PAYING FOR TELEVISION: THE CASE OF SPONSORSHIP IN IRELAND

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Paying for Television: The Case of Sponsorship in Ireland

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This thesis is concerned with the future development of broadcast funding with particular reference to public service broadcasters. The arguments are situated in the context of the crisis of funding for public service broadcasting in an increasingly competitive and fragmenting market place. The difficulties of commercial funding of public service stations are examined and analysed in the light of increased competition, the growing penetration of satellite and cable channels, and the possible implications of commercial influence.

The thesis documents the development of RTÉ as a dual funded public service organisation. It examines the political climate which has shaped the evolution of RTÉ. The increase in the presence of sponsored programmes on RTÉ is detailed as is the enforced increase of independently produced programmes on RTÉ. The current Irish broadcasting scene, the current financial difficulties and the broad implications for the station as a public service broadcaster in the face of new channels are also mapped.

Sponsorship as a growing source of funding is examined with particular reference to the stagnation in some advertising markets and poor projections for the growth of advertising revenue to the end of the century. The advantages, disadvantages, and implications of sponsorship as an alternative and/or complimentary source of funding to advertising are discussed and evaluated. To this end, a case study of the highly successful RTÉ programme *Crimeline* was conducted. *Crimeline* occupies a unique position in that it generally falls into the category of current affairs but it can be argued that it is a hybrid of several genres of programme. The difficulties inherent in the sponsorship of such a programme are discussed.

A survey of Advertisers, Advertising Agencies, Independent Producers and Broadcasters was conducted as a means of evaluating individual and collective perceptions of sponsorship as a means of funding as well as the possible growth, efficacy, and value of this method of funding and promotion.

The thesis concludes with an examination of implications of the funding crisis for the public sphere and the future of public service broadcasting. In this context, regulation, new influences on regulation in Ireland, and the impact of these and the future internal policies of RTÉ are of particular relevance.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations and Terms

Fianna Fáil:	The largest Irish political party.
IBC:	Irish Broadcasting Commission (proposed regulatory authority).
IRTC:	Independent Radio and Television Commission (Independent broadcasting regulatory body in Ireland).
ITC:	Independent Television Commission (Independent broadcasting regulatory body in Britain).
Narrowcasting:	The targeting of programmes at a specific audience possessing certain demographic characteristics.
RÉ:	Radio Éireann (Irish state broadcasting service, established in 1926).
RTÉ:	Radio Telefís Éireann (new title of the service since the introduction of television in 1960).
PBS:	Public Broadcasting System (American public television service).
PSB:	Public Service Broadcasting.
UTV:	Ulster Television (one of the ITV companies which is based in Northern Ireland).

Preface

RTÉ, the Irish state broadcasting service presently finds itself in a transitional period as it faces the reality of global competition. This brings with it a need to re-evaluate and perhaps re-emphasise its role as a national, public service broadcaster in order to meet the demands of the environment in which it finds itself operating. This thesis is concerned with the future development of broadcast funding, particularly that of public service broadcasters. The focus of this research is broadcast sponsorship, a growing means of funding television programmes. This type of funding arguably represents a closer linkage between advertiser and programme producer and may possess benefits in terms of exposure and financing for advertisers and producers respectively. Nonetheless, there are concerns regarding the increasing presence of commercial interests in programme production, particularly for public service broadcasters such as RTÉ.

In the two years since this study began, the presence of sponsorship as a means of broadcast funding in Ireland and Britain has increased significantly. This is due to the increasing need to raise funds and find new means of generating revenue. Sponsorship as a means of funding has gained in importance as a result of the stagnation in some advertising markets and poor projections for the future growth of advertising revenue. This has implications for broadcasters as productions costs continue to increase and transnational trends in media ownership continue. The advantages, disadvantages, and implications of sponsorship as a source of funding are discussed and evaluated. A case study of the highly successful RTÉ programme *Crimeline* served as a practical examination of the dynamic of a sponsorship arrangement. Sponsorship as a means of funding raises issues regarding the increase of commercial presence in broadcasting and the further encroachment of advertiser interests on programming. However, it may afford broadcasters an opportunity to supplement budgets and thus enable them to continue to provide a wide range of programmes and services. The issues raised by sponsorship and its possible benefits and liabilities are the subject of this thesis. It must be stated that the issue of funding is examined with reference to public service broadcasting; while it is also an important issue for commercial broadcasters, that is not the purpose of this research. While this research cannot therefore claim to be definitive, it does provide the only in-depth discussion of sponsorship in public service broadcasting in Ireland to date and has generated significant new data on the subject in question.

Difficulties concerning the commercial funding of RTÉ and by extension, public service broadcasting, are investigated in the context of increased competition, the growing penetration of satellite and cable channels and the possible implications of commercial influence. Thus, the implications of an increasingly fragmented and competitive market place are evaluated. The pending broadcasting legislation which marks a departure from the legislation of the 1980s which was predominantly concerned with financial issues is discussed in the conclusion. The intended legislation seeks to foreground questions of identity and public service, and may alter broadcasting in Ireland considerably. The proposed creation of an Irish Broadcasting Commission proports to change the way in which broadcasting is regulated and with greater powers than the existing RTÉ Authority and Irish Radio and Television Commission. As in many countries, broadcasting in Ireland finds itself in a dynamic phase in its history.

