

TELEVISION PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN THE PORTUGUESE TERRESTRIAL CHANNELS (1992/2002)

Research Purpose

Television programming for children in the four Portuguese terrestrial channels (RTP1, RTP2, SIC, TVI) between 1992 and 2002

Offer

Criteria

Starting Points

- ✘ Television plays an important role in society in general and particularly in the lives of children;
- ✘ The Portuguese audiovisual landscape has experienced significant changes in the nineties;
- ✘ Television and its programming are socially constructed activities in accordance with interests, specific guidelines and strategies of control.

Research Issues

- ✘ What significant occurrences have taken place in the programming geared to children – in terms of origin, genre, contents, formats, length and schedules – with the introduction of private television operators?
- ✘ What observable tendencies can be identified at the level of programme schedules and their contents?
- ✘ Is there or is there not, at the level of supply, a plurality of products, in terms of genre, formats and contents, able to interest and meet the needs and the psychosocial abilities of the different age groups?
- ✘ To what extent can, what Kunkel considered about the American television over the last years (limiting the programmes for childhood to adventure serials and sitcoms under the form of cartoons) be applied to Portugal, a country which has just come out of a situation of public state monopoly?
- ✘ What attention has been given by the four channels to the different types of child audiences?
- ✘ Is the programming criteria for children in public broadcasting service the same as that in private television?
- ✘ Do all television channels have a programming department or service geared to children? What is the background, forms of recruitment, skills and status of the professionals assigned to the programming for children? What views do these professionals have of child audiences?
- ✘ To what extent is the reduction in the programming for children, announced by several authors, evident in Portugal?

Research Goals

The main goals of this study are:

- ✘ to understand the relationship between society and television;
- ✘ to contribute to the knowledge of television programming for children in the framework of the Portuguese television;
- ✘ to understand and characterise the evolution of television programming for children in Portugal from 1992 to 2002 in the four terrestrial channels (two public – RTP1 and RTP2 and two private – SIC and TVI);
- ✘ to build an analytical-theoretical frame which allows us to identify the tendencies of the programming of the 4 terrestrial channels existing in Portugal;
- ✘ to identify the guiding philosophies and the options of those who are responsible for this programming throughout the period concerned and to understand how they define child audience.

Theoretical Framework

Based on sociological grounds with contributions of:

- sociology of childhood;
- sociology of education;
- sociology of the media.

Central Concept: Programming

In this study, programming is understood as a 'discourse' built on certain guidelines, choices and exclusions, constituted by different programmes, genre and segments of continuity between programmes.

This 'discourse' is also strategically thought out in accordance with audience preferences, daily routines, lifestyles, seasonal criteria, broadcasting resources and media competition.

Research Methodology

Documental research
(extensive analysis)

Interviews
(intensive analysis)

Content analyse
Quantitative and qualitative

Documental research:

- ✘ Newspapers and magazines (*TVGuia* and *TVMais*) specialised on TV;
- ✘ Television yearbooks;
- ✘ Audiometric material.

Interviews with:

