers. Innovation units were often established to experiment beyond genre boundaries and institutional norms, and they exist across both British and German broadcasters. In relation to RQ2, which focused on format development, these changes

were not merely technical responses. They also functioned as spaces in which new creative practices could be tested and institutional norms renegotiated. This suggests that organisational structure can be used deliberately to foster internal experimentation. However, my study also found that such units gain influence only when they are backed by resources and integrated into institutional strategy. For example, within ARD/BR, initiatives such as the digital innovation lab supporting the social video format *I'm just myself* across platforms and experimental Mediathek formats demonstrated how new workflows could be trialled. Further, a longer-term impact appeared limited where integration into established commissioning structures did not follow. Under such conditions, innovations risk remaining isolated and may not translate into wider organisational practice. Another significant implication concerns the evolving role of audience data and the professionals who manage it. In response to RQ3, the study found that audience conceptualisation is now embedded across the production process in digital teams. Audience data is not only used to identify content opportunities but also functions as an internal mediator during decision-making. The emergence of the data gatekeeper role, explored in RQ4, reflects a reconfiguration of creative authority. Professionals with expertise in metrics and platform analytics are now positioned at the centre of commissioning and development workflows. This shift has implications for professional identity and collaboration. Creative roles can no longer rely solely on genre knowledge or artistic judgement. Authority increasingly depends on the ability to translate ideas into data-justified strategies. Institutions will need to respond by supporting cross-disciplinary fluency. They should also recognise the risks of over-relying on short-term data signals at the expense of creative risk and long-term cultural value. The findings suggest that institutions should treat audience data as one form of insight among many, not as an automatic arbiter of creative decisions.

In the period following 2015, audience data practices appear to have undergone notable changes within public service broadcasting contexts. Data was no longer confined to isolated platforms but increasingly aggregated, visualised, and incorporated into everyday decision-making. This shift was described by interviewees across different levels and regions, although its scope and depth varied. A notable development occurred in 2018, when ARD introduced an expanded data self-service infrastructure. This system made it possible for a broader range of professionals, beyond dedicated data analysts, to access basic audience reports and to conduct more independent data enquiries. These changes can be understood as part of a broader reorganisation of institutional knowledge and authority. At the same time, they signalled that audience data was becoming increasingly central to everyday creative processes. These developments signalled a broader reconfiguration of institutional routines, requiring professionals to adopt new forms of reflexivity in their engagement with

data and decision-making processes. During the interviews, I observed a lack of confidence in data interpretation across both countries and across broadcasters. Questions about specific metrics and how they were compared were often answered superficially. As one British executive producer noted, there was a separate department responsible for the granular detail. Hence, it remains an open question to what extent creative decisions are genuinely shaped by data, as opposed to being informed by it in selective or strategic ways. My study suggests that the boundary between data-driven insight and editorial judgement remains fluid, and that the relative weight of each varies across units, roles, and institutional contexts. The findings indicate that creative influence is increasingly associated with the capacity to operate within hybrid knowledge regimes. In these contexts, metrics-based evidence is combined with professional and editorial judgement. This has implications for training and professional development, and for how creative labour and expertise are defined and valued within public service institutions.

Tensions Between Institutional Measurement and Platform Logics

The differentiation between digital, social video, and hybrid formats suggests that production logics may be shaped by differing epistemologies of the audience. In digital contexts, audience knowledge often appears to be integrated throughout development, supported by analytics tools and dashboard visualisations, tests, and continuous optimisation. This resonates with Johnson's (2019; 2022) observations on the rise of structured data-driven commissioning but also extends them by demonstrating how agile principles have become routine in broadcaster-led digital units.

By contrast, social media-native production demonstrates the volatility of what Napoli (2011; 2019: 238) conceptualises as audience epistemologies. These refer to the conditions under which knowledge about audiences is produced and mobilised. In social video environments, producers often work within accelerated cycles of feedback shaped by algorithmic systems. Producers accordingly tend to see social video platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok as prioritising visibility and immediacy over stability (see Chapter 5). The observation of the ARD/BR format targeted at young women illustrates how platform restrictions directly shape creative practice. During the format workshop I observed, the social media manager outlined the specific affordances and constraints that determined what was possible on Instagram. These included the prioritisation of vertical video, the limits on length for reels and stories, and the algorithmic emphasis on immediate engagement. The social media manager referred to Instagram:

We have to start from what our viewers are actually interested in. If the topic doesn't connect with their daily lives, they'll just scroll past. We need to talk to them about what they care about and discuss how we can contribute to those conversations.

Part of this discussion also concerned technical specifications such as recommended runtimes, framing conventions, and the need to tailor captions and thumbnails for visibility within the feed environment. These specifications were not presented as optional but as binding parameters that determined how the format could be designed and launched. This example highlights how the affordances of platforms are transformed into institutionalised rules of practice within production workflows.

During the workshops, I observed social video metrics being discussed as direct indicators of user interaction and feedback. This may further shape how audience knowledge is interpreted. Crucially, social video platforms remain the only environments that provide direct forms of user interaction for broadcasters, as neither BVOD nor SVOD platforms allow comments beneath their videos. As a result, producers working with BVOD systems such as ARD Mediathek and BBC iPlayer are unable to replicate this immediacy. They instead rely on occasional surveys. While surveys can generate some insight, they are often episodic and limited to participants' memories. This may indicate a continuing gap between institutionalised national measurement practices and the immediacy of platform-native engagement, where direct feedback from the audience is generated. This supports Hesmondhalgh and Lobato's (2019: 970) critique that datafication reshapes broadcasters as a growing number of data intermediaries are involved in the process of audience measurement. Livingstone (2018: 171) argues that media studies has responded to the growing datafication of media, while also cautioning that some media scholars frame media systems as monolithic forces and risk neglecting the complexity of audience life. This critique is particularly relevant to social video contexts, where broadcasters increasingly publish content across multiple platforms in which audience activity is more visible. In these environments, audience life becomes observable through comments, sharing practices, and forms of interaction that exceed aggregated metrics, offering producers more immediate and situated insights into how content is received and engaged with.

Hybrid production environments, such as those developed by BBC Three or funk, demonstrate the tensions between these competing logics. On the one hand, they maintain structured commissioning workflows aligned with national measurement systems. On the other hand, they experiment with social distribution and analytics that prioritise

responsiveness. Meehan's (2005; 2014) insight that audiences are constructed as commodities by the very act of measurement underlines the extent to which these hybrids negotiate not just institutional mandates but competing definitions of value. My workshop observations confirmed these dynamics. The consultant and the researcher as well as the social media manager reflected on the strategic importance of audience feedback and cross-platform trends, discussing how concepts are initially tested through sketches, piloted in controlled releases, and subsequently optimised using analytics. One producer at ARD/BR outlined this process as an expression of audience centrality. Presentations on target groups and audience behaviour during the format workshops illustrated the perceived value of data, particularly through persona models designed to make abstract audience insights relatable to real individuals. This development aligns with Kotliar's (2020: 1159) assertion that economic and symbolic values are intertwined within specific social contexts. From the perspective of critical data studies, this position resonates with Kitchin's (2025: 46) argument that data is never raw or neutral but embedded within epistemological frameworks that shape how knowledge is produced and enacted. As Kitchin (2025: 36) observes, 'data work is thus a situated, contingent, socio-technical activity, not one that takes place in a hermetically sealed vacuum of perfect, expected conditions'. My findings suggest that this contingency is increasingly managed through a structural shift. Specifically, audience feedback has evolved from an occasional supplement into a central organising logic within contemporary production workflows. This development both confirms and extends earlier analyses of adaptive production practices (Caldwell, 2008; Couldry, 2012; Banks et al., 2018) by demonstrating how institutional routines are increasingly structured around data-driven metrics. Within this paradigm, data appears to be enacted not merely as a tool for operational efficiency, but as a resource through which creative authority may be negotiated.

7.3 Implications for Media Institutions and Practitioners

The findings of this thesis point to a recurring tension between the logics associated with linear, VOD, hybrid, and social video formats. Rather than reflecting a purely technical disagreement over workflows, these tensions appear to relate to differing professional cultures and their orientations towards change, risk, and the role of the audience. This section discusses these dynamics by considering how organisational efforts towards systemic change were often partial and uneven. As a result, change frequently took the form of trial-and-error experimentation, in which different production cultures engaged with data and audience feedback in varied and sometimes inconsistent ways.

The Contested Path to Systematisation

The findings also highlight the impact of organisational culture on different format typologies (see Chapter 2), rather than genres, within media companies. Factors such as creativity, innovation, collaboration, and communication across departments emerged as crucial for sustaining digital cultures. These elements are not automatically embedded in existing hierarchies but often require active fostering. The intermingling of these factors is particularly important in digital divisions, where success definitions tend to depend on a willingness to experiment and take risks. Organisational culture may play an important role in enabling such practices and in creating conditions in which digital development can thrive. This is consistent with Van Wyngaarden's (2018) finding that the modification of organisational and personnel structures is a decisive lever for increasing innovation potential and strategic flexibility. In both the UK and Germany, reaching new target groups through content innovation and fostering collaboration across different areas were repeatedly identified by a consultant and a format developer as key objectives. The adaptation of established processes and structures was framed by interviewees as essential for promoting cooperation among producers, directors, project managers, researchers, and designers.

At ARD/BR, process managers appear to support the flow of developing and distributing digital formats, which can enable project teams to focus more closely on their creative work. For larger series or for content developed for specialised platforms, independent project teams are often established separately. These are supported from the outset by experts from consulting and strategy units. Such projects are typically backed by larger budgets for research and development, which enable creative professionals to focus on conception and production. The interview with a digital producer at ARD/BR and the case studies provided insights into how teams operationalise the target audience in measurable terms and combine desk-based quantitative synthesis with qualitative interviews where budgets allow. Where resources are constrained, compromises are made, and qualitative research in particular is often reduced or omitted. To maintain high narrative standards, editorial staff from specialised departments are integrated and, in the case of high-quality science formats, scientists are sometimes involved. In such cases, project groups are expanded and coordination demands increase. This results in different format development set-ups and workflow arrangements, often associated with higher budgets. However, this was only mentioned briefly by one producer and a fuller account lies beyond the scope of this study, though it indicates a departure from a straightforward develop, measure, and adjust logic.

While public service broadcasters provide an important lens through which to examine institutional adaptation and audience data practices, their remit is shaped by distinct regulatory obligations and public value frameworks. To provide further insight into how production logics operate under different conditions, the discussion now turns briefly to commercial broadcasting and independent production companies. This shift allows for closer examination of environments in which market imperatives, commissioner relationships, and competitive positioning are embedded from the outset, offering a contrasting perspective on how creative, organisational, and strategic decisions are structured. Private production firms often begin with a mass audience orientation, aligning their internal practices to market and commissioner expectations from the outset. Storyboard, for example, adopts an encompassing strategy from the beginning, responding closely to commissioner demands with a strong emphasis on aesthetics and emotional appeal, as their Vice President explained in an interview. In the UK, private production companies including A+E Networks, Fulwell 73, and Endemol Shine continued to reserve linear narratives for large-scale entertainment shows with established international potential.

This was evident not only through the interviews but also in the company's presentations at MIPCOM. One of Fulwell 73's founders presented a distinctive case, as the company was originally established as a family-run business by lifelong supporters of Sunderland AFC. This personal connection was not only reflected in one of their flagship productions, which focused on the city and its football club, but is also embedded in the company's very name¹⁰. This does not imply a restriction to personal or regional boundaries, as Fulwell 73 has produced numerous internationally oriented projects. In fact, the founder was walking along the Los Angeles shoreline following a co-production meeting when I interviewed him.

Across the UK and German broadcasters and production companies with digital production units examined, I observed prototyping as a recurrent element. It was often framed as a forward-looking practice that supports collaborative brainstorming with the audience in mind. Several UK interviewees referred to international productions when discussing prototyping. Taken together, the cross-national evidence and the presence of international case

¹⁰ Fulwell End" was the name of a stand at Roker Park, and "73" is a reference to the 1973 FA Cup Final, when Sunderland last won a major trophy.

references suggest that prototyping has become an increasingly international element of contemporary digital format development.

The Incomplete Cycle: From Experimentation to Partial Institutionalisation

The proliferation of new roles and skills in broadcasting has given rise to an expanding number of micro-fields. These include units labelled as UX, social media, or digital labs, alongside less clearly defined hubs related to new format development. At ARD/BR, a data lab and an artificial intelligence lab were established, but they remained largely disconnected from the editorial and television divisions (see Chapter 6). This reflects a trend that began in the 2010s, when ARD/BR and some other broadcasters started to establish additional units in areas such as social media, data analytics, and digital marketing. Since 2015, ARD/BR has progressively established specialised units, including BR Data and the AI + Automation Lab, as indicated in organisational documentations. Both units focus on supporting data-driven and AI-related workflows. Traditional research and development departments continue to exist alongside these developments, yet new units have grown around them, often struggling for visibility but gradually gaining acceptance as specialised consulting teams. Although these units were initially peripheral to format development, the interviews suggest that their influence has expanded over time. Case studies and internal strategy presentations have become mechanisms through which these entities seek recognition and legitimacy from programme executives. The pursuit appears to be shaped in part by increasing institutional pressure to respond to shifting audience behaviours and the rise of platform-centric consumption. These conditions can be related to the dynamics identified by Abbott (1988), in which professional jurisdictions are negotiated and defended within evolving organisational fields. The shift from marginalisation to greater integration appears to be particularly evident in digital contexts, where teams that were previously more isolated are now more closely embedded in production processes. This supports Banks et al.'s (2018) claim that production cultures are contingent and adaptive, shaped by the institutionalisation of new competencies. The organisational logic of these new fields does not always appear to be fluid. Projects and departments often go through phases of siloing, de-siloing, and re-siloing, reflecting cycles of separation, integration, and reintegration that incorporate lessons learned. As Straubhaar et al. (2013) note, such dynamics illustrate how organisations adapt to technological shifts through reconfigured boundaries rather than holistic transformation. However, the application of defined models of change appears uneven. Some departments seem to embrace iterative restructuring, while others continue to operate with more rigid hierarchies. This is consistent with Lotz's (2014) argument that

institutional responses to technological change vary widely according to resources, strategy, and national context.

The path towards identifying stable processes for digital format development has therefore been anything but straightforward. Instead, it is characterised by trial-and-error, experimentation, and negotiation, echoing the agile principles imported from software engineering. Digital teams have frequently acted as catalysts for change, experimenting with storytelling across multiple platforms and challenging conventional workflows. This reinforces Caldwell's (2008) observation that production cultures are reflexive, with practitioners continually reimagining professional practices in response to technological disruption. The findings suggest that systematisation should not be understood as the emergence of a single standardised model of format development. Rather, different format development typologies have evolved through varying combinations of audience research, prototyping, collaboration, and organisational coordination. What emerges is therefore a process of partial and contested institutionalisation, rather than a completed transformation. However, this process is not random. The analysis demonstrates that it is shaped by four interconnected dynamics that underpin the systematisation of contemporary format development.