I have found the undertaking of this research to have been a worthwhile and rewarding endeavour though it has not been without difficulties. In conducting

research on broadcasting in Ireland, the greatest challenge has been the lack of written material on the subject. Very little has been written about RTÉ, although the articles and books that exist are detailed and informative. As sponsorship is a relatively recent phenomenon in broadcasting, most of the information that exists is in the form of articles and little of it deals with the history of sponsorship. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the project has been fascinating as it afforded me the opportunity to generate much of my own data. For their giving of their time and expertise I would like to thank Eugene Murray (RTÉ), Brian Lynch (RTÉ), Colm Molloy (RTÉ), Bryan O'Higgins (Garda Press Office), Norman MacCann (Hibernian Insurance) and David Harvey (Midas Productions). I would also like to thank Michael Hayes, Director, Diploma in Advertising, Dublin Institute of Technology for his invaluable assistance with the industry survey.

Finally I would like to express my gratitude to the Dublin Institute of Technology for the scholarship that allowed me to conduct this research and to Bob Kavanagh, SRD manager. Thanks also to the Library Staff of DIT and TCD. I am very grateful to Dr. Ellen Hazelkorn, my supervisor, for her boundless help and support during the course of the research, her concern has always extended past the thesis to the student. Thanks also to Dr. Catherine Curran, Michelle Barnes, Ruth O'Looney, Lesley O'Connor, Ann, Sean, Seamus, Kathleen and Thea Dunne, Maureen Fullam, Larry Bass and Richard Fitzsimons - it seems so inadequate. Huge amounts of gratitude go to Tom Gormley, Sarah Barrow and Lee Fulmer. Nessa, thank you for helping me to keep going at the eleventh hour. A last word to Tanya and Leah who made me aware in a very special way of the bigger picture, thank you both very much.

1 The Crisis in Public Service Broadcasting

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the issues facing public service broadcasting (PSB). It is against this background that the examination of the question of sponsorship as a means of funding for RTÉ, the Irish state broadcaster, is set. The key questions addressed concern the funding difficulties of broadcasting arising from increasing competition and a shift in political support from a predominantly public service conception of television to one which is more and more commercial or market-oriented. The issues of market fragmentation and the possible emergence of a small number of dominant corporations are also considered as are the difficulties peculiar to the funding, public or commercial, of public service broadcasters. Thus funding is established as an area of some concern to broadcasting particularly in the case of small, dual funded organisations such as RTÉ. It is within this context that the question of sponsorship merits consideration.

1.1 Problems of Broadcast Funding

In recent years, the dominant trend in broadcast regulation in Europe has been to place the consumer, not the citizen, at the centre of policy. While technological change has provoked phenomenal changes in both broadcasting and its marketplace, the irrefutable tension between the interests of the consumer and those of the citizen, between 'mass' audiences and 'quality' programming, and between the interests of commercial broadcasting and the public service ethos is more directly a function of policy (Dahlgren, 1995). Thus, the dogma of 'consumer sovereignty', best epitomised by Margaret Thatcher's efforts to deregulate broadcasting in the United Kingdom during the late 1980s and early 1990s, has generated a 'laissez-faire' approach to television, creating a situation wherein the capacity of the state to regulate broadcasting has deteriorated (Snoddy, 1993).[1] Deregulation has meant that programming content and financing of broadcasting has been left increasingly to the mercies of the market, leading to a new tension between 'privately generated' advertising money and 'publicly generated' media revenues (IPPR, 1997). Garnham (1994) has argued that the amount and nature of the finance available for production has a direct impact on the quantity and quality of programming, and on the ethos of the broadcaster. While the quantity of finance available has more obvious implications for programing and broadcasters, the implications of the nature of that finance are more difficult to identitfy. The pressure to be competitive and to maintain a commitment to public service broadcasting has forced many broadcasters to radically reassess their activities in order to maximise audience share. The former Director-General of RTÉ, Vincent Finn[2], foresaw such a tension when, in 1984, he advocated the notion of 'semi-controlled competition'. This concept envisaged a set of rules that would allow for some protection of the public service element of broadcasting while acknowledging the inevitability of competition (quoted in McLoone and MacMahon, 1984). The argument exists that the original justification for public service broadcasting (PSB), that is the need for a

[1] The report of the Peacock Committee on Broadcasting and its espousal of the doctrine of 'consumer sovereignty' is evidence of a state sanctioned commercialisation, to some extent, of broadcasting.

[2] In the same essay, Finn accurately predicted the difficulties facing the funding of RTÉ: the stagnation of advertising revenue and the lack of political support for an increase in the license fee.

universalist service, is no longer valid. This does not however, take account of the unique functions of public television in modern society.