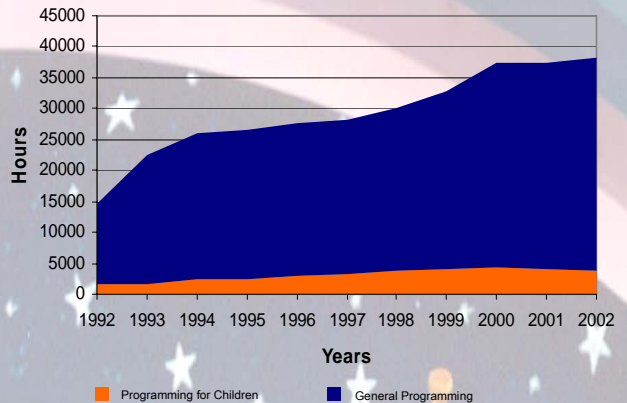


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Main Conclusions

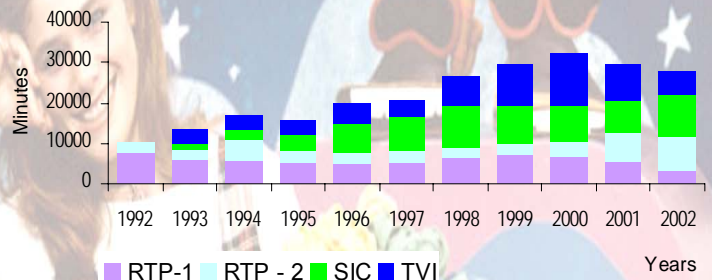
- ✘ The 'discourse' of television programming for children integrates a 'macro-discourse' of general programming. This 'discourse' is not only influenced by television programming, but also influences programming itself;
- ✘ Television emission time for children rose significantly between 1992 and 2002. Unfortunately, this increase has not necessarily given rise to programme diversity;
- ✘ The period of the greatest expansion occurred in weekly morning programming, particularly in early morning viewing time;
- ✘ During the period between 1992-2002, afternoon programming for children suffered a gradual decrease and eventually disappeared from television schedules;
- ✘ Children's programming is subjected not only to the logics of production and emission management, but also profits;
- ✘ At the end of nineties, children were gradually incorporated in adult viewing time;
- ✘ Television programming for children is more carefully thought out in function of its profit objectives and advertising goals than in the social-educational needs of children;
- ✘ Fiction dominates most of the schedules on all terrestrial channels which results in the absence of genre diversity;
- ✘ The production of Portuguese programmes for children on Portuguese television was very reduced;
- ✘ 'Omnibus' programmes for children were a significant factor in television programming for children and contained the same type of programming format which was composed of cartoons, game shows, contests and music. This programmes involved a television host who made the connection and transition between the different segments of the programmes;
- ✘ During this study, the offer of public and private channels showed both similar and different forms of programming strategies at different periods of time;
- ✘ Programming for children was considered by all interviewed an essential dimension of the public service broadcasting;
- ✘ Programming production is influenced and conditioned by internal and external factors of the television medium as shown on the figure below.

Total Emission Time of General and Children's Programming Transmitted by the Four Portuguese Terrestrial Channels (RTP1, RTP2, SIC, TVI) Between 1992 and 2002



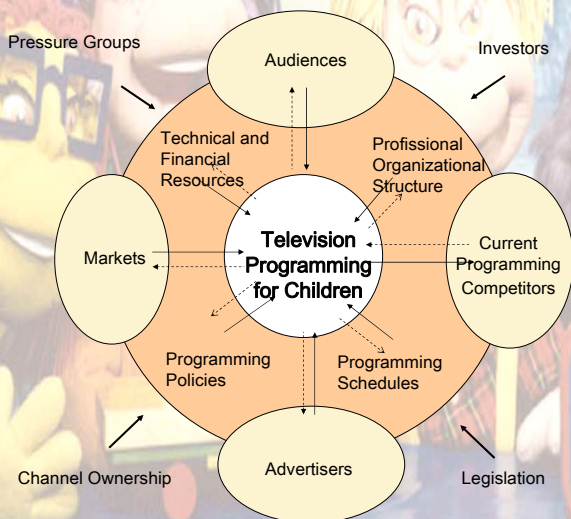
Source: Anuários RTP (year 1992) and Markttest Audimetria (years 1993-2002)

Evolution of Children's Programming Transmitted by the Four Portuguese Terrestrial Channels (RTP1, RTP2, SIC, TVI) Between 1992 and 2002

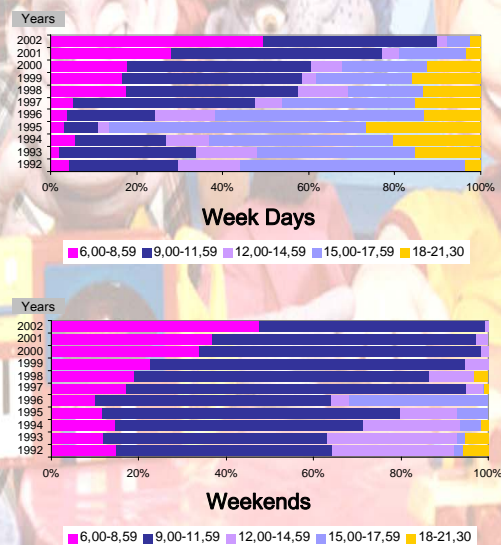


Source: Anuários RTP (year 1992) and Markttest Audimetria (years 1993-2002)

Factors that Influence the Television Programming for Children



Children's Programming Transmitted by the Four Terrestrial Portuguese Channels Between 1992 and 2002 in Specific Time Periods



Source: Reviews TV Guia and TV Mais

Urgent Needs of Television for Children in Portugal

- ✘ to acknowledge the diversity of children's wishes, needs, interests, which is beyond the diversity of childhoods;
- ✘ to talk about the needs of the audience is to insist on diversity: since audiences vary a lot in their tastes and situations, broadcasters cannot legitimately meet the preferences of the majority only;
- ✘ the issue of diversity - and the commitment with a 'mixed menu' - is a key issue of public service;
- ✘ to look at and consider children as a public rather than as a market;
- ✘ to consider children's own views, to ask for their opinions. On the whole, to consider the rights inscribed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child: children's right to an opinion, to participate in the affairs they are concerned with and to be heard.