Trust as a Bridging Element in Organisational Dynamics

The first of these dynamics is trust, which emerged consistently across the interviews as a mechanism through which collaboration, authority, and legitimacy are negotiated within production cultures. In linear contexts, trust is often embedded in established networks and professional hierarchies (Cunningham and Craig, 2019: 120). In digital environments, however, newcomers can leverage professional connections, often established through cross-divisional work or traineeships, to build bridges of trust that encourage collaboration with their linear counterparts. Trust also intersects with audience categorisation practices. At ARD/BR, departments employ systems to cluster audiences according to social positions and values, echoing Kotliar's (2020: 1153) analysis of identity categorisation. These practices are used to reassure commissioners and executives that formats are grounded in reliable knowledge, thereby enabling trust in decision-making. Interviews suggested that trust constitutes a central but ambivalent dimension of contemporary production cultures. While many participants emphasised trust as a prerequisite for collaboration, particularly in cross-disciplinary and fast-moving digital environments, others expressed scepticism towards its operation in practice. Several digital producers, in particular, questioned reliance on trust when it functioned as an informal gatekeeping mechanism that privileged

established professional networks over data-driven or experimental forms of knowledge. My interview material indicates that trust does not operate as a neutral interpersonal value but is closely entangled with reputation, tenure, and prior institutional standing. In this sense, trust can facilitate coordination and reduce friction in production processes, while simultaneously reinforcing existing hierarchies by shaping whose judgement is taken seriously and whose contributions are marginalised. This argument is supported by recurring accounts in which participants contrasted their own data-informed proposals with decisions justified through appeals to experience. The key insight, therefore, is that trust functions both as an enabling and constraining force within digital production. Rather than dissolving power asymmetries, it may recalibrate them, influencing how innovation is evaluated and which forms of knowledge gain legitimacy. This highlights trust as a critical site where organisational culture, data practices, and creative authority intersect, rather than as a purely positive or self-evident resource.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how linear, digital, and social practices interact within contemporary media organisations, highlighting the uneven but significant shifts in production cultures. The analysis shows that digital and social practices are marked by iterative experimentation and audience centrality, while linear practices remain grounded in continuity and hierarchical stability. These contrasting orientations illustrate Bourdieu's (1993) argument that cultural fields are defined by struggles over authority and legitimacy. Atkinson's reworking of field theory helps to specify how such struggles are experienced in practice by drawing attention to the fact that actors are rarely situated within a single field alone. The empirical material gathered in this study directly illuminates how format development within British and German television production operates as a contested field, extending Bourdieu's (1993) relational sociology into the digital era. My findings demonstrate that the ongoing transition from linear broadcasting to streaming and social video platforms does not represent a simple technological shift, but rather a profound reconfiguration of symbolic capital and institutional authority. Whilst the influx of real-time metrics and platform analytics provides digital specialists with fresh forms of data-driven legitimacy, this authority remains highly uneven. Established creative actors actively resist total quantification by deploying their internalised habitus, specifically drawing upon long-standing genre histories, institutional seniority, and traditional public service values as competing modes of professional credibility. Public broadcasters such as the BBC and ARD are caught between defending their editorial autonomy and responding to the growing influence of platform performance indicators. Ultimately, this tension supports an adapted Bourdieusian approach,

revealing that format development is shaped by structural dependencies in which access to quantitative audience data becomes a resource through which decision-making authority is negotiated and contested.

Further, I discussed how practitioners operate across overlapping organisational fields, each carrying different expectations and sources of recognition. Within these contexts, trust and reputation shape whose judgements are taken seriously and which practices gain traction. In this sense, digital transformation is not only a matter of technological adoption but also a negotiated process embedded in professional cultures and institutional histories. This discussion also confirms ongoing research on platformisation (Poell and Nieborg, 2018; Lobato and Scarlata, 2023), which emphasises how external infrastructures increasingly structure both creative and organisational choices. Organisational cultures play a key mediating role in how pressures are absorbed and translated. The establishment of specialised units, such as storytelling labs, data labs, and format labs, can be understood as attempts to professionalise digital work while simultaneously legitimising it within established institutional hierarchies. At the same time, the adoption of agile practices borrowed from software engineering reveals how digital development is reshaping the temporalities, structures, and professional norms of broadcasting. This aligns with Kitchin's (2014) claim that technical systems are not neutral but actively shape cultural and organisational processes.

Another contribution of the study is to show how different practitioners interpret change. Linear practitioners often frame change as a destabilising threat, while digital practitioners tend to treat it as a cultural asset, and social media producers regard it as an everyday reality of working within volatile platform environments. Social media, previously framed primarily as a promotional extension, has since around 2018 increasingly been configured as a distinct site of production. My findings suggest this is reflected in the expansion of platform-specific roles and the growing attribution of creative value to digital and social-first content. However, the platforms that broadcasters focus on beyond their own VOD players are volatile, as third-party platforms change in terms of audience interest and infrastructure. For public service broadcasters, these developments raise pressing questions about how institutional mandates for inclusivity and diversity can be pursued in environments shaped by metrics of shareability and engagement.

The chapter also contributes to the study's aims and objectives by demonstrating that the reconfiguration of production is not a uniform process but characterised by the coexistence of multiple and sometimes conflicting logics. Audience conceptualisation has shifted from episodic measurement in linear practices to continuous feedback loops in digital and social

contexts, reshaping the balance of authority within production teams. The emergence of new professional roles, such as data analysts and social media managers, illustrates how power is redistributed in ways that challenge established hierarchies. Digital professionalisation emerges here as inseparable from organisational change. It is often expressed in compartmentalisation and decentralisation. At the same time, it produces silos and asymmetries. This appears to be more than an operational side effect. Digital professionalisation redistributes informational and technical capacities unevenly, generating durable differences in who sees the audience, who defines its meaning, and who can act on it. Hence, I argue that these asymmetries can reflect deeper imbalances in organisational power. Teams and individuals differ in their access to data, technological infrastructure, and decision-making authority. For example, editorial staff may depend on insights controlled by line managers or platform strategists, whose priorities are often shaped more by metrics than by content considerations. Such dynamics expose broader institutional struggles, particularly regarding whose expertise is granted authority and which forms of labour are recognised as legitimate within evolving production cultures. More broadly, the findings suggest that contemporary format development is undergoing a process of partial systematisation. Rather than converging towards a single standardised model, organisations continue to operate through multiple format development typologies that combine audience research, prototyping, creative collaboration, and data-informed decision-making in different ways. The recurring cycles of siloing, de-siloing, and re-siloing identified across the case studies indicate that institutional adaptation remains ongoing rather than complete. These dynamics demonstrate that the integration of digital practices is characterised less by linear transformation than by continuous negotiation between competing organisational logics, professional identities, and forms of expertise. For the discipline, these insights reinforce the value of combining production studies, organisational sociology, and critical data studies to understand how production cultures are reorganised. For practitioners, they highlight both the opportunities and risks of audience centrality, agile methodologies, and decentralised decision-making. The discussion therefore concludes that digital and social practices are not simply extensions of linear broadcasting but constitute distinct cultural logics. These shifts point towards a future of media production defined by the ongoing negotiation between public service values and platform imperatives.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: A Field in Transition

8.0 Introduction

This chapter brings together the findings of the study, which were developed through interviews, organisational documents, case studies, and keynote analysis. The aim is to synthesise how processes of format development were negotiated in German and British broadcasting organisations during a period of transition. It focused on the period from 2010 to 2022, a phase in which audience measurement and format development processes across platforms became increasingly systematised compared to earlier years (see Chapter 3). The study traced how professionals reflected on existing cultures, engaged with new forms of data, and tested collaborative and adaptive practices in response to shifting technological and institutional pressures. The findings capture a moment immediately before artificial intelligence became widely integrated into production environments. As such, they provide a historical account of pre-AI practices, documenting the cultural adaptations, tensions, and continuities that defined this phase of organisational change.

This concluding chapter proceeds in four stages. First, it synthesises the principal findings of the research. Second, it explicitly aligns these findings with the four guiding research questions, analysing the results across structural, organisational, and professional dimensions. Third, it assesses the significance of the research by outlining its theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions. Finally, the chapter reflects on the study's limitations and identifies directions for future work, particularly in light of the new dynamics being introduced by artificial intelligence. The study was guided by four objectives: (1) to analyse structural and regulatory transformations; (2) to assess how organisational practices in production were reconfigured; (3) to explore how cross-platform formats reshaped strategies and methods; and (4) to evaluate how audience data is conceptualised in different fields.

8.1 A Synthesis of Findings in Response to the Research Questions

The principal finding of this thesis is that the reconfiguration of production processes at broadcasters is not uniform. Here, 'process' refers to the interconnected practices through which formats are conceived, evaluated, commissioned, produced, tested, and adjusted, including the ways organisational routines and professional roles shape decision-making across these stages. The process also entails the emergence and coexistence of distinct, and often conflicting, production logics, which became visible across linear, hybrid, digital

on-demand, and social media production contexts. The reconfiguration of processes can be understood as a direct response to institutional drivers and market changes. Further, it represents a strategic effort by practitioners to navigate the competing pressures of a volatile digital media environment. Here, I refer to a 'reconfigured and iteratively encompassing practice' as the increasing systematisation of development stages. This practice also encompasses repeated cycles of testing, evaluation, and revision that extend across multiple platforms and organisational units, rather than being confined to a single linear production workflow (RQ2). This new workflow, modelled on agile principles, contrasts sharply with the sequenced processes that still govern linear production. A key finding was that the strategic creation of new departments or project-based units is not necessarily a barrier. Instead, it is often a deliberate mechanism used to foster innovation beyond the organisation's traditional genre boundaries and cultural norms. My research further found that the conceptualisation of the audience was profoundly reconfigured (RQ3). Within digital workflows, audience conceptualisation is a continuous process that tends to be integrated at every stage of format development. This contrasts with linear production, where audience research tends to play a more limited and largely upfront role. The analysis suggests that, in digital contexts, audience data can serve a dual function. It may be used to identify perceived 'audience gaps' for strategic commissioning and format development, while also operating as an internal reference point in decision-making processes. In some cases, it is mobilised to counterbalance the influence of established creative perspectives (see Chapter 5). Consequently, these shifts have led to a significant reconfiguration of power within organisations (RQ4). A central finding here is the emergence and consolidation of the 'data gatekeeper' role. This shift has repositioned professionals who do not traditionally identify as creative, such as data analysts, researchers, and social media managers, from the organisational periphery to more central roles within creative decision-making processes. This shift appears to be supported by the growing disciplinary influence of audience metrics, which are increasingly drawn upon to inform and justify creative choices. At the same time, the analysis points to a continuing limitation in the absence of a holistic, cross-media measurement framework capable of aligning these divergent production logics. Taken together, these findings suggest an ongoing contest over authority, knowledge, value, and decision-making within the format landscape.

RQ1: The Complex Interplay of Shifts in Television Format Development

The first research question asked what the key drivers were and how they shaped the strategic development of television formats in the post-2010 era in the UK and Germany. The findings indicate that developments such as the BBC Three move to online-only distribution and the establishment of funk in Germany, are also associated with regulatory mandates operating within a liberalised market environment. While this thesis does not focus on regulation as its primary object of analysis, understanding certain strategic shifts requires attention to the broader constellation of influencing factors. These extend beyond internal organisational change to include regulatory conditions that initiated, shaped, or at least contributed to the contexts in which such shifts occurred. My study demonstrates that these developments can act as powerful catalysts for institutional change. In the UK, the context for this, as first detailed in the regulatory overview in Chapter 1, is the post-2003 environment shaped by the Communications Act and the creation of Ofcom. The 2024 Media Act builds on this by granting PSMs greater flexibility to fulfil obligations via on-demand services (e.g. counting iPlayer content towards quotas), while mandating prominence for PSM apps on smart TVs and streaming devices to sustain linear-to-online transitions. This framework required the BBC to justify every strategic change through a stringent public value test.¹¹ The initial transition of BBC Three to an online-only service in 2016 can be considered a direct consequence of this. Whilst internally driven by cost-saving imperatives, the move was publicly legitimised through the compelling narrative that younger audiences were abandoning linear television, and that the BBC had a public service obligation to reach them in the digital spaces they now inhabit.

At first sight, the strategy adopted in Germany appears similar, albeit differing in important nuances. Germany and the UK exhibit territorial differentiation, but their media regulatory systems differ structurally. In Germany, broadcasting falls under Länder jurisdiction under the Basic Law, coordinated via treaties like the Medienstaatsvertrag and enforced by Landesmedienanstalten. British broadcasting remains a reserved matter, regulated centrally by Ofcom across all nations (Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, and England). Devolved governments influence cultural and language policies but lack the autonomous regulatory powers of German Länder. The creation of funk in 2016 was shaped by the German Media State Treaty (Medienstaatsvertrag) and the EU's Audiovisual Media Services (AVMS) Directive. This regulatory framework enabled a strategic reallocation of resources, including the closure of niche linear channels to fund the new digital-only youth service. This move

¹¹ BBC Trust – Public Value Test:
https://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/governance/tools_we_use/public_value_tests.html

was justified by an identical public service argument: the necessity of a dedicated, online-only service to engage the 14–29-year-old demographic who were no longer served by traditional broadcasting. To understand these different approaches in greater detail, the following table provides a comparative analysis of the key aspects of the BBC Three and funk initiatives.

Table 8-18: Comparative Analysis: BBC Three and funk

Aspect	BBC Three (UK)	funk (Germany)
Transition to Online	2014: BBC announced plans to move BBC Three online after the 2010 licence fee freeze. 2015: BBC Trust approved the transition. 2016: Channel relaunched as online-only. 2022: Returned to broadcast TV after Ofcom-approved Public Interest Test. ¹²	2016: ARD and ZDF launched funk as an online-only network for 14–29-year-olds. Designed as a digital platform from the start. Distributes content via YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and its own app and website.
Financial Motivations	The shift to an online platform was driven by the need to reduce operational costs. By moving online, the BBC aimed to save approximately £50 million, reallocating resources to other areas such as BBC One.	The establishment of funk was part of a strategic reallocation of resources by ARD and ZDF. This move also allowed for more flexible and innovative content production tailored to younger audiences and digital platforms.
Role of Oversight Bodies	The BBC Trust approved BBC Three's move to an online-only service after public consultations and assessments in November 2015. ¹³ It emphasised adapting to changing viewing habits and keeping BBC content relevant to younger audiences.	Funk was enabled by decisions from the ARD and ZDF broadcasting councils, coordinated with state media authorities. It formed part of a broader modernisation strategy focused on digital innovation and younger audiences.
Closure of Niche Channels	The transition of BBC Three did not directly involve the closure of other BBC channels but was part of a broader cost-saving strategy. The move allowed the BBC to reallocate funds.	The launch of funk was accompanied by the closure of niche channels ZDFkultur and EinsPlus (an ARD channel). This decision was made to consolidate resources.
Adaptation to Mobile and Social Media Culture	BBC Three's move online aimed to reflect younger audiences' viewing habits, shaped by mobile and social media use. The online-only model enabled more flexible formats and distribution strategies.	Funk was specifically designed to cater to the mobile and social media habits of its target demographic. It distributes content primarily through platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram.

Source: Adapted from Ofcom's Statement of Change (2021); BBC Trust 2015; Media Perspektiven (2018)

¹² BBC iPlayer Public Interest Test: <https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/reports/consultation/bbc-iplayer-public-interest-test/>

¹³ BBC Trust Decision on BBC Three: https://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/news/press_releases/2015/service_changes_decision

This historical context is crucial for understanding the study's specific empirical focus. Whilst these initial regulatory decisions occurred in 2016, the empirical part of this research focuses on the period from 2018 to 2022. This timeframe was deliberately chosen because it captures the crucial subsequent stage during which these digital-first units had to operationalise their new remits in practice. It is, therefore, the period in which the strategic redefinition compelled by the mandates was being actively negotiated on the ground. The analysis reveals that the primary organisational response observed in both national contexts was the creation of bounded units or 'arenas of autonomy'. Units such as BBC Three and funk appear to have enabled their parent broadcasters to respond to new digital mandates while limiting disruption to established legacy structures. This observation is consistent with earlier scholarship (Caldwell, 2008; Noonan, 2018). Rather than representing a wholesale organisational shift, these units can be understood as indicative of a redefinition of strategy shaped by regulatory contexts. However, such strategic adjustments also raise questions about how far production processes themselves have changed in practice. The analysis therefore turns to the second research question, which examines how workflows have been reconfigured at the level of everyday production. Having established the macro-level institutional context, the discussion now focuses on the practical reconfiguration of television production processes.