The difficulties experienced by public service broadcasters are not confined to Ireland and Britain. The Public Broadcasting Service in the United States, while admittedly always a niche broadcaster, has enjoyed the consistent support of corporate sponsors and AB1 audiences (Blumler, 1991; Ford and Ford, 1993). In recent times, this support has dwindled from a five per cent audience share to only three per cent. Across Europe, public service broadcasters have also faced increasing competition from new commercial terrestrial stations; emerging as the most significant threat are satellite channels. France and Italy in particular have witnessed the decline of public service broadcasting and a reduction in overall quality of content on their television services which feature an increasing amount of soft porn (Cayrol, 1991; Graham and Davies, 1992).

The crisis is not merely of a financial nature. Increasing globalisation calls for a reassessment of the role of national broadcasters. The original premise on which public service broadcasting was founded in Europe was that the transmission spectrum was limited, thus the ability to broadcast was a precious resource (Garnham and Locksley, 1991). It was decided to utilise this resource for the public good in the creation of a universalist service which formed the basis of the accepted ethos of public service broadcasting which is still very much in evidence in Europe generally (Crookes, 1995; O'Higgins 1995; McQuail, 1996). As competition has intensified between commercial and public broadcasters the emphasis of broadcasters has shifted very definitely towards the provision of entertainment (Phillips, 1995). In 1991, Brittan identified a distinct movement away from Reithian notions of broadcasting in favour of a conception of television as existing to meet public desires. In order to justify their continued existence, public broadcasters have expended much effort in pursuit of bigger audiences which has impacted on the kind of programmes produced and on the schedule. There is an increasing reliance on populist or mainstream American imports, in particular, game-shows, soap operas and situation comedies (Bell, 1988). This has resulted in a reduction of domestically produced programming as it is more expensive to generate. The average cost of an hour of programming for a public broadcaster is approximately £50,000Stg. or more. Newer commercial stations can make an hour of television for less than half this amount (Foster, 1992).

Unfortunately, a long-time strength of PSB has been domestically-produced programmes which are generally more popular with local audiences. They also provide a catalogue of productions which can then be sold abroad to generate additional revenue for the broadcaster (Brown, 1996a). If television can be said to form part of a society's on-going dialogue with itself, then domestic productions are of extreme importance and relevance as they provide a forum where society both depicts and reflects itself. If there is nothing to distinguish a public service broadcaster from its commercial counterparts it cannot be argued that it is providing a unique or alternative service. This compromises the value of a public service broadcaster which centers on its remit to cater to all sections of the audience, including those who are of less economic benefit to commercial broadcasters and advertisers. [3] Thus, the argument has been made that the original justification of PSB which was to entertain, educate and inform the general public is no longer valid as there is now less need for a single universalist service. However, this position does not take account of the unique functions of public television in modern society.

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[3] Lord Reith was first Director General of the BBC and fostered the ethos of educating, entertaining and informing the public which still informs the organization and many other PSB stations.

1.2 New and Increasing Pressures

As the number of channels available to the viewer has proliferated in tandem with new, more efficient means of transmission, the market for broadcasting has fragmented and expanded. National markets can now be served by up to hundreds of channels. In Ireland, despite its peripheral location and small market, there are approximately 56 channels currently available from most cable or MMDS suppliers (Molloy, 1996). In addition there are satellite channels which serve many national and indeed global markets such as CNN, CNBC and BSkyB. The dominant position of public service broadcasters is being eroded as a larger commercial market is becoming increasingly feasible (Graham and Davies, 1992). The fragmentation of that market is of major concern as it threatens the funding of all broadcasters (Phillips, 1995; Brown, 1996b). However, it should be noted that the likelihood of an infinite number of channels is remote, as the cost of producing programmes is simply too great to support that level of expansion (Garnham, 1994).

The proliferation in the number of broadcasters has inevitably increased competition for advertising revenue. The amount of revenue generated from the sale of advertising has not, however, grown in line with the amount of broadcast hours or in line with production costs (Seaton, 1994)[4]. Economic pressures that are both global and uneven have meant that there is intense competition for smaller amounts of money. Public service broadcasters, many of whom are partially funded by advertising like their commercial counterparts, have found themselves in a weakening position; advertisers no longer need them to reach a national audience with so many commercial alternatives

[4] Many advertisers are choosing direct sales and marketing techniques such as direct mail or point of sale promotions over conventional media advertising. Sponsorship is one such method.

available (Sepstrup, 1991). Hence, the revenue available to public service broadcasters is now more thinly spread.[5]

Thus, it appears that the benefits of public broadcasting for advertising expenditure may have reached a plateau, through a combination of economic variables, questionable efficacy, legislative restrictions and public distrust (Ehrenberg and Mills, 1990). If this is true, there is a clear and ominous link between decreasing advertising and broadcast revenue. In Ireland, RTÉ has become increasingly dependent on advertising for revenue. In 1994, 51 per cent of its budget came from this source, while only 36 per cent came from the license fee and the remaining thirteen per cent from other commercial sources (RTÉ, 1994; Molloy, 1996). Against this grain, the recent government Green Paper on broadcasting, *Active or Passive. Broadcasting in the Future Tense* (1995) noted the danger of such reliance and of advertiser influence:

> While there is no evidence to suggest that it is the case, does the reliance by RTÉ for so much of its revenue from commercial sources including sponsorship run the risk of compromising its editorial integrity? (p 184)

While consumer expenditure on media remains quite constant as a percentage of GDP, consumer expenditure to support a proliferation of channels without a reduction in production costs does not exist (Garnham, 1994; Seaton, 1994). The cost of television production and the number of channels is growing, yet the revenue to support these developments may not exist. Therefore, it is not

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[5] ORF (Austria), BRTN and RTBF (Belgium), ZDF and ARD (Germany), NOS and BA (Netherlands) and RTÉ (Ireland) are dual funded public service broadcasters in the EU and FR2, 3 (France) and RAI 1, 2, 3 (Italy) are funded by license fee, advertising and public funds. The majority of public service broadcasters in the EU are funded to some extent by advertising revenue (14 out of 18 stations).

unreasonable to assume that channels will either close down or, alternatively, production standards may fall dramatically. It is within this context that the need to discover new sources of broadcast funding has become most urgent; tied to this is the necessity of political and public support for such policy changes. That this search is linked to the necessity of (re)structuring market mechanisms in order to encourage and ensure diversity rather than hinder it has equally become pressing (Corner, 1984; Dahlgren, 1995). It might ensue that in a fully privatised industry, choice may contract again as a few dominant players emerge and the price of broadcasting rises accordingly. The inevitability of cross-media ownership may furthermore compromise choice and the availability of the range of diverse voices in the broadcasting arena.

The tastes of the consumer and the consumption of the product are interdependent, a factor that should be borne in mind by all broadcasters to ensure that the needs of both sides are met, preferably by a schedule which provides programming that is stimulating and informative as well as entertaining (Brown, 1996b). Quality broadcasting faces a number of conflicts which arise from, and are added to, operating in a highly commercial environment. If consumers do not buy 'good' programmes there is less of an incentive to make them. However, if broadcasters are not making good programmes, they cannot be bought (Graham and Davies, 1992). Expansion into foreign markets via programme sales may help PSB channels to generate funds for new productions as they generally have a substantial back-catalogue of programmes. The possibility of direct payment in the form of subscription for broadcasting overtaking advertising as the most important single source of funding for commercial broadcasting during this decade is growing. This will, in all probability, further fragment the audience as pay-tv stations tend to cater to niche audiences, as exemplified by the more successful channels such as Sky Sports, Sky Movies and Canal + etc. Advertising revenue may not be any greater in real terms in 2000 than it was in the 1980s and this could contribute to a cheaper programming mix (Congdon, 1992; Sturgess, 1992a).

It has been argued that television is no longer a 'public good'. If this is the case is there any argument to support a different regulation for the elaborate formal and informal codes of the medium that make it unique and arguably powerful? The reality of the late 20th century is that regulation will have to keep pace with technology. Thus, the focus of much regulation has been technological advancements rather than the socio-political function of broadcasting. Dahlgren, 1995, has argued that European Commission quotas may not be viable in the long term and essentially amount to little more than cultural protectionism. The question of the state (be it national or European) protection of public service institutions is still a matter of debate, particularly in light of the European Commission's attempt to prevent the monopolisation of sports rights in broadcasting. Satellite broadcasting undoubtedly makes the regulations pertaining to, and the monitoring of, public service obligations increasingly difficult to operate (Congdon, 1992; Goodwin, 1995). This is not, however, sufficient reason for the abdication of responsibility for the quality of content on public service or commercial broadcasters as broadcasting serves a purpose beyond that of entertainment, and each group within society merits due concern and attention, irrespective of their socioeconomic status.

1.3 Funding and public service broadcasting

The way in which public service organisations should be funded, the extent of their funding, whether they should carry advertising, and whether their programming should be comprehensive or confined to public service 'type' programming are issues that involve judgements about cultural and social values. As such, these issues are not adequately handled by economic benefit cost analysis (Brown, 1996a). The consumption of a programme by one individual does not affect the ability of another individual to consume it while the cost of production is the same if the audience consists of one person or 100,000 people. Broadcasting is a peculiarly problematic area in that it does not operate in the same manner as conventional markets. This complicates the relatively simplistic rhetoric of consumer choice whereby if a consumer wants or values a particular good or service, they will purchase it (Dunnett, 1982; Ingram, 1983). In the case of broadcasting as in most cases, what the audience wants is influenced by the range of what is available. The sophistication of the audience increases with each innovation in programme style or content, therefore, the boundaries of what can be 'read' by the viewer are continually expanded. Should the range or quality of programmes be undermined through lack of finance or a change in ethos, the audience may well get that for which they settle.