RQ2: The Reconfiguration of Television Production in a Platformised Environment

The second research question addressed how the key elements of format development practices evolved within the British and German public service television industries since 2010. The principal finding is that this reconfiguration has not been uniform. Instead, it has resulted in a significant divergence between the practices of broadcast-centric and digital-first units, leading to the coexistence of distinct, and at times conflicting, production logics within the same organisation. Broadcast professionals largely maintained a 'closed-field' logic (Bourdieu, 1993), prioritising their own practices. By contrast, digital practitioners tended to champion more iterative and audience-driven processes, reflecting the participatory and data-rich culture associated with platform environments. This divergence in practice appears to be shaped, and at times reinforced, by organisational structures. The findings suggest that the strategic creation of new silos, or what may be termed 're-siloing', functions as one mechanism through which organisational change is pursued (see Chapter 5). Rather than arising purely as an unintended barrier, such arrangements can be understood as a deliberate, if uneven, strategy to enable innovation. Furthermore, the research showed that some innovative formats were established as independent units, deliberately set apart from defined departmental boundaries. The format workshop I

observed provided an example of this practice, illustrating how independent units are afforded the freedom to experiment with new workflows. However, this autonomy is typically provisional and oriented towards future evaluation rather than permanent separation. Decisions to later integrate successful units into larger, established departments are often framed as evidence of success, drawing on audience feedback and key performance metrics such as views, viewing time, and viewer retention from episode to episode. In this way, integration functions as a selective mechanism through which experimental practices are evaluated and, where deemed effective, incorporated into the organisational mainstream. This reliance on specific performance metrics cuts across these divergent structures, yet the research revealed a persistent lack of critical reflection on the nature of this data. As observed across this study, professionals in both the British and German contexts often appeared to treat metrics as given, with less attention paid to their partial and constructed nature. This tendency seemed to emerge across both positive and sceptical attitudes towards data, suggesting that metrics were frequently taken as a shared reference point regardless of whether they were embraced or contested (Andrejevic, 2014; Couldry and Mejias, 2019). This uncritical adoption reflects the absence of a coherent, cross-departmental strategy for data integration. It has allowed the disciplinary power of platform metrics to grow without a corresponding development in organisational data literacy. Ultimately, the findings for RQ2 demonstrate that the operationalisation of data is profoundly structured by the interplay of institutional strategies and regulatory pressures. The next section will therefore turn to the third research question to analyse in greater detail how this data is used to conceptualise the audience in practice.

RQ3: The Reconfiguration of Audience Conceptualisation

The third research question asked how media professionals conceptualise ‘the audience’ through data sources at different stages of the format development process. The principal finding is that this process has been fundamentally reconfigured. It has shifted from a static, pre-production consideration to a dynamic and continuous activity that is embedded across a new, phased workflow. This shift, however, is not a simple embrace of ‘audience power’. Instead, the research found it to be a site of significant friction, where the ideal of data-driven design struggles against ingrained professional cultures and institutional constraints.

In the digital-first contexts observed, the conceptualisation of the audience appears to serve several strategic functions. First, audience data is used at the inception stage to identify a perceived ‘audience gap’. This can provide a market-oriented rationale for commissioning new formats. Second, the findings suggest that audience data may act as an internal

mediator in decision-making processes. Formalised audience constructs, such as the persona model discussed during the workshop at ARD/BR, were used to guide and structure creative discussions. Third, audience conceptualisation functions not only as a market research tool but also as a mechanism for balancing internal power relations. It can be mobilised to challenge established hierarchies, particularly where forms of ‘gut feeling’ are presented by legacy producers as experience-based and therefore as a superior form of professional judgement. Fourth, audience conceptualisation may operate as a counterweight to individual anecdotes. For example, an executive’s reference to his daughter’s social video viewing habits during a workshop illustrated a tendency to privilege personal observation over systematically collected data. Taken together, these findings point to an ongoing tension between the formal authority of decontextualised metrics and the asserted value of professional craft knowledge. This tension suggests a degree of scepticism towards datafication alongside a continued reliance on lived experience as a basis for institutional decision-making. Furthermore, this new mode of audience conceptualisation does not operate in a vacuum. It is itself constrained by the interplay of other powerful institutional forces. My study showed that the public service remit, with its emphasis on ethical and value-based principles, often clashed with the commercial logics of third-party measurement platforms. This tension has not consistently been articulated as an obstacle in debates around cross-media currency, despite the fact that not all available metrics can be measured, stored, or integrated within shared analytics frameworks. Only one interviewee, a media consultant at ARD/BR, explicitly framed this limitation as a ‘lack of continuity’ in capturing more granular patterns of audience movement across platforms. This issue should also be understood against the backdrop that neither the ARD nor the ZDF Mediathek requires user registration, meaning that no sociodemographic analytics are available beyond panel-based measurement. As a result, audience data is primarily derived from AGF panel measurement, which does not provide real-time information. At the same time, the AGF is under increasing pressure due to growing demands for transnational data comparability. As a result, it has joined the Audience Measurement Coalition (AMC)¹⁴ in 2025 in an effort to strengthen the standards and independence of audience measurement across Europe. Ultimately, the findings suggest that the ways in which the audience is conceptualised are closely intertwined with shifts in internal and external power relations. The next section will therefore turn to the final research question to directly analyse these shifts in professional hierarchies and creative negotiations.

¹⁴ AGF joined the Audience Measurement Coalition: <https://www.agf.de/en/services/press/press-release/agf-tritt-der-audience-measurement-coalition-amc-bei-208>

RQ4: Cross-Media Audience Measurement and Decision-Making in Public Service Media

The fourth research question examined how the rise of cross-media audience measurement has reconfigured traditional hierarchies and forms of gatekeeping in creative decision-making. The principal finding is that the integration of such practices has introduced a new and powerful set of actors into the creative process. In this context, the creative process refers to the interconnected practices through which format content ideas are generated, evaluated, refined, and authorised across the stages of format development. This includes decisions about concept selection, narrative framing, aesthetic choices, casting, scheduling, and platform adaptation, as well as the informal negotiations through which creative judgement is exercised and legitimised within organisations. As a result, it fundamentally challenged and reconfigured the traditional authority of creative producers and editors. This reconfiguration, however, is not a simple replacement of one elite with another. Instead, it has created a new, contested field where different forms of knowledge and authority compete for influence. As detailed in the findings chapters, professionals such as researchers, social media managers, and audience engagement managers are no longer just supportive functions. This key finding can be linked to the increasing use of cross-media data, which compares metrics across different digital and social video platforms and thereby makes shifts in audience behaviour more visible. The findings suggest that the integration of multiple platforms has brought different audiences and usage contexts into view. As a result, digital and social video platforms have increasingly been considered for specific types of production. This shift has begun to challenge the established authority of television producers, as work for formats on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok has gained greater recognition over time. However, this reconfiguration does not amount to a straightforward replacement of one elite with another. Instead, it has contributed to the emergence of a more contested field in which different forms of knowledge and authority compete for influence. One indicator of this shift is the movement of roles that were previously more peripheral towards the centre of decision-making processes. As discussed in Chapter 5, professionals such as researchers, social media managers, and audience engagement managers are no longer confined to supportive functions. They increasingly participate in creative decision-making from the earliest stages of digital and social production. Their influence is linked to their capacity to interpret complex metrics and translate them into actionable creative or strategic recommendations. In this way, creative ideas tend to be filtered through data-informed forms of validation. From a broader perspective, this development can be situated within an increasingly competitive environment for public service media, shaped by the growing range of VOD services. This

expansion appears to have contributed to a shift in how audiences are conceptualised, moving away from primarily national groupings towards more fluid and transnational constellations of algorithmically directed users across platforms (Doyle et al., 2025: 1133). At broadcasters, this aligns with Banks and Ross's (2021) argument that the value of creative and strategic labour is not fixed but is continually reshaped by organisational and technological change. At the same time, revaluation remains uneven. While digital roles gain influence, traditional functions may face gradual devaluation and increased precarity, particularly in lower-status roles (Hesmondhalgh, 2018: 354). Skill revaluation, therefore, is not only about recognising emerging competencies. It also signals a redistribution of authority within evolving media institutions. However, my research revealed significant tensions in cross-measurement. Linear teams continue to value the stability of panel-based ratings, whilst digital teams privilege the immediacy of platform analytics. This is more than a technical disagreement. It is a jurisdictional struggle over whose data, and therefore whose expertise, is considered most legitimate. These debates directly echo critical scholarship on the politics of measurement (Napoli, 2011; Andrejevic, 2014), revealing that the choice of metric is a political act that distributes authority within the organisation. Ultimately, the findings for RQ4 demonstrate that the rise of data-driven practices has created a new, contested field of practice. It has not simply replaced one hierarchy with another. Instead, it has introduced a new form of data-driven authority, wielded by a range of newly central professional roles, that coexists uneasily with traditional creative and managerial power. This has created a more complex and fragmented decision-making process. This process is characterised by an ongoing negotiation between professional autonomy, data-driven accountability, and strategic imperatives.

Reframing Audience Research

The thesis also contributes to audience research by demonstrating that audience data is not simply a retrospective measure of performance, but an increasingly formative part of television production. Existing scholarship has shown how audiences are commodified, segmented, and made visible through institutional systems of measurement (Meehan, 2005; Napoli, 2011; Webster, 2014). This study extends that discussion by demonstrating how such systems are operationalised within format development and how they shape professional practice, strategic priorities, and organisational power. In this sense, the thesis connects audience research more directly with production studies. More specifically, the study shows that industry measurement systems do not simply report audience behaviour. They also structure how broadcasters imagine target groups, justify commissioning decisions, and define success across linear, on-demand, and social video environments.

The thesis therefore contributes to audience research by analysing audience measurement as an institutional, relational, and contested process rather than a purely technical one. It argues that measurement systems are part of the struggle over authority within contemporary media organisations, since access to, interpretation of, and reliance on audience data increasingly shape who is able to intervene in creative and strategic decisions.

8.2 Interdisciplinary Convergence and FAST-Driven Transformation

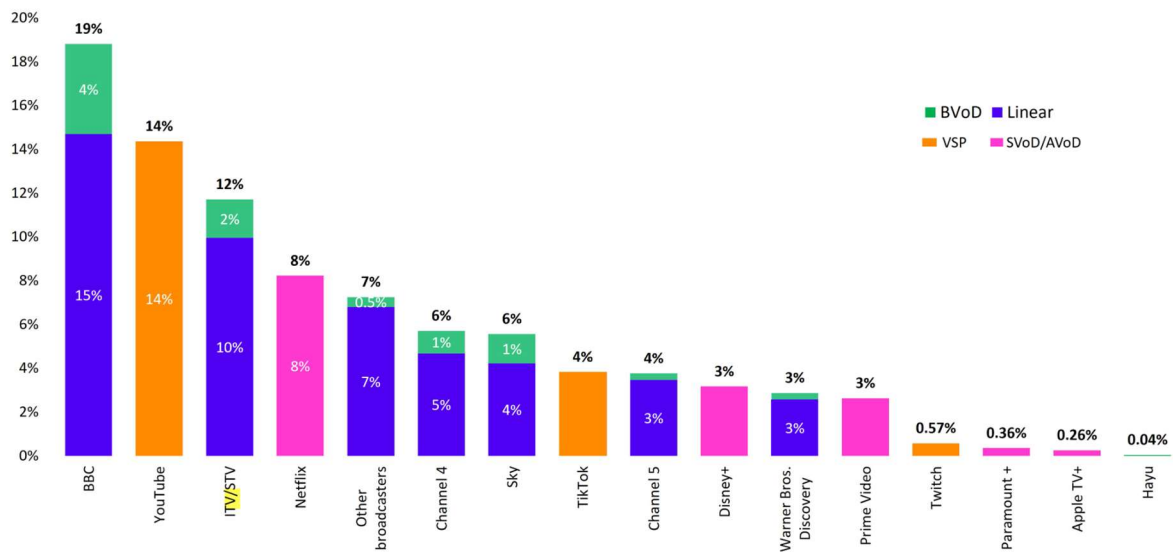
The findings of this thesis have demonstrated a fundamental tension between the established, linear workflows of broadcasters and the iterative, on-demand logics of their digital and social media units. However, the rapid developments in the streaming market complicates this narrative. The concept of Free Ad-supported Streaming Television (FAST) was introduced in Section 2.3 and requires more critical discussion, as it represents not a simple continuation of the digital shift, but a hybrid phenomenon that both challenges and reinforces this study's core findings. Its emergence responds to both economic and psychological pressures within the mature streaming market. The rise of 'subscription fatigue' has increased demand for free options, whilst the 'paradox of choice' in vast on-demand libraries makes the simplicity of a pre-programmed channel a compelling alternative (Ampere Analysis, 2023; Schwartz, 2004). This phenomenon aligns with Lotz's (2017) notion that distribution infrastructures shape production logics but also extends it by illustrating a 're-platformisation of linearity'. This term is used here to illustrate how linear scheduling is re-inscribed into a digital, algorithmically governed environment where programming can be diversified at a relatively low cost (van Esler, 2025: 6). Further, it demonstrates that the foundational logic of traditional broadcasting is being rebuilt on new digital infrastructures. FAST is therefore re-centring the 'channel' as the primary unit of organisation.

This ecosystem is notable for its inclusion of both commercial and public service actors. Commercial public service broadcasters such as ITV are heavily invested. In early 2025, the BBC launched six FAST channels (Top Gear, BBC History, BBC Travel, BBC Food, BBC Drama, Doctor Who) across Europe through their partnership with LG (BBC Studios Press Release, 2025)¹⁵. Although this is not the BBC's first partnership of this nature, it signals a

¹⁵ As of September 2025, the BBC operates seven FAST channel brands across 42 countries in the EMEA region. <https://worldscreen.com/bbc-studios-goes-fast-2025/>

continued strategic commitment to expansion through collaborative ventures. This development creates new institutional and strategic tensions regarding how a low-cost, schedule-driven model aligns with their public service remit. Further, it prompts a reconsideration of public service obligations in the digital era. The low-cost, schedule-driven logic of FAST may appear to contradict the curated, mission-oriented ethos of PSM institutions such as ARD and the BBC. Yet, this tension appears to be more complex. On one hand, the standardisation and repetition associated with FAST could risk diluting the diversity and editorial integrity central to PSM mandates (Iosifidis, 2010). On the other hand, the format's flexibility and low entry barriers could support underserved or fragmented audience groups through targeted thematic channels. As Donders (2021: 41–42) argues, PSM entities within platform ecosystems are tasked with continuously navigating the tensions between reach, inclusion, and distinctiveness, while asserting their institutional value primarily through the perceived quality of their output. The emergence of FAST represents more than a mere commercial development because it serves as a site of strategic negotiation where PSMs attempt to rearticulate public value within an increasingly platformised media environment. First, the emergence of FAST provides a critical lens through which to re-examine the findings on process transformation (RQ2). This research identified a clear divergence between the sequenced, 'push' model of linear broadcasting and the iterative, 'pull' model of on-demand development. As seen in some keynote discussions (Chapter 5), scheduling practices were being repositioned as a value-added service, not a relic – an orientation that FAST services now mainstream at scale. However, FAST services may be understood as a hybrid model: the platformisation of linearity. They use digital, internet-based infrastructures to deliver a traditional, scheduled, 'lean-back' viewing experience. This suggests that the decline of linear consumption habits may not be absolute (EBU, 2024). Instead, the logic of linear scheduling is being repackaged and re-monetised for a digital environment. For broadcasters like ITV, which has integrated FAST channels into its ITVX platform, this is a strategic move. It allows them to leverage their extensive content catalogues and scheduling expertise to compete in a streaming space that is not solely defined by the high-cost, on-demand model of Netflix. ITV and Channel 4 also have agreements with YouTube that allow them to retain control over advertising on their respective YouTube channels (Ofcom, 2025: 5). As Figure 7-1 shows, YouTube has secured the second place for the first time in total video viewing, ranking behind the BBC and ahead of ITV.