The problems arising out of the interdependence of sponsors and broadcasters are not the fault of any one party, rather, it derives from the funding system and the pressures of the market.[6] The problems are particularly acute for RTÉ which endeavours to serve two masters: the public purse and the competitive market. While RTE's dual funding from both public and commercial sources encouraged the company to appeal to audiences in order to attract advertising and in addition make contributions to the cultural and political life of Irish society, this position increasingly needs clarification (Barbrook, 1992; Garnham, 1994). It may be that, like the BBC, RTÉ needs a charter which

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[6] These difficulties are exemplified by *Crimeline*, a sponsored programme broadcast by RTÉ which is dealt with more fully in Chapter 5. *Crimeline* is the Irish version of *Crimewatch UK*, a crime reconstruction based programme which is sponsored and made by an independent production company for RTÉ.

specifically details its role in Irish society and guarantees the amount and nature of its funding (Graham and Davies, 1992).[7] Advertising as a source of revenue has been constantly rejected by the BBC. This has not been possible in Ireland where the population base is unable to support a national broadcaster funded solely by licence fee.[8] In its response to the green paper, RTÉ states its belief that adequate funds from the licence fee must be the cornerstone of the service (RTÉ, 1995). To this end, RTÉ recommends indexation. The importance of the licence fee is a view which is widely held throughout Europe although it remains controversial (Groombridge and Hay, 1995; Brown, 1996a).

Ireland's independent sector has been indicated by independent producers surveyed for this research to be sorely in need of additional sources of funding. Independently produced programmes are made for approximately half what they would cost if RTÉ were to make them. In many instances, the allotted funding of commissions received from broadcasting organisations are not sufficient to meet production costs in an expensive industry, a difficulty borne out by the responses received from independent producers (see Appendix D). In the case of *Crimeline*, it was as a direct result of RTE's financial difficulties that the programme came to be financed from the private sector. In contrast to RTÉ with amost 2000 employees, independent production companies are run by a skeletal staff of full-time employees and freelancers hired on a project by project basis. Staff are frequently paid a low

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[7] RTÉ policy, which is determined largely by the RTÉ Authority, is subject to the Authority's composition, thus the agenda of the Authority becomes that of the broadcaster to some extent. The decisions of the present Authority would not necessarily be in tandem with those of previous Authorities. It may be argued that a more coherent and consistent policy mechanism is needed.

[8] This is true of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation which is also dual funded and where advertising as a source of funding has long been contentious (Boardman and Vining, 1996, Filion, 1996).

wage for skilled and intensive labour due mainly to the low cost structure of the industry (Hazelkorn, 1997).

At the present, RTÉ is considering a policy on sponsorship. The suspicion with which sponsorship has been regarded has forced it to adopt a more subtle role in commissioned programmes as has been acknowledged by some members of the organisation.[9] RTÉ is also understandably concerned with not allowing 'free advertising' to escape onto the screen. This serves to further emphasise the need for regulation of these areas rather than ignoring them (Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, 1995). In many countries, the regulation of the media has been altered in favour of the owners and advertisers[10]. The amount of airtime has been increased as has the number of franchises/licences awarded in order to stimulate the broadcasting market. This raises questions about the balance between private enterprise and the 'public good', since it can be argued that the market has no intrinsic loyalties except to itself (Price, 1995). Some systems of regulation serve the cause of democratic deliberation better than others. Account needs to be taken of whether there should be a distinction between regulation of political discourse (news, current affairs, etc.) and of popular culture (entertainment, advertising, etc.). The issues raised by *Crimeline* are of broader concern to RTÉ in so far as they illustrate the inevitability of market pressures and their effect on regulation. Sponsorship is yet another manifestation of the increasing presence of business in broadcasting. The programme embodies many of the difficulties facing the institution as it seeks to straddle the public and commercial spheres.

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[9] Interviews with RTÉ employees have revealed concerns regarding sponsorship; the interviewees preferred to remain anonymous.

[10] This is evidenced in Ireland by the case of TV3, when a suitable bid for the franchise was not found in the early 1990s, the franchise lapsed. It was resurrected in 1996 due to regenerated commercial interest in the venture. In fact, the competition for advertising revenue in this country has increased as UTV and Channel 4 are now selling airtime in the Republic.

The conundrum posed by the commercial finance of public service television is not merely fiscal. Historically, public service broadcasting has been independent of industry and the state, providing an arena for diverse social groups to communicate with one another and has treated the public as citizens, not consumers (Cave, 1996; Achille and Miege, 1994; Gibbons, 1989). Unless carefully regulated, this ethos could be threatened by commercial pressures (Barnett and Docherty, 1991). *Crimeline* embodies one prospective future of the relationship between public broadcasting and private commerce. In many countries there has been a near total abdication of policy in favour of the market place (Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, 1995). Cultural and political intervention needs, however, to take account of social differences. The EU has sought to create a common cultural space through subsidisation and co-productions where the disparate elements of European culture can gain expression. It is a truism that since the market for information and entertainment is now global, regulation should take place at an international level. In this context, the EU has a greater role to play within European broadcasting (Wyatt, 1990; Wedell and Lange, 1991). The French have led the initiative to promote European culture but more support is necessary. This should be forthcoming from smaller nations, like Ireland, who may be more culturally vulnerable than larger nations as they rely on imported cultural products more heavily than larger states.

There are severe implications for RTÉ as an agent acting in the 'public sphere'.[11] The purpose of the public sphere is to enable people to reflect critically on themselves and on the practices of the state (Stevenson, 1995).

[11] Jurgen Habermas foregrounded the concept of and debate about the public sphere in writings such as 'The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society'. Simply, the debate concerns the ongoing project of democracy and the role of the development of the public sphere as a forum for active public participation in the life of society.

Legal and financial support from public authorities to ensure the pluralism of information must therefore be forthcoming (Groombridge and Hay, 1995). The citizen has the right of access to information and ideas from a plurality of sources. Information is not a commodity but arguably a public good. Should a system of access to information and entertainment largely based on ability to pay develop, it may increase the gap between those who have and those who have not. This could result in the diminution of the common ground necessary in any society for its members to communicate with each other.

It cannot be denied that people depend greatly on the media for the ideological framework with which they orient themselves in their society. As the media are both the agents and subjects of the dominant ideology, the push towards privatisation and the decline of publicly funded cultural organisations have serious implications for the range and diversity of public expression and the availability of television as a forum for all social groups. The public sphere consists of an intricate set of social spaces and practices, the democratic nature of which cannot be assumed but must be constantly attained (Dahlgren, 1995).

The economics of commercial television, and to a growing extent public service television, centre on the exchange of audiences for advertising revenue (Golding and Murdock, 1991). This affords a large degree of control to business as advertiser and sponsor over the direction of cultural activity. In many instances this has resulted in the reduction of diversity. The narrowing of the field of public discourse is therefore one of primary concern. Culture plays a vital role in shaping 'imagined communities', shared values, life styles, and political goals which form the basis of society (Dahlgren, 1995). Public service broadcasting embodies a public cultural space that is invaluable in a society's on-going interaction with itself. Therefore, the nature and quality of its funding is vitally important to the way in which it performs this function.

1.4 Public Funding

Public service broadcasting increasingly finds itself in the position of having to justify public funding (Cave, 1996). It has often been said, however, that public service broadcasting has grown complacent and unadventurous in its programming mix because of the existence of a 'cosy monopoly'. An advantage of channels funded by direct payment is that it has established information flows about products between viewers and broadcasters. It seems that PSB may have to redefine its role in a multichannel environment in order to survive as it no longer provides a unique service, nor does it dominate a limited transmission spectrum. Through involvement in commercial enterprises, public broadcasters are actively pursuing a niche in the new broadcasting market in order to survive economically and logistically (Brown, 1996a).[12]

Perhaps the justification for the continued existance of public service broadcasting lies in the alleged projection that the market will ultimately provide lower quality broadcasting as competition for limited resources will inevitably force the production of inexpensive programmes such as game shows and soap operas as well as a reduction of staffing levels (Achille and Miege, 1996). With few notable exceptions, private industry is less likely to carry out the level of research and development into technology, personnel and programming generally performed by public service broadcasters.[13] This is largely due to the fact that commercial enterprises are predominantly and understandably concerned with generating profits. In an industry such as

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[12] The BBC has become involved in providing commercial services with the BBC World Service, a subscription channel in Europe. RTÉ is establishing a cable channel in Britain at present and would be interested in becoming involved in a European cable channel in the US (Molloy, 1996).

[13] The investment in the development of digital broadcasting technology by BSkyB among others is however an exception to this.

broadcasting, the possibility of the market failure of a new programme is quite high (Congdon, 1992).

Graham and Davies, (1992) contend that the market takes no account of the complex relationship between citizenship, culture and community in which broadcasting plays a major part. While market research does attempt to chart and comprehend the relationships between viewers and programming, and viewers and advertising, the exercise is more concerned with predicting viewer behaviour and preferences than examining how the medium functions at a social and cultural level. Broadcasting also has a part to play in the democratic process as it gives universal access to information about society to every citizen. Television is the source from which most people derive information: through the news and the representations of society, and how it is functioning. It forms a part of the community. As people consume media as citizens, it contributes to the formation of a sense of identity and helps the individual to locate himself or herself within the culture (IPPR, 1997). Television is the single greatest force in the forging of a sense of commonality, in increasingly fragmented societies it is an area of common experience.

The concerns outlined in this chapter are not those of the market, and it is not claimed that they should. In any case, commercial broadcasters in many instances do not have the reach to perform those tasks as yet. The extent and penetration of a national broadcaster (generally PSB stations) would be both a requirement and an advantage in this endeavour. It is within the possibilities of public service broadcasting to contribute towards the reconstruction and maintenance of a common national culture and also acknowledge the validity of minority groups within that society (Graham and Davies, 1992). Informed and accurate representations of a nation and its citizens are undeniably in the interests of democracy. A source of information that is impartial and accurate is of acute importance to an increasingly fragmented society (Aufderheide, 1996). Availability of this service is crucial and should not be dependent upon ability to pay. The traditional role of public service broadcasters as a universal supplier is however more important now in the late 20th century or the 'post-modern era' than at any stage in its history. The danger for public service broadcasters is that in competing in the same arena as commercial broadcasters, its raison d'être and subsidisation become undermined and questioned (Boardman and Vining, 1996). The issue of quality is a cornerstone of the debate. The provision of high quality news, current affairs, fresh and innovative entertainment, educational programmes, and a means of communication between states provides a validation of the service offered by the public service model (Cave, 1996).