Figure 6: Proportion of Total Video Consumption by Platform in 2024



Source: Adapted from Ofcom Media Nations Report (2025)

Furthermore, the FAST model forces a reconsideration of audience conceptualisation. The workshops analysed for this thesis revealed a deep institutional focus on using data to identify audience gaps and to develop new, original content for highly specific, targeted demographics. This can be understood as a more active, 'lean-forward' conceptualisation of the audience. In contrast, the FAST model conceptualises a more passive viewer. It targets an audience that does not want to choose a specific programme from a vast library, but instead prefers the serendipity of channel surfing. This finding is noteworthy, as it suggests that, as the streaming market matures, the industry may be re-engaging with forms of audience behaviour that resemble more traditional patterns of television viewing, even where content delivery is fully digital. This development also has clear implications for the comparative analysis of the UK and German media systems. The rapid and successful integration of Free Ad-supported Streaming TV (FAST) by commercial players since 2022 within the UK's market-oriented model is unsurprising, given the launch of major ad-supported platforms such as ITVX in late 2022 (3Vision, 2023: 36). It is a highly commercial, advertising-driven system that aligns with the liberal media framework identified by Hallin and Mancini (2004). In Germany's state-integrated model, the situation is more complex. Whilst commercial players like RTL+ and ProSiebenSat.1 in Germany are adopting FAST, the public service broadcasters ARD and ZDF face a strategic dilemma. Their VOD players are framed as curated public archives, forms of BVOD designed to deliver public value. A move into FAST, with its logic of repetitive, low-cost, scheduled channels, could be perceived as a departure from this remit, creating a tension with their regulatory mandates.

However, in late 2024 and throughout 2025, ARD expanded its presence in the FAST market through targeted thematic channels such as ARD Plus Krimi (Crime) and ARD Plus Lindenstraße (a classic series), which were launched in collaboration with partners like High View and Samsung TV Plus (Broadband TV News, 2024)¹⁶. These channels do not necessarily represent a new form of content production but instead reflect a hybrid logic where existing archive material is repackaged into a linear format for digital-only audiences. This strategy suggests that ARD is seeking to capture the 'lean-back' viewing habits of younger or tech-savvy demographics who may have moved away from traditional television but still value the curated experience of a scheduled stream.

Finally, the rise of FAST complicates the findings on power reconfiguration (RQ4). The research demonstrated that the rise of data-driven, on-demand production has elevated the power of a new professional class of data gatekeepers. I frame this approach as data-driven, although the term remains contested; while many interviewees avoided using the label themselves, their strong orientation towards audience measurement can be summarised in this way. The FAST model, however, relies on a different set of skills. It can be understood as another layer that re-empowers the traditional roles of the scheduler and the content acquisition manager, whose task is to curate and programme channels from existing content. While this is certainly supported by data analytics, the focus of power is different. It is less about the iterative validation of new creative ideas and more about the efficient monetisation of existing content assets. The rise of FAST does not contradict the findings of this thesis. Instead, it powerfully reinforces the central argument. The transformation of television is not a linear progression towards a single, data-driven, on-demand future. It is the emergence of a complex, fragmented, and contested field where multiple, competing logics coexist. This multiplicity of production and distribution logics reinforces the central contribution of this thesis. More than ever before, platformisation does not flatten institutional difference, but reconfigures power and production fields along intersecting logics of continuity and change (Bourdieu, 1993; Poell et al., 2022)

8.3 Significance and Contributions of the Study

This study contributes to the understanding of how audience data has reshaped format development in the UK and Germany between 2010 and 2022. Its significance lies in documenting a historic transitional phase that was accelerated by COVID-19 and helped to normalise iterative workflows. This period also precedes the full-scale integration of artificial

¹⁶ High View bundles ARD Plus content as FAST Channels, <https://www.broadbandtvnews.com/2024/10/21/high-view-bundles-ard-plus-content-as-fast-channels/>

intelligence into commissioning and production. Accordingly, the study advances empirical understanding, methodological reflection, and practical insight into contemporary format development.

Theoretical Contribution

The theoretical contribution lies in the application and extension of Bourdieu's field theory to the changing dynamics of television production. As demonstrated throughout Chapters 5 and 6, audience metrics increasingly function as forms of capital that shape authority and decision-making within organisations. This thesis demonstrates how digital roles, including data analysts, audience specialists, and social media managers, participate in struggles over value and legitimacy by mobilising and converting different forms of capital within the field of television production. Drawing on Bourdieu's relational understanding of capital, the analysis does not treat symbolic capital as a singular or autonomous resource, but as an outcome of the successful conversion and institutional recognition of other forms of capital, including technical expertise, organisational position, and access to audience data. In this sense, the influence of emerging digital actors depends less on the possession of a new form of 'capital' in isolation than on whether their expertise and audience knowledge become legitimised within existing hierarchies and decision-making routines. This became particularly visible in Chapter 5, where digital development teams at ARD/BR used audience personas, engagement metrics and platform analytics to justify commissioning and distribution strategies, while more traditional production cultures continued to privilege editorial instinct, established commissioning expertise, and longstanding organisational authority.

The findings therefore reinforce the value of Bourdieu's framework because authority within format development processes consistently reflected unequal accumulations of symbolic and institutional capital. Senior commissioners and established intermediaries exercised influence not simply because their decisions were more transparent or objectively rational, but because their positions already carried legitimacy within the field. At the same time, the study also confirms the need to apply Bourdieu critically rather than deterministically. Critics of field theory have argued that its emphasis on institutional reproduction risks underestimating reflexivity and the ability of practitioners to negotiate or resist dominant organisational structures (Couldry, 2003; Hesmondhalgh, 2006). This became particularly relevant within increasingly hybrid production environments where editorial, strategic, and technological boundaries overlap. The findings reflected these tensions directly. Several Producers and creative practitioners questioned metrics-driven expectations and attempted

to defend professional judgement and creative integrity against increasingly data-oriented commissioning cultures. In this sense, the findings align more closely with later and more agency-sensitive interpretations of field theory that emphasise the socially embedded and negotiated character of media practice (Benson and Neveu, 2005; Chadwick, 2013).

These findings extend debates on cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1993; Hesmondhalgh, 2006) by showing how new intermediaries operate not only within a contested field but also across fields where creative, data-driven, and platform-oriented forms of authority are continuously negotiated rather than simply replaced. By integrating a political economy perspective, the study further demonstrates that audience data is not neutral but functions as a resource implicated in processes of institutional power redistribution (Andrejevic, 2014; Couldry and Mejias, 2019). The findings therefore extend field theory to what this thesis conceptualises as 'platformised production', where authority is increasingly contested between established broadcasting logics and newer platform-driven imperatives. This conceptual contribution connects research on cultural production with broader debates surrounding datafication and the political economy of media (Napoli, 2011; Flew, 2021). These findings demonstrate the continued relevance of Bourdieu's field theory for analysing authority and legitimacy within datafied television production cultures.

Methodological Contribution

Methodologically, this thesis demonstrates the value of combining Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014) with Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019) in research on media production. The approach was designed to move systematically between the macro level of markets and regulation, the meso level of organisational logics, and the micro level of professional practice. This multi-level design, introduced in Chapter 3, allowed the analysis to trace connections across institutional strategies and organisational routines.

A second methodological contribution lies in the breadth and depth of empirical engagement. The study drew on sustained fieldwork at four major television industry conferences, where 55 pre-talks with professionals were conducted before selecting participants for formal interviews. In total, 22 semi-structured interviews were carried out, supplemented by document analysis and two workshop observations at German public service media organisations. This combination ensured that the study captured both the perspectives of practitioners embedded in development processes and the institutional contexts in which they operate. The methodology was further shaped by reflexivity. My dual position as researcher and industry participant provided insider access and contextual sensitivity, but

also required continuous reflection on the interpretive process (see Section 4.1). By foregrounding positionality, the study contributes to ongoing debates about how insider knowledge can be used responsibly in production research. Finally, the combined use of Constructivist Grounded Theory and Reflexive Thematic Analysis proved particularly effective for capturing a transitional moment in the industry. It enabled the identification of emergent categories, including autonomy and intermediary power, that might not have been visible through more rigid research designs. In this sense, the study offers a methodological model for examining production cultures during phases of technological and organisational disruption. At a conceptual level, it introduces the notion of 'platformised production' as a field in which authority is increasingly negotiated through audience data, intermediary roles, and competing production logics.

Practical Contribution and Typology

The typology of format development proposed in this thesis is intended as an analytical framework rather than a fixed industrial classification. Its purpose is to bring conceptual precision to a domain in which different production logics have too often been subsumed under broad and insufficiently differentiated labels such as 'digital' or 'cross-platform'. As Chalaby (2015) has shown, the format trade is itself structured by distinct value-adding activities that cannot be adequately captured by umbrella categories, and this structural differentiation has only deepened with the transition to streaming. In practice, the development of a linear factual format and that of a social video format may occur within the same organisation, yet each is governed by distinct temporalities, metrics, workflows, and assumptions about audience engagement. By differentiating these modes with greater analytical care, the typology makes it possible to ask not only where a format is distributed, but how it is developed, for whom it is imagined, and under what organisational and regulatory conditions it takes shape.

The typology identifies distinct, though overlapping, forms of format development across linear, digital VOD, social video, and hybrid environments. Each category is defined by a different relationship between production practice, distribution strategy, audience construction, and measurement logic. Linear formats remain closely tied to scheduling conventions, inherited genre hierarchies, and established institutional authority, operating within what Moran and Malbon (2006) characterised as the relatively stable logics of national broadcast markets. VOD formats are shaped more strongly by catalogue logic, audience retention, and the demands of on-demand discoverability. As Lotz (2022) has demonstrated, subscriber-funded platforms organise content development around different imperatives from

those of linear broadcasting, prioritising depth of engagement over appointment viewing. Social video formats are characteristically iterative, platform-specific, and oriented towards metrics of engagement, visibility, and shareability that differ substantially from traditional broadcast measures of audience reach (Chalaby, 2024). Hybrid formats draw on elements of these models, though, as Lotz and Lobato (2023) observe in their analysis of cross-border storytelling strategies, such combinations are more often uneven and contested than they are coherently integrated. The value of the typology lies in making these distinctions visible and analytically tractable, enabling the thesis to move beyond a simple binary between ‘old’ and ‘new’ media and to identify the coexistence of multiple production regimes within contemporary broadcaster organisations.

This analytical differentiation also provides a productive means of connecting television and format studies more directly to critical political economy and governance perspectives. From a critical political economy standpoint, the typology illuminates how format development is shaped by unequal resource distribution, platform dependency, and shifting regimes of value that bear unevenly on different kinds of production. Hardy (2014) has argued that such structural inequalities are constitutive of media industries rather than incidental to them, and the differentiated logics of the typology give this argument concrete analytical purchase in the context of format development specifically. From a governance perspective, the typology demonstrates how different format types are subject to different systems of oversight, measurement, and institutional control, each carrying its own assumptions about what counts as quality, reach, and public value. Understood within the context of format studies, the typology extends existing scholarship, particularly the foundational work of Chalaby (2016) and Esser (2016), by attending not only to the circulation and adaptation of formats but to the differentiated development processes that precede and condition circulation. It is in this sense that the typology offers a more precise conceptual vocabulary for analysing the fragmented and stratified production environment in which contemporary broadcasters now operate. Beyond its theoretical and empirical contributions, this thesis illuminates critical challenges for media practitioners. It exposes the inherent contradictions that arise when public service broadcasters attempt to integrate data-driven, agile practices into their established institutional structures. First, the findings reveal a structural tension in how audience data is operationalised. The research demonstrates that the lack of a standardised cross-platform currency is not merely a technical problem. It is a site where institutional power is contested. This was clearly evidenced by the strategic difficulties surrounding the repositioning of BBC Three and the establishment of *funk* (Section 2.3). These national cases are not identical, however. Their distinct approaches reflect the divergent media systems identified by Hallin and Mancini (2004). The UK’s more market-oriented response

contrasts sharply with Germany's state-integrated model. For practitioners, therefore, audience data is not an objective truth. It is a contested political resource whose authority is constantly negotiated within these different national contexts. Second, the study exposes the limits of agile workflows as a simple solution. The analysis of the 2018 to 2022 period showed that the pandemic accelerated such methods in digital units. However, the resilience of entrenched institutional logics in linear departments remains formidable. Agile methods, therefore, are not a neutral solution. Their implementation is a structural act that frequently clashes with the cultural and organisational realities of the broader institution. Ultimately, these practical insights reinforce a central argument of this thesis. The integration of data into format development is not a technical challenge to be solved. It is a political and cultural terrain to be navigated. This terrain fundamentally reshapes how authority, and innovation are contested in a permanently unsettled field.

The thesis also contributes to audience research by showing that audience data is not simply a retrospective measure of performance, but an increasingly formative part of digital and television production. Existing scholarship has shown how audiences are commodified, segmented, and made visible through institutional systems of measurement (Meehan, 2005; Napoli, 2011; Webster, 2014). This study extends that discussion by demonstrating how such systems are operationalised within format development and how they shape professional practice and strategic priorities. In this sense, the thesis connects audience research more directly with production studies. More specifically, the study shows that industry measurement systems do not simply report audience behaviour. Rather, they shape how broadcasters imagine target groups, justify commissioning decisions, and define success across linear, on-demand, and social video environments. In this respect, the typology constitutes an original contribution to knowledge by providing a framework for analysing format development according to production logic rather than distribution platform alone.

8.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

A crucial aspect of academic rigour is the critical reflection on a study's own limitations. This section therefore addresses those boundaries and the situated nature of its findings, acknowledging that the research design necessarily shaped and constrained the knowledge that could be produced.

Limitations – Comparative and Cross-Sectoral Scope

Like all qualitative research, this study is defined by its scope and methodological choices. While its design was appropriate for capturing a historicised account of format development between 2010 and 2022, several limitations should be acknowledged. These limitations do not undermine the value of the findings but highlight the contextual boundaries within which they should be understood. Three key limitations can be identified. First, the empirical evidence is constrained by limitations of access. The research is grounded in a robust, multi-level qualitative approach. This was supported by observations at industry conferences, organisational documents, and workshops at ARD/BR. However, specific aspects of the comparative design were impacted by these access constraints. The contrast between the UK as a non-EU, anglophone country and Germany as an EU, non-anglophone country therefore could not be explored with observational data in both national contexts (see Chapter 4). However, access to senior executives and high-level strategic decision-makers was limited for full interviews, although some were responsive to brief conversations between conference sessions. Keynotes delivered by executives and managing directors were accessible live and were often available online afterwards. The findings therefore reflect perspectives from senior and mid-level professionals responsible for format production and licensing, as well as practitioners embedded in, or closely associated with, development processes, and managers who shape strategy at the highest level. This composition was designed to broaden the scope of the study.