Graham and Davis (1992) amongst others have identified the main dynamic behind the current global changes as the development of technology and not a shift in public attitudes. This augurs well for public service institutions which generally enjoy a high level of public support as it indicates that this support is current. A question of fundamental importance however, is whether government support will continue if audience levels continue to decline (Boardman and Vining, 1996). Pay television offers a different service to 'free' television in that it is generally themed. There is an increasing amount of commercial airtime available but demand may not equal supply as companies are pursuing direct marketing alternatives to an increasing extent (de Burca, 1995). This, coupled with the fact that programme costs are growing thirty per cent faster than the general price level makes the reduction in production of more expensive programmes more likely (Congdon, 1992). The feasibility of market supply cannot be seen as proof of its desirability.

The collective sense of identity is lessened if there is no society with which to identify (Ellis, 1994; Price, 1995). Broadcasting has a special part to play in the formation of a sense of identity due to its power and influence. There is a need for a public service broadcaster as it serves as a guarantor of quality for consumers, provides a centre of excellence and widens choice by complementing the market in its pursuit of public service aspirations (Seaton, 1994). Furthermore, because it is forecast that only half of all viewers will have access to pay television by the end of the decade, terrestrial broadcasting and the policies pertaining to it will continue to be important for the foreseeable future (Price, 1995). Public service broadcasting has real value in its efforts to achieve universal coverage and is large enough to influence the commercial sector. However, without adequate funding, none of this can be achieved. Thus, it is imperative that the licence fee supply a realistic amount of money to the broadcaster and should in some way be linked to increases in overall production costs (Congdon, 1992). This form of funding is generally viewed as the best existing type of finance for public service broadcasting as it arguably represents a less direct relationship between the broadcaster and the financer of the broadcaster. However, a major market presence is generally seen as necessary to justify this licence fee and any increases. The broadcaster must maintain market presence in order to justify the licence fee but needs revenue to maintain that presence. Broadcasting is undoubtedly an expensive but highly significant industry. The need for funding is crucial and sponsorship may be the means of providing some of this finance.

2 Overview of Broadcasting in the Irish Context

2.0 Introduction

The function of this chapter is to give an overview of the development of the Irish state broadcasting service from its beginnings as a radio service (Radio Éireann) to its present manifestation as a radio and television broadcaster (Radio Telefís Éireann). The complexities arising from the imposition of a public service mandate on a service that was also to endeavour to be self-sufficient are evaluated as is the impact of this on the organisation. The difficult funding arrangements imposed on RTÉ due to its small and often economically weak domestic market are evaluated. The issues arising from the commercial funding of a public service broadcaster are detailed. A history of sponsorship on RTÉ is presented and the presence of sponsorship at present is discussed.

2.1 Historical overview of RTÉ

Like the BBC, Radio Éireann (RÉ) was established as an off-shoot of the Irish Department of Posts and Telegraphs and under its direct control. In this way, broadcasting functioned as an extension of the civil service until 1953. As the new Irish state had inherited a British type of civil service and government structures, so too did it borrow much of its public service ethos regarding broadcasting from the BBC. The BBC assisted in the establishment of the service and John Reith, first Director of the BBC and an influential figure in the interpretation of public service broadcasting, played a part in the selection of the

Director of the service.[1] Seamus Clandillon, who became the first Director, was sent to London to train for his new post. From the outset, there was a strong link between the BBC and RÉ. The existence of an Irish nation was pre-supposed, it was the construction of a distinct state that was the objective of the time (Savage, 1996).

From its inception, RÉ carried advertising[2] and was clearly expected to become financially self-sufficient, a departure from the usual financing of PSB and a dictum that greatly influenced the ethos and performance of the service, past and present. A significant proportion of RÉ's finances came from the import tax on radios in the 1920s and 1930s (Gorham, 1967). In 1927, licence revenue amounted to £9, 682, advertisements equalled £200 and import duties equalled £19,000. The customs duties proved a lucrative source of funds and so, by 1934 they no longer formed part of the finances of broadcasting, they went instead to the Exchequer. Thus, broadcasting was deprived of a significant source of income (£88,000 in 1936) but the stipulation that it should be self-financing remained. However, import duties had never been intended to be a mainstay of the organisation, licence fee and advertising had always been the intended means of financing the service.

From 1926, advertising was predominantly limited to Irish companies and other companies that did not compete with Irish concerns. Advertising was not a great success in the early stages, bringing in very little funding. It was not welcomed by the broadcasters and while it was not made policy, it was decided to allow

[1] Public service broadcasting as defined by Reith was more than an entertainment service for the masses, it also had educational and informational functions and part of its remit was to expand the tastes of the viewing public, expose them to what it deemed the most worthy aspects of the national culture whether or not it was desired by that public.

[2] Advertising on RTÉ has been restricted on more than one occasion: in the 1920s and 1930s when Cumann na nGael, and then later Fianna Faíl restricted it to Irish firms as part of their protectionist policies, and again in the 1980s when Fianna Faíl 'capped' the level of advertising income allowed to the station.

advertising to die out. It nonetheless lingered on, contributing very little to the financing of RÉ and this remained the case until the establishment of the high powered transmitter at Athlone in 1933. Even after this development, between 1934-35, receipts from advertising dropped by £9,000. In 1941 the licences reached a peak of 183,000 and began to fall off during the war years when advertising too fell off (Gorham, 1967).