Second, the geographic focus of the research necessarily restricts generalisability. By concentrating on the UK and Germany, the study examined two countries with strong public service broadcasting traditions but divergent regulatory environments. The UK context allowed more experimentation with commercially aligned strategies, while German Public Service Media remained more closely tied to regulatory mandates. Although this contrast was analytically valuable, it means the findings cannot be uncritically applied to other contexts. Media industries in countries with different regulatory regimes, weaker public service obligations, or different market structures may demonstrate alternative trajectories of transformation. Future comparative studies are therefore necessary to test the applicability of the typology and its associated production processes. Such research would be particularly valuable for exploring their wider cultural, organisational, and operational implications.

Third, the researcher's reflexive position requires careful interrogation. My dual role as both academic and industry participant shaped the framing of questions and the interpretation of responses. While this position allowed for insider access and contextual sensitivity, it also

risked introducing bias into the analysis. Following Haraway's (1988) notion of situated knowledge, the findings should therefore be understood as partial and context-bound rather than universal. This limitation underscores that qualitative accounts of media production are always mediated by positionality, and that researcher reflexivity must remain central to future studies in this field (see Section 4.5). Contemporary scholars such as Duffy (2023) and McRobbie (2020) similarly emphasise the need to situate knowledge claims within the specific socio-material conditions of media labour, particularly as digital infrastructures and institutional pressures reshape epistemic authority in creative industries. These limitations indicate that the findings should be interpreted as situated insights into the historicised phase of 2018–2022 rather than definitive accounts of the entire television industry. At the same time, they provide a foundation for comparative and longitudinal research that can extend the frameworks developed here to other contexts and new technological conditions.

Evolving Industry Conditions as Further Research

Television production today operates in an unsettled field where creative practice, institutional strategy, and technological experimentation intersect. The findings of this thesis capture one historic phase of that process, yet new transformations are emerging that call for systematic academic investigation. Three areas in particular merit closer attention. The first concerns the redefinition of cross-media strategies. The boundaries between linear broadcasting, streaming, and social media are increasingly blurred. Channel 4's Credit 101 series, distributed across YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok in 2025, illustrates how formats are now conceived for multi-platform reach from the outset. In Germany, ProSiebenSat.1 has extended its Joko and Klaas formats into YouTube and social media, where clips and spin-offs act both as engagement tools and as experimental spaces for new ideas. RTL has followed a similar trajectory, positioning RTL+ as a hub for convergence that integrates linear programming, streaming, podcasts, and music into a single ecosystem. These strategies are not developed in isolation but conditioned by regulatory environments, as explained in Chapter 2.

The second area concerns the reorganisation of workflows and labour. The integration of audience data into everyday decision-making has altered the balance between creative and managerial authority. As this study has shown, data specialists and digital strategists are gaining influence within development teams. At the BBC, the repositioning of BBC Three as an online-first service created new workflows in which commissioners collaborated closely with social media and audience insight teams, embedding data into the early stages of development. Channel 4's in-house Audience Research and Insight Unit has become central

to commissioning, providing cross-platform consumption data that shapes pilots and commissions.

In Germany, RTL's streaming service RTL+ has reorganised commissioning teams to integrate data scientists alongside producers, particularly in entertainment and reality genres. ProSiebenSat.1 has adopted algorithmically informed scheduling across broadcast and streaming, requiring producers to frame pitches with supporting data on audience viability. These developments indicate that data is no longer confined to marketing or post-broadcast evaluation but embedded directly into creative workflows. Regulatory contexts continue to mediate these changes, shaping the extent to which data-driven practices can be integrated into commissioning and production processes. These shifts highlight a pressing need for research into how workflows adapt to new forms of datafication and monetisation. They also point to tensions between public service mandates and commercial imperatives, particularly as algorithmic and automated systems become routine. A critical focus of such research should be the analysis of algorithms themselves. As Johnson (2019: 134) argues, algorithms are the 'invisible frames' behind the visible surface of online television. This becomes evident when public service broadcasters collaborate with global platforms. As noted during an observed keynote, producers working with Netflix or Amazon Prime Video are frequently denied access to detailed viewership data and remain excluded from understanding the functioning of proprietary recommendation systems. For public service media, this raises a crucial governance issue: how can a public remit be fulfilled when success is judged by opaque, commercial systems whose decision-making logics remain inaccessible? Hence, I argue that studies at the intersection of creative production and audience data should consider whether audience data can be interpreted accurately in an algorithmic environment without access to the selection rules. They should also examine the extent to which the mediation of algorithmic data shapes decision-making, and whether algorithmic systems can be influenced through manipulated feedback. The context for data interpretation is limited because platform metric definitions vary and can be altered without notice. These metrics may also be susceptible to manipulation. Consequently, the risks associated with decision-making based on third-party platform data, including the potential for misinterpretation, should be acknowledged.

The third area concerns the impact of emerging technologies on format development. Artificial Intelligence is already being trialled for ideation, forecasting, and audience testing, although integration remains experimental. Virtual and augmented reality formats are likewise beginning to reshape genres and audience interaction. The same applies to formats on gaming platforms such as Twitch, where public service media organisations have also

begun to experiment. Academic research needs to look beyond documenting these innovations and interrogate the ethical, cultural, and regulatory challenges they pose. This includes questions of algorithmic bias, the transparency of metrics and their changes, and the implications for professional autonomy in creative labour. These directions underline that the evolution of television formats is cyclical rather than linear. The phase of experimentation and systematisation identified in this thesis provides the foundation upon which AI and other technologies are now being layered. Future research should therefore track how power, knowledge, and cultural value are reconfigured at each stage of technological and organisational change.

8.5 Final Reflections on the Systematisation of Conflict and the Future of the Field

This thesis has argued that the period from 2018 to 2022 marks a distinct phase in the transformation of public service broadcasting. It was a period defined not by simple experimentation, but by the systematisation of digital practices and the institutionalisation of audience data into production processes. The findings demonstrate how data moved from a reactive, evaluative tool to a constitutive element of the entire creative cycle. This transformation has fundamentally reshaped the balance between creative autonomy and institutional authority, thereby reconfiguring the operational field of television production. The analysis revealed that this reconfiguration manifests as a state of managed, institutionalised conflict. The linear and digital departments were found to operate as competing subfields, each with its own form of capital vying for dominance. These subfields were often manifested through organisational silos. Far from being mere barriers, these silos were strategically employed as ‘arenas of autonomy’ to foster innovation.

This conflict is not abstract. It is made tangible in the practical interpretation of audience metrics. A ‘view’ on YouTube, for instance, represents a fundamentally different philosophy of audience-centricity than a ‘view’ on the broadcaster’s own VOD platform. The first is defined by an opaque, commercial algorithm. The second is defined by the institution itself, which can align the metric with its public service goals. The workshop therefore became a site of political tension over a crucial question: which philosophy of the audience should prevail, and who should have the authority to define it? The implications of these findings are significant. For media theory, this research challenges technologically determinist narratives. It demonstrates that the effects of datafication are not uniform. They are profoundly mediated by the institutional logics and professional cultures of the specific media field. For

practitioners, the study reveals that adopting data-driven tools is not a simple technical solution. It is an entry into a new political terrain that requires critical data literacy and a constant negotiation of professional values. For public service media as an institution, the findings suggest a future defined not by a new, stable equilibrium, but by its capacity to manage these internal contradictions productively. The study therefore captures a pivotal transitional moment: a phase in which experimentation gave way to systematisation, but before the onset of widespread automation.

The rise of artificial intelligence since 2023 signals the beginning of a new era and suggests a further reconfiguration of these hierarchies and workflows. By historicising the pre-AI period, this study provides a vital historical baseline through which subsequent transformations can be understood. Its findings offer a framework for understanding the evolving narrative of public service media, in which the dynamics of data and creativity will continue to be renegotiated in the years to come. Further, the thesis shows that production processes at broadcasters are not converging into a single model but are fragmenting into conflicting logics. Linear, hybrid, digital on-demand, and social media practices coexist, often in tension (see Chapter 2). Rather than smooth adaptation, the findings reveal an uneven reconfiguration shaped by institutional pressures identified in RQ1. Hence, I argue that practitioners are conditioned to negotiate contradictions rather than resolve them.

In relation to process transformation (RQ2), digital format development has become highly structured and iterative, borrowing from agile methods. This stands in contrast to the rigid, sequenced routines that continue to dominate linear production. Organisational restructuring through new units and departments was not simply a facilitator of innovation. It also exposed how attempts to bypass entrenched norms often reproduce boundaries in new forms, raising questions about the durability of such reforms. The findings also point to a profound shift in how audiences are conceptualised (RQ3). Digital workflows tend to place the audience at the centre of every stage of development, while in linear contexts audience research remains narrow and episodic. Yet this integration is not neutral. Audience data functions both as a commissioning tool and as a mechanism of internal control, invoked to discipline creative authority. This double role highlights how data promises participation but frequently reinforces managerial priorities. Power relations are being reconfigured as a result (RQ4). The rise of the 'data gatekeeper' has moved non-creative professionals into central decision-making positions, supported by the growing disciplinary authority of metrics. This shift signals a redistribution of influence but also produces new dependencies on opaque measurements. Crucially, the absence of a holistic cross-media framework leaves these power shifts unstable. Fragmented data regimes sustain organisational conflicts rather than

resolve them. The study therefore reveals a production landscape defined as much by contestation as by innovation. Further, the concurrent restructuring of processes does not inherently yield coherence. Instead, the field is fractured by competing claims to expertise and value, a dynamic that precludes any immediate stabilisation. Ultimately, the thesis argues that contemporary television production is best understood not as a process of convergence, but as a condition of platformised production in which competing logics, forms of expertise, and claims to authority are continuously negotiated across organisational and technological boundaries.

References

3Vision (2023) *The Rise of FAST: A Global Market Review*. London: 3Vision.

Adorno, T. W. and Horkheimer, M. (1997) 'The culture industry: enlightenment as mass deception', in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. London: Verso, pp. 120–167.

AGF Videoforschung (2022) *AGF Methodensteckbrief: TV-Plattform 2022-II*. Frankfurt am Main: AGF Videoforschung GmbH. Available at: <https://www.agf.de/en/audience-measurement/method> (Accessed: 05 October 2025).

Andrejevic, M. (2013) *Infoglut: How Too Much Information Is Changing the Way We Think and Know*. New York: Routledge.

Andrejevic, M. (2014) 'The big data divide', *International Journal of Communication*, 8, pp. 1673–1689.

Ang, I. (1991) *Desperately seeking the audience*. London: Routledge.

Ang, I. (2006) *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World*. London: Routledge.

ARD (2022) *ARD-Reichweiten und Nutzerservice: Methodische Grundlagen*. Frankfurt am Main: ARD-Programmdirektion. Available at: <https://www.ard.de/die-ard/fakten/publikationen/Methodische-Grundlagen-100.html> (Accessed: 05 October 2025).

ARD/BR (2024) *Next: Strategic Planning Report 2024–2026*. Munich: Bayerischer Rundfunk.

Atkinson, M. (2016). Ethnography. In *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise* (pp. 71–83). Routledge.

- Atkinson, W. (2016) *Beyond Bourdieu: From Genetic Structuralism to Relational Phenomenology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Atkinson, W. (2022) *The Class Structure of Capitalist Societies, Volume 2: Social Space and Symbolic Domination in Three Nations*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Atkinson, W. (2025) 'Field theory, role theory and role conflict: Reappropriating insights from the past', *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 25(1), pp. 3–19.
- Balnaves, M., O'Regan, T. and Goldsmith, B. (2011) *Rating the audience: the business of media*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Banks, M. (2017) *Creative Justice: Cultural Industries, Work and Inequality*. London: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Banks, M. (2019) 'Work and time in the cultural industries', *Time and Society*, 28(1), pp. 3–22.
- Barr, K. and Kretschmer, M. (2022) 'Channel 4: Streaming on the world stage? Competing in the changing media landscape', *AHRC Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre*, 12 May.
- Basit, T. (2003) 'Manual or electronic? The role of coding in qualitative data analysis', *Educational Research*, 45(2), pp. 143–154.
- Bauman, Z. (2005) *Liquid Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bazeley, P. (2013) *Qualitative Data Analysis: Practical Strategies*. London: SAGE.
- BBC (2018) *R&D White Paper: The Future of Audience Measurement*. London: BBC.
- BBC (2024) *Royal Charter*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/research/royal-charter> (Accessed: 11 November 2025)
- Bell, E. and Singh-Sengupta, S. (2022) *Empowering Methodologies in Organisational and Social Research*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Bennett, J. and Strange, N. (2011) *Television as Digital Media*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Bennett, J. and Strange, N. (eds) (2014) *Media Independence: Working with Freedom or Working for Free?* New York: Routledge.

Bennett, J. (2020) *Celebrity, Public Culture, and the Television Industry*. London: Routledge.

Benson, R. (2004) 'Bringing the sociology of media back in', *Political Communication*, 21(3), pp. 275–292. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600490481369> (Accessed: 19 September 2025).

Benson, R. and Neveu, E. (eds) (2005) *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Benson, R. (2006) 'News media as a "journalistic field": What Bourdieu adds to new institutionalism, and vice versa', *Political Communication*, 23(2), pp. 187–202. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600600629802> (Accessed: 13 February 2025).

Benson, R., Hessérus, M., Neff, T. and Sedel, J. (2025) *How media ownership matters*. Paperback edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Berger, P.L. and Luckmann, T. (1989) [1966]: *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books

Bermejo, F. (2009) 'Google', *New Media and Society*, 11(1–2), pp. 133–150.

Bolin, G. (2003) *Variations, Media Landscapes, History: Frameworks for an Analysis of Contemporary Media Landscapes*. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola (Mediestudier vid Södertörns högskola 2003:1).

Bourdieu, P. (1986) 'The forms of capital', in Richardson, J. (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1993) *Sociology in Question*. Translated by R. Nice. London: SAGE.

Bourdieu, P. (2016) *The Social Structures of the Economy*. Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Bourdon, J. and Méadel, C. (2011) 'Inside television audience measurement: deconstructing the ratings machine', *Media, Culture and Society*, 33(5), pp. 791–800.

- Boyd, D. and Crawford, K. (2012) 'Critical questions for big data', *Information, Communication and Society*, 15(5), pp. 662–679.
- Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2013) *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners*. London: SAGE.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2020) 'One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis?', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), pp. 328–352.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2021) *Thematic analysis: a practical guide*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Broadband TV News (2024) 'ARD expands FAST channel portfolio on Samsung TV Plus', *Broadband TV News*, 15 May. Available at: <https://www.broadbandtvnews.com> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).
- Briggs, A. (1995) *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Volume V: Competition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Broadband TV News (2025). *Germany's AGF joins audience measurement coalition*. [online] 11 February. Available at: <https://www.broadbandtvnews.com/2025/02/11/germanys-agf-joins-audience-measurement-coalition/> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).
- Broughton-Micova, S. and Jacques, S. (2020). *The logic of platforms: how algorithms and data shape the media*. Centre on Regulation in Europe (CERRE). [online] Brussels: CERRE. Available at: <https://cerre.eu/publications/logic-platforms-algorithms-data-shape-media/> (Accessed: 10 October 2025).
- Bruns, A. (2008) *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: From Production to Produsage*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Bruun, H. (2023) 'The changing role of a video-on-demand service in the strategies of public service media: A production study of Danish TV 2 Play and its impact on the production culture of the schedulers, 2016–2022', *Nordicom Review*, 44(2), pp. 235–252.
- Bruun, H., and Andersen, M. M. T. (2025). Publishing strategies in online television: Introduction to the themed issue. *MedieKultur: Journal of Media and Communication*

Research, 41(78). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.7146/mk.v40i78.156657> (Accessed: 10 December 2025).

Bruun, H. (2016) 'The qualitative interview in media production studies', in Paterson, C., Lee, D., Saha, A. and Zoellner, A. (eds.) *Advancing Media Production Research: Shifting Sites, Methods and Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 131–146.

Bruskin, S. (2019) 'Insider or outsider? Exploring the fluidity of the roles through social identity theory', *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, 8(2), pp. 159–170.

Bryman, A. (2016) *Social research methods*. 5th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burgess, J. and Green, J. (2018) *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Burr, V. (2015) *Social Constructionism*. 3rd edn. London: Routledge.

Buscombe, E. (2003) 'Creativity in television', in Miller, T. (ed.) *Television: Critical concepts in media and cultural studies*. London and New York: Routledge

Burns, T. (1977) *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World*. London: Macmillan.

Buzzard, K. (2012) *Tracking the Audience: The Ratings Industry From Analog to Digital*. New York: Routledge.

Caldwell, J.T. (2008) *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Caldwell, J.T. (2023) *Specworld: Folds, Faults, and Fractures in Embedded Creator Industries*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Cardano, M. (2020) *Defending Qualitative Research: Design, Analysis and Textualization*. New York: Routledge.

Castells, M. (2010) *The Rise of the Network Society*. 2nd edn. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.

Chadwick, A. (2017) *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chalaby, J.K. (2015) *The Format Age: Television's Entertainment Revolution*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Chalaby, J.K. (2022) 'Placing the transnational at the heart of TV culture', *Journal of Digital Media and Policy*, 13(3), pp. 323–342.
- Chalaby, J.K. (2023) *Television in the Streaming Era: The Global Shift*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chalaby, J.K. (2024) 'The streaming industry and the platform economy', *Media, Culture and Society*.
- Champagne, P. (2005) 'The "double dependency": The journalistic field between politics and markets', in Benson, R. and Neveu, E. (eds) *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Chand, S.P. (2025) 'Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis', *Advances in Educational Research and Evaluation*, 6(1), pp. 303-317.
- Charmaz, K. (2012) *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*. London: SAGE.
- Charmaz, K. (2017) 'The power of constructivist grounded theory for critical inquiry', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 23(1), pp. 34–45.
- Charmaz, K. and Bryant, A. (eds) (2019) *The SAGE Handbook of Current Developments in Grounded Theory*. London: SAGE.
- Charmaz, K. and Keller, R. (2019) 'Grounded theory', in Atkinson, P., Delamont, S., Cernat, A., Sakshaug, J.W. and Williams, R.A. (eds.) *SAGE research methods foundations*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Clark, T., Foster, L., Bryman, A. and Sloan, L. (2021) *Bryman's Social Research Methods*. 6th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Couldry, N. (2003) 'Media meta-capital: Extending the range of Bourdieu's field theory', *Theory and Society*, 32, pp. 653–677.
- Couldry, N. and Yu, J. (2018) 'Deconstructing datafication's brave new world', *New Media and Society*, 20(12), pp. 4473–4491.
- Couldry, N. and Mejias, U.A. (2019) *The Costs of Connection: How Data is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Cotter, K. (2023) “Shadowbanning is not a thing”: Black box gaslighting and the power to independently know and credibly critique algorithms’, *Information, Communication and Society*, 26(6), pp. 1226–1243.

Creswell, J.W. (2013) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Creswell, J.W. and Poth, C.N. (2024) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. 5th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Crisell, A. (2006) *A Study of Modern Television: Thinking Inside the Box*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cunningham, S. and Craig, D. (2019) *Social Media Entertainment: The New Intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley*. New York: New York University Press.

Curran, J. (2002) *Media and Power*. London: Routledge.

Curran, J. (2011) *Media and Democracy*. London: Routledge.

D’Arma, A., Raats, T. and Steemers, J. (2021). ‘Public service media in the age of SVoDs: a comparative study of PSM strategic responses in Flanders, Italy and the UK’, *Media, Culture and Society*, 43(4), pp. 682–700. doi: 10.1177/0163443720982928.

Davenport, T.H. and Beck, J.C. (2001) *The Attention Economy: Understanding the New Currency of Business*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S., Giardina, M.D. and Cannella, G.S. (eds.) (2023) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 6th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Deuze, M. and Prenger, M. (eds) (2019) *Making Media: Production, Practices, and Professions*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Deuze, M. (2023) *Life in Media: A Global Introduction to Media Studies*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Donders, K. (2019) ‘Public service media beyond the digital hype: Distribution strategies in a platform era’, *Media, Culture and Society*, 41(7), pp. 1011–1028.

Donders, K. (2021) *Public Service Media in Europe: Law, Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.

Doyle, G. (2019) 'Public policy, independent television production and the digital challenge', *Journal of Digital Media and Policy*, 10(2), pp. 145–162.

Doyle, G., Paterson, R. and Barr, K. (2021) *Television Production in Transition: Independence, Scale, Sustainability and the Digital Challenge*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Doyle, G. (2023) 'SVoDs, new norms and the challenge for public service media', *Journal of Digital Media and Policy*, 14(3), pp. 287–302.

Doyle, G., Barr, K. and Boyle, R. (2025). 'The critical media infrastructure of public service media: why and how it must be protected', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 31(2), pp. 1130–1145.

Dwyer, P.A. (2019) *Understanding Media Production*. Abingdon: Routledge.

European Broadcasting Union (2023) *Hot Media Trends 2023* (EBU Media Intelligence Service report). Geneva: European Broadcasting Union. Internal report, accessed as part of academic research.

European Broadcasting Union (2023) *Measuring Total Audience*. Geneva: European Broadcasting Union. Internal report, accessed as part of academic research.

European Broadcasting Union. 2024. *The European Commissioning Landscape*. Geneva: European Broadcasting Union. Available at:
<https://www.ebu.ch/research/membersonly/report/the-european-commissioning-landscape>
(Accessed: 11 December 2025).

European Commission (2024) *Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act)*. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1083/oj/eng> (Accessed: 10 October 2025).

European Broadcasting Union (2025) *Access Services and Public Service Media: PSM Access Services Survey Report* (EBU Media Intelligence Service). Geneva: European Broadcasting Union. Available at:
https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/MIS/login_only/psm/EBU-MIS_PSM_Access_Services_2025_public.pdf (Accessed: 10 December 2025).

Ellis, J. (2000) *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Esser, A. (2010) 'Television formats: Primetime staple, global market', *Popular Communication*, 8(4), pp. 273–292.

Esser, A. (2016) 'Challenging the digital: the role of the television audience in the age of big data', *Critical Studies in Television*, 11(1), pp. 11–26.

Esser, A. (2017) 'TV format sector consolidation and its impact on the configuration and stickiness of the UK entertainment production market', *International Journal of Digital Television*, 8(1), pp. 143–165.

Esser, A. and Steemers, J. (2025) 'Global platforms, new media generations and Anglo-American hegemony: An exploration of young audience viewing and language preferences in four European countries', *Critical Studies in Television*, pp. 1–22. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/17496020251360130> (Accessed: 10 October 2025).

European Commission (2022) *The Digital Services Act Package*. Available at: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package> (Accessed: 22 October 2025).

European Commission (2023) *European Media Industry Outlook*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

European Audiovisual Observatory (2023) *Video sharing platforms in Europe: how do we regulate online advertising and protect ourselves from harmful and illegal content?* Available at: https://www.obs.coe.int/en/web/observatoire/home/-/asset_publisher/9iKCxBYqiO6S/content/video-sharing-platforms-in-europe-how-do-we-regulate-online-advertising-and-protect-selves-from-harmful-illegal-content- (Accessed: 22 October 2025).

Eurostat (2022) 'Culture statistics'. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/> (Accessed: 10 September 2025).

Evens, T. and Donders, K. (2018) *Platform power and policy in transforming television markets*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74246-5> (Accessed: 10 October 2025).

Fairclough, N. (2003) *Analysing discourse: textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.

- Fenton, N. (2007) 'Bridging the mythical divide: political economy and cultural studies approaches to the analysis of the media', in Devereux, E. (ed.) *Media Studies: Key Issues and Debates*. London: SAGE, pp. 7–31.
- Flick, U. (2018) *Doing Grounded Theory*. London: SAGE.
- Freedman, D. (2014) *The Contradictions of Media Power*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Fuchs, C. (2021) *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*. 3rd edn. London: SAGE.
- Geertz, C. (2003) *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gergen, K.J. (2022) *An Invitation to Social Construction: Co-creating the Future*. London: SAGE.
- GfK (2020). *Video Audience Measurement (VAM): GfK's contribution to egta insight*. [online] Nuremberg: GfK. Available at: https://www.gfk.com/hubfs/Product%20Single%20Pages/GfK%20Media%20Measurements/2020_egta_insight_vam_gfk_contribution.pdf (Accessed: 04 September 2025).
- Gibbs, G.R. (2012) 'Different approaches to coding', *Sociological Methodology*, 42(1), pp. 82–84.
- Gibbs, G.R. (2018) *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. 2nd edn. London: SAGE.
- Gillespie, T. (2018) *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, content moderation, and the hidden decisions that shape social media*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Gitlin, T. (1994) *Inside Prime Time*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.
- Glaser, B.G. (1992) *Basics of grounded theory analysis: emergence vs forcing*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B.G. (2005) *The Grounded Theory Perspective III: Theoretical Coding*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Gracenote (2025) *2025 FAST report: how platforms and publishers can stay ahead in the free ad-supported streaming television market*. Available at: <https://gracenote.com/insights/2025-fast-report/> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).
- Gray, J. and Lotz, A. (2019) *Television Studies*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gronow, J. (2011) *From Habits to Social Structures: Pragmatism and Contemporary Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

lordache, C., Martin, D., & Johnson, C. (2025). Public service algorithms: Balancing the scales between public mission and market pressures at the BBC and VRT. *MedieKultur: Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 41(78).
<https://doi.org/10.7146/mk.v40i78.147182>

Hall, S. (1981) 'Notes on deconstructing the popular', in Samuel, R. (ed.) *People's History and Socialist Theory*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp. 227–240.

Hall, S. (1993). Encoding, Decoding, in During, S. *The Cultural Studies Reader*, 507-517

Hallam (2018) How Love Island is shaping digital-first television. Available at:
<https://www.hallaminternet.com/love-islandsocial-media-strategy/> (Accessed: 18 September 2025).

Hallin, D.C. and Mancini, P. (2004) *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2019) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. 4th edn. London: Routledge.

Hansen, A. and Machin, D. (2013) *Media and Communication Research Methods*. London: Red Globe Press.

Hanusch, F. and Maares, P. (2022) 'Journalism and social media: rethinking the field in a platformised era', *Journalism Studies*, 23(5–6), pp. 734–751. Available at:
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2022.2039023> (Accessed: 12 December 2025).

Harcourt, A. (2023) 'European Media Communications Policy, Development, and Governance', in Nussbaum, J.F. and Powers, M. (eds) *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at:
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.723> (Accessed: 12 December 2025).

Hardy, J. (2008) *Western Media Systems*. New York: Routledge.

Hardy, J. (2010) *Cross-Media Promotion*. New York: Peter Lang.

- Hardy, J. (2011). 'Mapping commercial intertextuality: the case of *True Blood*', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14(1), pp. 7–17. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877910382181> (Accessed: 12 December 2025).
- Hardy, J. (2012) 'UK Television Policy and Regulation, 2000–10', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 9(4), pp. 521–547. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3366/JBCTV.2012.0104> (Accessed: 12 December 2025).
- Hardy, J. (2014) *Critical Political Economy of the Media: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Hardy, J. (2016) 'Money, (co)production and power', *Digital Journalism*, 5(1), pp. 1–25.
- Hardy, J. (2021) 'Media systems and misinformation', in Tumber, H. and Waisbord, S. (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Media Misinformation and Populism*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Hardy, J. (2022) *Branded Content: The Fateful Merging of Media and Marketing*. New York: Routledge.
- Hardy, J. (2024) 'Political economy and critical studies of advertising and media', in Pedro-Carañana, J. et al. (eds) *Political Economy of Media and Communication*. New York: Routledge.
- Hartley, J., Burgess, J. and Bruns, A. (2013) *A Companion to New Media Dynamics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Havens, T. (2014) 'Media programming in an era of big data', *Media Industries Journal*, 1(2), pp. 5–9.
- Kennedy, H. (2016) *Post, Mine, Repeat: Social Media Data Mining Becomes Ordinary*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Helberger, N., Pierson, J. and Poell, T. (2018) 'Governing online platforms: From contested to cooperative responsibility', *The Information Society*, 34(1), pp. 1–14. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2017.1391913> (Accessed: 08 October 2025).
- Hesmondhalgh, D. (2006) 'Bourdieu, the media and cultural production', *Media, Culture and Society*, 28(2), pp. 211–231.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. and Baker, S. (2011) *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries*. London: Routledge.

- Hesmondhalgh, D. (2018) *The Cultural Industries*. 4th edn. London: SAGE.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. and Lobato, R. (2019) 'Television device ecologies, prominence and datafication: The neglected importance of the set-top box', *Media, Culture and Society*, 41(7), pp. 958–974.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. and Zoellner, A. (2013) 'Is media work good work? A case study of television documentary', in Valdivia, A.N. (ed.) *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Hilgers, M. and Mangez, E. (2014) 'Introduction to Pierre Bourdieu's social fields', in Hilgers, M. (ed.) *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*.
- Hill, A. (2019) *Media Experiences: Engaging with Drama and Reality Television*. London: Routledge.
- Hill, A. (2020) 'Reality TV: performances and audiences', in Wasko, J. and Meehan, E. R. (eds.) *A companion to television*. 2nd edn. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 201–220.
- Hill, A. (2021) 'Media industries and audiences: An analytic dialogue', in McDonald, P. (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Media Industries*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 508–517.
- Hill, A. and Lunt, P. (eds) (2024) *The Routledge Companion to Media Audiences*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Holt, J. and Perren, A. (2019) 'Media industries: A decade in review', in Deuze, M. and Prenger, M. (eds) *Making Media: Production, Practices, and Professions*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Humphreys, P. J. (1994) *Media and Media Policy in Germany: The Press and Broadcasting since 1945*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Berg Publishers
- Iordache, C., Martin, D. and Johnson, C. (2025). 'Public service algorithms: Balancing the scales between public mission and market pressures at the BBC and VRT', *MedieKultur: Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 40(78), pp. 59–80.
- Iosifidis, P. (2007) *Public Television in the Digital Era: Technological Challenges and New Strategies for Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jackson, K. and Bazeley, P. (2019) *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo*. London: SAGE.

Jackson, P. and Klobas, J. (2008) 'Building knowledge in projects: A practical application of social constructivism to information systems development', *International Journal of Project Management*, 26(4), pp. 329–337.

Jenkins, H. (2006) *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Jenkins, H. (2009) 'Buying into American Idol', in Murray, S. and Ouellette, L. (eds) *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. New York, NY: New York University Press, pp. 343–362.

Johnson, C. (2012) *Branding Television*. New York: Routledge.

Johnson, C. (2019) *Online TV*. London: Routledge.

Johnson, C. (2019) 'Online TV: Commissioning, producing, and distributing television in the digital era', *Critical Studies in Television*, 14(2), pp. 197–213.

Johnson, C. (2022) 'Public service broadcasting and streaming: The BBC's hybrid strategies', *Television and New Media*, 23(5), pp. 403–417.

Johnson, C. (2023a) 'Public service media at the intersection of broadcasting and streaming', *International Journal of Media Management*, 25(1), pp. 11–24.

Johnson, C., Hills, M. and Dempsey, L. (2023b) 'An audience studies' contribution to the discoverability and prominence debate: Seeking UK TV audiences' "routes to content"', *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 29(5), pp. 1311–1326.

Johnson, C. (2024) 'Provocation: An agenda for the future of TV studies: technology, audiences, stakeholders', *Critical Studies in Television*, 19(1), pp. 116–122.

Kitchin, R. (2014) 'Big Data, new epistemologies and paradigm shifts', *Big Data and Society*, 1(1), pp. 1–12.

Kitchin, R. (2022) *The Data Revolution: A Critical Approach to Big Data, Open Data, and Data Infrastructures*. Second edition. Sage, London.

Kitchin, R. (2025) *Critical Data Studies: An A to Z Guide to Concepts and Methods*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kosterich, A. (2016) 'Reconfiguring the "hits": The new portrait of television program success in an era of big data', *International Journal on Media Management*, 18(1), pp. 43–58.

Kosterich, A. and Napoli, P.M. (2016) 'Reconfiguring the audience commodity: The institutionalization of social TV analytics as market information regime', *Television and New Media*, 17(3), pp. 254–271.

Kotliar, D.M. (2020) 'The return of the social: Algorithmic identity in an age of symbolic demise', *New Media and Society*, 22(7), pp. 1152–1167.

Kotliar, D.M. (2021) 'Who gets to choose? The salience of scale and power to three European cultures of TV production', in *Locating the Influencer*. Bingley: Emerald.

Küng, L. (2023) *Strategic Management in the Media*. 3rd edn. London: SAGE.

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (1985) *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Lincoln, Y.S., Lynham, S.A. and Guba, E.G. (2023) 'Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences', in Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 6th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 75–112.

Livingstone, S. (2013) 'The participation paradigm in audience research', *The Communication Review*, 16(1–2), pp. 21–30.

Livingstone, S. (2018) 'Audiences in an age of datafication: Critical questions for media research', *Television and New Media*, 20(2), pp. 170–183.

Lobato, R. (2019) *Netflix Nations: The Geography of Digital Distribution*. New York: New York University Press.

Lobato, R. and Scarlata, A. (2023) 'Broadcaster VOD and the platformization of television', *Media, Culture and Society*, 45(1), pp. 78–93.

Lobato, R. and Scarlata, A. (2025) 'Default viewing: Reconceptualising choice and habit in television audience research', *Media, Culture and Society*.

Lobato, R. and Lotz, A.D. (2023) *Streaming Video: Storytelling Across Borders*. New York: NYU Press.

- Lobato, R. and van Es, K. (2025) 'Video-on-Demand Research: New Methods, Old Questions', *Media Industries*, 12(1), Article 5. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3998/mij.6359> (Accessed: 10 December 2025).
- Lobigs, F. and Neuberger, C. (2018) 'Plattform-Revolution der Medien und neue Machtverhältnisse im Internet', in KEK (ed.) *Sechster Medienkonzentrationsbericht 2018*. Berlin: Kommission zur Ermittlung der Konzentration im Medienbereich.
- Lotz, A.D. (2014) *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*. 2nd edn. New York: New York University Press.
- Lotz, A. (2017) *Portals: A Treatise on Internet-distributed Television*. Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Publishing.
- Lotz, A.D., 2021. *Media disrupted: Surviving pirates, cannibals, and streaming wars*. MIT Press.
- Lotz, A. (2022) *Netflix and Streaming Video*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Lotz, A. (2023) *Media Disrupted: Surviving Pirates, Cannibals, and Streaming Wars*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lotz, A.D. (2025) 'US television's expanding modes of industrial practice', *Critical Studies in Television*.
- Lowe, G.F. and Bardoel, J. (eds) (2007) *From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Media*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Mansell, R. (2004) 'Political economy, power and new media', *New Media and Society*, 6(1), pp. 74–83.
- Mansell, R. and Silverstone, R. (1996) *Communication by Design: The Politics of Information and Communication Technologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marlière, P. (1998) 'The rule of the media: Pierre Bourdieu on journalism', *European Journal of Communication*, 13(2), pp. 219–234. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323198013002004> (Accessed: 10 December 2025).
- Mayer, V., Banks, M. and Caldwell, J.T. (eds) (2009) *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*. New York: Routledge.

Mayer, V., Banks, M. and Conor, B. (eds) (2015) *Production Studies, The Sequel! Cultural Studies of Global Media Industries*. New York: Routledge.

Mayer, V. (2024) 'Emplacement and emplotment: Media production in pandemic times', *Television and New Media*.

Mayer-Schönberger, V. and Cukier, K. (2013) *Big Data: A Revolution that Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Mayer-Schönberger, V. and Ramge, T. (2022) *Access Rules: Freeing Data from Big Tech for a Better Future*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

McQuail, D. (2010) *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. 6th edn. London: SAGE.

Mediametrie and NPA Conseil (2023) *The AVoD/FAST Market Report*. Available at: <https://www.mediametrie.fr/sites/default/files/2023-09/2023%2008%2031%20AVoD%20FAST%20Market%20Report%20CP%20Volet%20%20ENG%20version%20d%C3%A9finitive.pdf> (Accessed: 10 December 2025).

Medienanstalten (2024) *Medienstaatsvertrag (MStV)*. Available at: <https://www.die-medienanstalten.de/service/rechtsgrundlagen/medienstaatsvertrag/> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).

Meehan, E.R. (1986) 'Conceptualizing culture as commodity', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 3(4), pp. 448–457.

Meehan, E.R., Wasko, J. and Mosco, V. (1994) 'Rethinking political economy', in Levy, M.R. and Gurevitch, M. (eds) *Defining Media Studies: Reflections on the Future of the Field*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Meehan, E.R. (2005) *Why TV is not our fault: television programming, viewers, and who's really in control*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Meehan, E.R. and Wasko, J. (2013) 'In defence of a political economy of the media', *Javnost – The Public*, 20(1), pp. 39–54.

Meyrowitz, J. (2009) 'We liked to watch: Television as progenitor of the surveillance society', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 625(1), pp. 32–48.

Mikos, L. (2021) 'Corona, Streaming und die Bedeutung des linearen Fernsehens', *tv diskurs*, 96 (25 Jg.), pp. 82–85.

- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M. and Saldaña, J. (2020) *Qualitative data analysis: a methods sourcebook*. 4th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Mirrlees, T. (2013) *Global Entertainment Media*. London: Routledge.
- Moran, A. (1998) *Copycat TV: Globalisation, Program Formats and Cultural Identity*. Luton: University of Luton Press.
- Moran, A. (2009) *TV Formats Worldwide: Localizing Global Programs*. Bristol and Chicago: Intellect.
- Moran, A. and Malbon, J. (2006) *Understanding the global TV format*. Bristol: Intellect.
- Mosco, V. (1996) *The Political Economy of Communication*. London: SAGE.
- Mosco, V. (2009) *The Political Economy of Communication*. 2nd edn. London: SAGE.
- Morse, J.M. et al. (2021) *Developing Grounded Theory: The Second Generation Revisited*. 2nd edn. New York: Routledge.
- Mulvin, D. (2021) *Proxies: The Cultural Work of Standing In*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Murdock, G. (1982) 'Large corporations and the control of communications industries', in Gurevitch, M., Curran, J. and Woollacott, J. (eds) *Culture, Media and Society*. London: SAGE.
- Napoli, P.M. (2011) *Audience Evolution: New Technologies and the Transformation of Media Audiences*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Napoli, P. M. (2022). *Social Media and the Public Interest: Media Regulation in the Disinformation Age*.
- Napoli, P.M. (2025) 'In pursuit of ignorance: The institutional assault on disinformation and hate speech research', *Information Society*.
- Neveu, E. (2007) 'PIERRE BOURDIEU: Sociologist of media, or sociologist for media scholars?', *Journalism Studies*, 8(2), pp. 335–347. doi: 10.1080/14616700601149026.
- Nieborg, D.B. and Poell, T. (2018) 'The platformization of cultural production: Theorizing the contingent cultural commodity', *New Media and Society*, 20(11), pp. 4275–4292.

Nieborg, D., Poell, T. and van Dijck, J. (2022) 'Platforms and platformization', in Flew, T., Holt, J. and Thomas, J. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of the Digital Media Economy*. London: SAGE, pp. 29–49.

Nieborg, D.B. and Poell, T. (2025) 'Analyzing institutional platform power: Evolving relations of dependence in the mobile digital advertising ecosystem', *New Media and Society*, 27(4), pp. 1909–1927. Available at: doi:10.1177/14614448251314405 (Accessed 15 December 2025).

Nielsen, L. (2019) *Personas: User Focused Design*. 2nd edn. London: Springer.

Ohlsson, J., Lindell, J. and Arkhede, S. (2017) 'A matter of cultural distinction: News consumption in the online media landscape', *European Journal of Communication*, 32(2), pp. 116–130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323198013002004> (Accessed: 19 September 2025).

Ofcom (2021). *Statement of Change: Media Nations 2021*. [online] London: Ofcom. Available at: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector/media-nations/2021/report> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).

Ofcom (2023) *Heritage and Archive of UK Regulators*. Available at: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/our-website/regulator-archives> (Accessed 15 December 2025).

Ofcom (2025). *Media Nations 2025: UK Report*. [online] London: Ofcom. Available at: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/multi-sector/media-nations/2025/media-nations-2025-uk-report.pdf?v=401287> (Accessed 15 December 2025).

Overnights.tv (2025) *Daily television overnight ratings: UK audience data*. Available at: <https://www.overnights.tv/overnights> (Accessed: 27 November 2025).

Papacharissi, Z. (2015) 'Affective publics and structures of storytelling: sentiment, events and mediality', *Information, Communication and Society*, 19(3), pp. 307–324.

Patton, M.Q. (2015) *Qualitative research and evaluation methods: integrating theory and practice*. 4th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Pink, S., Horst, H., Postill, J., Hjorth, L., Lewis, T. and Tacchi, J. (2015) *Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practice*. London: SAGE.

- Poell, T. and van Dijck, J. (2013) 'Understanding social media logic', *Media and Communication*, 1(1), pp. 2–14.
- Poell, T., Nieborg, D., and van Dijck, J. (2019) 'Platformisation', *Internet Policy Review*, 7(4), pp. 1–13.
- Poell, T., Nieborg, D.B. and Duffy, B.E. (2021) *Platforms and Cultural Production*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Poell, T. (2020) 'Three challenges for media studies in the age of platforms', *Television and New Media*, 21(6), pp. 650–657.
- Poell, T. (2024) *Platform Power and Cultural Production*. London: Polity.
- Porter, J. and Standing, K. (2020) 'Love Island and relationship education', *Frontiers in Sociology*, 5, Article 594322. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2020.594322>
- Potschka, C. (2012) *Towards a Market in Broadcasting: Communications Policy in the UK and Germany*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pratten, R. (2015) *Getting started in transmedia storytelling: A practical guide for beginners*. 2nd edn. London: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Pruitt, J. and Adlin, T. (2006) *The persona lifecycle: keeping people in mind throughout product design*. Amsterdam: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers.
- Redge Media (n.d.) *The expanding universe of free ad-supported streaming television (FAST): A global and European market analysis*. Available at: <https://redge.media/en/blog/the-expanding-universe-of-free-ad-supported-streaming-television-fast-a-global-and-european-market-analysis/> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).
- Saldaña, J. (2021) *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. 4th edn. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Salonen, A., Rajala, R. and Virtanen, A. (2017) 'Leveraging the benefits of the digital economy: the role of institutional boundaries', *International Journal of Information Management*, 37(5), pp. 369–374.
- Salonen, V.M.M. et al. (2023) 'Post-publication gatekeeping factors and practices: Data, platforms, and regulations in news work', *Media and Communication*, 11(2), pp. 367–378.

Salminen, J., Guan, K., Jung, S.-G. and Jansen, B.J. (2021) 'A survey of 15 years of data-driven persona development', *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 37(18), pp. 1685–1708. doi:10.1080/10447318.2021.1908670.

Sampson, T. (2020) *A Sleepwalker's Guide to Social Media*. Cambridge: Polity.

Schlesinger, P. (2020) 'After the post-public sphere', *Media, Culture and Society*, 42(7–8), pp. 1545–1563.

Schlesinger, P. (2022) 'The neo-regulation of internet platforms in the United Kingdom', *Policy and Internet*, 14(1), pp. 47–67.

Schmidt, V. (2008) 'Discursive institutionalism: The explanatory power of ideas and discourse', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11, pp. 303–326.

Scolari, C. A. (2009). 'Transmedia storytelling: implicit consumers, narrative worlds, and branding in contemporary media production', *International Journal of Communication*, 3, pp. 586–606.

Screenforce (2024) *Media activity guide 2024: research findings on media use in Germany, Austria and Switzerland*. Frankfurt: Screenforce. Available at: https://www.screenforce.de/sites/default/files/media_pool/presentation_pdf/Media_Activity_Guide_2024.pdf (Accessed: 10 October 2025).

Seale, C. (2018) *Researching Society and Culture*. 4th edn. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Sehl, A. and Cornia, A. (2021) 'How do public service media innovate? An analysis of product development by European PSM', *Journalism Studies*, 22(11), pp. 1469–1486.

Sehl, A. 2023, 'Public service media and public funding: A three-country study of willingness to pay versus perceived dispensability', *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 38, no. 6, pp. 608–624.

Sendall, B. (1982) *Independent Television in Britain: Volume 1 - Origin and Foundation, 1946–62*. London: Macmillan.

Sennett, R. (2012) *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

- Shaw, A. (2017). Encoding and decoding affordances: Stuart Hall and interactive media technologies. *Media, Culture and Society*, 39(4), 592-602. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717692741> (Accessed: 10 December 2025)
- Shoemaker, P.J. and Vos, T. (2009) *Gatekeeping Theory*. New York: Routledge.
- Shoemaker, P.J. and Reese, S.D. (2013) *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective*. New York: Routledge.
- Silvey, R. (1974) *Who's Listening? The Story of BBC Audience Research*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- SINUS-Institut (2023). *The Sinus Milieus: a model for social positioning and target group segmentation*. [online] Heidelberg: SINUS Markt- und Sozialforschung GmbH. Available at: <https://www.sinus-institut.de/en/sinus-milieus> (Accessed: 10 December 2025)
- Sonkar, N.K. (2025). Raymond Williams and the politics of culture: A critical analysis of Culture and Society and the foundations of cultural materialism. *The Creative Launcher*, 10(2), pp. 257-264. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.53032/tcl.2025.10.2.29> (Accessed: 10 December 2025)
- Spigel, L. and Olsson, J. (eds) (2004) *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Srnicek, N. (2017) *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Steemers, J. (2014) 'Selling television: addressing transformations in the international distribution of television content', *Media Industries Journal*, 1(1).
- Steemers, J., Iosifidis, P. and Wheeler, M. (2005) *European Television Industries*. London: British Film Institute.
- Stollfuß, S. (2019) 'German public television, social media and audience engagement', *VIEW: Journal of European Television History and Culture*, 8(16), pp. 98–109.
- Stollfuß, S. (2020) 'Formen, Dynamiken und Entwicklungen am Beispiel des Contentnetzwerks funk', *Media Perspektiven*, 12, pp. 649–660.
- Stollfuß, S. (2024) 'Platformization as a structural dimension for public service media in Germany: The funk content network and the new Interstate Media Treaty', *Television and*

New Media, 25(2), pp. 185–203. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/15274764221138248>. (Accessed: 10 December 2025)

Storsul, T. and Krumsvik, A.H. (2013) 'What is media innovation?', in Storsul, T. and Krumsvik, A.H. (eds) *Media Innovations: A Multidisciplinary Study of Change*. Gothenburg: Nordicom, pp. 13–26.

Straubhaar, J., Davenport, L. and LaRose, R. (2013) *Media Now: Understanding Media, Culture, and Technology*. 7th edn. Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

Strauss, A.L. (1987) *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (2008) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. 3rd edn. London: SAGE.

Sujon, Z. (2021) *The Social Media Age*. London: SAGE.

Sujon, Z. and Dyer, H. (2020) 'Understanding the social in a digital age', *New Media and Society*, 22(7), pp. 1125–1134.

Sujon, Z., Dyer, H.T. and Soares, F.B. (2025) 'Social media and society: Platforms, publics, and anti-publics', *Social Media + Society*, 11(3), pp. 1–10.

Taylor, S.J., Bogdan, R. and DeVault, M. (2015) *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*. 4th edn. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

Thinkbox (2022). *BVoD Uncovered: How Broadcaster Video-on-Demand fits into the video ecosystem*. Thinkbox. Available at: <https://www.thinkbox.tv/research/> (Accessed: 10 December 2025).

Thinkbox (2024) *BARB: the gold standard in media research*. Available at: <https://www.thinkbox.tv/training-and-tools/barb-data/barb-the-gold-standard-in-media-research> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).

Thornberg, R. (2012) 'Informed grounded theory', *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 56(3), pp. 243–259.

Thurman, N. et al. (2023) 'Predicting streaming audiences for a channel's on-demand TV shows: Discerning the influences of choice architecture, consumer agency, and content attributes', *Convergence*, 30(3), pp. 1254–1270.

- Trappel, J. et al. (2011) *Media in Europe Today*. Chicago: Intellect Books.
- Túñez-López, M., Vaz-Álvarez, M. and Fieiras-Ceide, C. (2020) 'Covid-19 and public service media: Impact of the pandemic on public television in Europe', *Public Service Media in Europe: Perspectives and Challenges*, pp. 1–15.
- Turner, G. (1990) *British cultural studies: An introduction*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Turow, J. (2017) *The Aisles Have Eyes: How Retailers Track Your Shopping, Strip Your Privacy, and Define Your Power*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Twyman, T. (1998) 'The evolution of audience research', in Emm, A. and Potter, J. (eds.) *The first 40 years: a celebration of independent television*. London: Independent Television Association, pp. 82–91.
- van der Vlist, F. N. and Helmond, A. (2021). 'How platforms are becoming infrastructures: platformisation, integration, and the diversification of digital capitalism', *Social Media + Society*, 7(4), pp. 1–17. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051211028640> (Accessed: 10 December 2025).
- Van Dijck, J., Poell, T. and de Waal, M. (2018) *The Platform Society: Public Values in an Online World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- van Es, K. (2023) 'Netflix and big data: The strategic ambivalence of an entertainment company', *Television and New Media*, 24(7), pp. 656–672.
- van Es, K. (2024) 'Exploring Netflix myths: Towards more media industry studies and empirical research in studying video-on-demand', *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies*.
- Van Esler, M. (2025) 'Syndication in a FAST world: Lineages and ruptures', *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies*, pp. 1–18.
- Verwiebe, R. and Hagemann, S. (2024) 'Bourdieu revisited: new forms of digital capital – emergence, reproduction, inequality of distribution', *European Sociological Review*, 40(5), pp. 1853–1870.
- Waisbord, S. (2004) *McTV: Understanding the Global Popularity of Television Formats*. New York: New York University Press.

Wasko, J. and Meehan, E. (eds) (2019) *A Companion to Television*. 2nd edn. New York: Wiley.

Webster, J.G. (2016) *The Marketplace of Attention: How Audiences Take Shape in a Digital Age*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Webster, J.G., Phalen, P.F. and Lichty, L.W. (2014) *Ratings Analysis: Audience Measurement and Analytics*. 4th edn. New York: Routledge.

Williams, R. (1981) *Culture*. London: Fontana.

Williams, R. (1990) *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. London: Routledge.

Wu, W.W., Powell, E.R. and Barasch, A. (2025) 'How second screens shape consumer experiences: The role of social connection on repeat viewing', *Psychology and Marketing*, 42(5), pp. 1249–1263. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.22175>
<https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051211028640> (Accessed: 10 December 2025).

Wyngaarden, E. (2018) *Digitale Formatentwicklung – Nutzerorientierte Medien für die vernetzte Welt*. Köln: Herbert von Halem.

Zoellner, A. (2022) 'Commissioning and Independent Television Production', *International Journal of Communication*, 16, pp. 585–607.

Zuboff, S. (2019) *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: PublicAffairs.

Appendices

- A) Ethics Approval Statement
- B) Sample Questions
- C) Interview Summaries (Excerpt)
- D) Coding Example: Themes and Categories

A) Ethics Approval Statement

In accordance with the University of East London's (UEL) ethical guidelines and procedures, this part-time PhD project received ethics approval on the 31st of October, 2017. Throughout its duration, the project has evolved, necessitating a change in its title from 'The Changing Role of Gatekeepers – Effects of Media Fragmentation, Big Data Influence, and Audience Engagement in the Entertainment Television Production Process' to 'Re-Contextualisation of TV Production: Implications of Audience Data in Digital Format Development'. This alteration was vital to more accurately reflect the project's enhanced focus on the use of audience data in the development of television formats across various genres. Despite these changes and the unforeseen circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the study was executed with minor amendments to the original plan. Notably, the pandemic and a general trend towards virtual collaboration necessitated the move of planned onsite visits and workshop observations to online platforms. These modifications were made in strict adherence to ethical standards, ensuring that the integrity and validity of the research remained intact, while also respecting the anonymity of all participants involved. The ethics approval letter is included in the following three pages for reference.



31st October 2017

Project Title:	The changing role of gatekeepers – effects of media fragmentation, big data influence and audience engagement in the entertainment television production process
Principal Investigator:	Jonathan Hardy
Researcher:	Sylvia Albert-Vogl
Reference Number:	UREC 1617 77

Dear Sylvia,

I am writing to confirm the outcome of your application to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), which was considered by UREC on **Wednesday 5 July 2017**.

The decision made by members of the Committee is **Approved**. The Committee's response is based on the protocol described in the application form and supporting documentation. Your study has received ethical approval from the date of this letter.

The Committee would like to commend you on the presentation of this application for ethical approval.

Should you wish to make any changes in connection with your research project, this must be reported immediately to UREC. A Notification of Amendment form should be submitted for approval, accompanied by any additional or amended documents:

<http://www.uel.ac.uk/wwwmedia/schools/graduate/documents/Notification-of-Amendment-toApproved-Ethics-App-150115.doc>

Any adverse events that occur in connection with this research project must be reported immediately to UREC.

Approved Research Site

I am pleased to confirm that the approval of the proposed research applies to the following research site.

Research Site	Principal Investigator / Local Collaborator
UK, France, Holland, Germany and Switzerland	Jonathan Hardy



Approved Documents

The final list of documents reviewed and approved by the Committee is as follows:

Document	Version	Date
UREC application form	2.0	2 October 2017
Enquiry for the research project about television show production	1.0	29 June 2017
Letter of Consent for the research project about television show production	1.0	29 June 2017
Debriefing Letter for the Study about television show production	1.0	29 June 2017
Interview Questions	2.0	2 October 2017
Indicative questions	2.0	2 October 2017
Request for approval to travel overseas – student travel	1.0	2 October 2017

Approval is given on the understanding that the [UEL Code of Practice in Research](#) is adhered to.

The University will periodically audit a random sample of applications for ethical approval, to ensure that the research study is conducted in compliance with the consent given by the ethics Committee and to the highest standards of rigour and integrity.

Please note, it is your responsibility to retain this letter for your records.

With the Committee's best wishes for the success of this project.

Yours sincerely,

Fernanda Silva

Administrative Officer for Research Governance

University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk

B) Sample Questions

What is your role in format development?

What does the development of digital formats mean to you in terms of how it is conceptualised?

What considerations and methods are paramount for a broadcaster when establishing digital formats?

What are your experiences of working in digital within a legacy broadcaster?

What are the most significant obstacles you encounter in your work?

In your opinion, what is the most effective strategy to integrate digital formats with traditional linear broadcasting?

At what stages does data influence the digital format production process?

Which metrics are most relevant to your work?

How did digital format development get where it is today?

Can you describe how data is integrated in decision-making processes?

C) Interview Summaries (Excerpt)

Questions	What are the core principles of format development?	In which way is audience data influencing a format?	What kind of data is used to make decisions?	What are the major transition steps of TV/digital production?
Head of Digital Production	Addressing platform-specific and target group-specific criteria, understand the interplay and goals of stakeholders, management and technical editorial teams.	The iterations consist of audience feedback, this gets integrated and tested again which is part of an optimisation cycle.	Market Research: Conducting market research helps identify audience preferences, demographic trends, and market gaps, providing valuable insights for developing TV formats that resonate with target audiences.	Content-related, methodical and strategic, in many editorial teams no digital know-how (Seeding, Distribution, Community Management), two ways of digital format development: Establish own silos for individual formats or work directly with an editorial team which brings topic-specific know-how.
Producer	Target group definition before format development begins, needs interviews with target group before format development begins, the demand to develop a format with an interdisciplinary team and to have someone from the target group involved	Pre-defined target groups are researched and sometimes create a fake account (follow the same pages and people and see what their interest is on the platform), prototype testing, WhatsApp groups for tests, all dependent on target and resources.	Audience Surveys: Surveys allow TV format developers to gather direct feedback from viewers, gaining insights into their interests, preferences, and viewing habits, which inform the development process.	Thinking about ideas and decide which platform is best to distribute it. Research of target groups, where they are and what they like. Checking trends on a niche level.
Head of Digital Development	Agility and adaptability throughout the process, even immediately after publications channels are monitored and new targets are set.	Create tests several times until we think we got it right, tests are important to understand users, it also helps to develop other formats and the information is shared among the teams.	Focus groups provide an opportunity to engage with a select group of individuals representing the target audience, facilitating in-depth discussions to uncover perceptions, opinions, and potential improvements for TV formats.	Methods from software development are used that already existed in the company and they got adapted for format development. Continuous evaluation until a certain satisfaction point is reached.

Head of Development	Everything around audience-centricity, adaptability, innovation, and interactivity. Understanding the target audience and their preferences is crucial in creating content that resonates with them. Producers must be adaptable, as digital formats often require quick adjustments and iterations based on user feedback and changing trends.	Audience surveys: Conducting surveys helps broadcasters gather feedback on the format, allowing them to make informed decisions based on audience preferences.	Content Analysis: Analysing existing TV formats, industry trends, and competitor offerings helps shape the development of new formats by identifying successful elements, innovative approaches, and potential areas for differentiation.	Content Digitalisation: The major transition step towards digital production for broadcasters involves converting existing content into digital formats for distribution across multiple platforms.
Head of Acquisitions/VP	The core principles of digital format development for Producers include creativity, user experience, data-driven insights, and cross-platform integration. These principles ensure the creation of engaging and tailored formats that resonate with audiences across various platforms.	Ratings and viewership data: Analysing ratings and viewership data provides insights into audience behaviour, influencing format adjustments to better cater to audience interests.	Trend Analysis: Monitoring social and cultural trends helps TV format developers stay attuned to the evolving interests and demands of the target audience, allowing for the integration of timely and relevant themes into the format.	Multi-platform delivery: Broadcasters focus on expanding their reach by delivering content across various digital platforms, including websites, apps, and streaming services.

D) Coding: Themes and Categories

Theme A) Power Flow

Theme A	Category (digital)	Sub-Categories
Power Flow	Reverse Power Flow	Innovation Standards
		Integrated Audience Research
		Interdisciplinary Teams
		Silo-Breaking and Re-Siloing
		Decentralised Decision-Making
		Flexible Workflows
		Agile Methods
		Product Mindset
		Pre-Defined Target Group (based on gaps)
		Bottom-Up and Top-Down Management
	Category (linear)	Sub-Categories
	Traditional Power Flow	Pre-defined Agents
		Linear Flow of Tasks
		Content Creation within Boundaries
		Pre-Defined Target Group (based on schedule embedding)
		High-End Quality Driven
		Centralised Decision-Making
		Waterfall Methods
		Top-Down Management

Theme B) Re-Visioning Storytelling

Theme B	Category (digital)	Codes/Sub-Categories
Re-Visioning Storytelling	Data-Informed	Iterative Format Development
		Seeding as Part of Storytelling
		Based on Audience Gap
		Content Validation
		Research Integration (staged)
		Platform-Specific
		Flexible Programme Length
		Open Pitching Process
		Mainstream and niche Storytelling
		Culture Reflection
	Category (linear)	Codes/Sub-Categories
		Pre-defined Format Development
		seeding separated from the production
		Based on Schedule Slot
		Pre-Defined Research Integration
		Global Commissioning
		Closed Pitching Process
		Mainstream Storytelling
		Confidence-Driven
		Culture Adoption
		Aesthetics
		Long-Term Show Structure

Theme C) Operational Strategy

Theme C	Category (digital)	Codes/Sub-Categories
Operational Strategy	Interdisciplinary Innovation	Agile Framework
		Design Thinking
		Iterative Approach
		Research-Based Platform Selection
		Target Group Based
		Expertise Coordination
		Audience Credibility
		User-Centricity
		Product Thinking
		Open Data Evaluation
		Job Rotation
	Category (linear)	Codes/Sub-Categories
	Discipline-Specific Innovation	Editorial Thinking only
		High Inhouse Credibility
		Line Management-Centricity
		Fixed Data Evaluation
		Established Workflows
		International Format Trade
		High Identity Creation
		Loyalty
		Programme Thinking
		Assigned Roles

Theme D) Audience and Data Infusion

Theme D	Category (digital)	Codes/Sub-Categories
Audience and Data Infusion	Editorial Audience Mindset	Constant Data Analysis
		Direct Access with Manipulation Option
		Owned Research Infrastructure
		Low Data Authoritativeness
		Non-Regulated Data Metrics
		Integrated Community Engagement
		Content Recommendation Algorithm
		Full Measurement Approach
	Category (linear)	Codes/Sub-Categories
	Consulted Audience Mindset	Direct Access
		Consolidated Tracking
		Data Analysis (At the Beginning and at
		Consulted Research Infrastructure
		High Data Authoritativeness
		Regulated Data Metrics Framework
		External Community Engagement
		Extrapolated Measurement Approach
		Low Internal Social-Media Adoption