In the 1940s, the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs drew up advertising restrictions. There was to be no more than 2 hours of advertising daily, none between 5:30pm and 11pm, none on Christmas Day and four other holy days. By the end of the 1940s the number of licences purchased was increasing and RÉ was earning more money. Advertisements brought in £47,000 in the period 1949-50 (Gorham, 1967). In the 1950s the then Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Erskine Childers, supported the use of sponsored programmes in order to improve the finances of Radio Éireann and the number of broadcast hours. When RÉ became RTÉ in 1960, the service had 493,000 licensed listeners and an income from licence fees and advertisements of some £530,000. This transition also marked the introduction of 'spot' advertising on radio as well as television which was utilised in addition to sponsored programmes. Irish broadcasting could not have developed in its present form without advertising or a licence fee of a magnitude that would be unrealistic in the context of Ireland's economy (Finn, 1993). Revenue from the sale of commercial airtime and other enterprises have always been essential as the size of the population base and the economy was and is too small to support a state broadcaster funded entirely by licence fee (Mullholland, 1995; Molloy, 1996).

In 1946, the service received a major economic boost when it was given funds to create a symphony orchestra, a light orchestra, a repertory company and a more comprehensive news service (Bell, 1995).[3] By the 1950s, eighty five per cent of the audience listened to Radio Éireann as opposed to the foreign channels also available. Almost thirty years after its inception, RÉ was finally given some level of independence. In 1951 Erskine Childers agreed to delegate a large measure of executive authority to a five man council known as Comhairle Radio Éireann. The notion of broadcasting independence, independence from the government, was established and ultimately imported into the establishing legislation for Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ) (MacConghail, 1984). Under the terms of the Broadcasting Act 1960 and subsequent legislation, RTÉ is subject to a nine member RTÉ Authority, appointed by the Government. The executive is headed by the Director General.

When RÉ became RTÉ with the introduction of the television service and began broadcasting on December 31st, 1960, programmes were received by 290,000 homes in the state. British channels could however also be received in certain parts of the country (Finn, 1993). Increasingly the state sought to reduce its financial liability for RTÉ even though it continued under state control by insisting that it be self-financing as far as possible. The difficulty lay in the conundrum of trying to live up to the ideals of public service broadcasting in providing programming that would be innovative, informative and perhaps without mass appeal while also being commercially viable. The first Director General of RTÉ, Edward J. Roth, identified the dilemma presented by the divergent aims of the new service in the mandate to further national culture combined with the stipulation to be a paying commercial enterprise (Gorham, 1967).

[3] There was a feeling that increasing the funding for the news service would further enable it to be unbiased and independent.

During the 1960s there was an increase in the number of broadcast hours and an increase in domestically produced programming on television. In the early years approximately two thirds of programmes were domestically produced; by the late 1970s, only one third were home productions, a figure that dropped to thirty per cent in 1980 when almost seventy per cent were imported. Yet over the same period, home productions dominated the TAM (Television Audience Measurement).

The television service was seen by the Oireachtas and elsewhere as providing increased opportunities in drama and the arts, education, information and entertainment. The early years of RTÉ were influenced by producers who had been recruited mainly from abroad, a mixture of experienced non-nationals and Irish citizens, working in television in North America and Britain. The service shifted gradually from entertainment towards a cautious information strand. From the visit of John F. Kennedy in 1963, RTÉ began televising large-scale events, something at which they came to excel and which boosted confidence within the organisation. Programmes like *7 Days* and *The Late Late Show* began to deal with controversial subjects of social relevance (Gibbons, 1989). From the 1960s on, RTÉ steadily increased the proportion of programmes imported from abroad in its schedules. A comprehensive news service was provided while there was an increasing reliance on imports in the entertainment schedule. In 1978 RTÉ 2 was launched; as a second channel operated by the national broadcaster, this situation was deemed preferable to official availability of the British channels by the population. By 1980, RTÉ was showing more imported programmes than any other television company in the European Community (Barbrook, 1992).

This partial abandonment of its public service commitment to produce indigenous programming, was due to increasing financial problems (Hazelkorn, 1996). Any growth in income for RTÉ was effectively limited to increases in its advertising revenues as the licence fee did not increase significantly. Thus, RTÉ broadcast programmes, mainly British and American imports, that would attract large audiences for the advertisers. Commercial competition had forced a shift in emphasis. In contrast to its earlier role of restricting the dissemination of foreign ideas, RTÉ was now effectively promoting them. Moreover, the broadcaster began segmenting the audience into distinct target groups, contrary to the accepted conception of public service broadcasting as a unifying force in Ireland.

RTÉ currently broadcasts over 10,500 hours of television each year, almost 50 per cent of which domestically produced. The average hours transmitted per week are 200. RTÉ asserts a commitment to providing programming which reflects the social and cultural interests of the audience (RTÉ, 1996). Management endeavours to provide a structure within which the ethos of public service broadcasting is enhanced and extended. The company maintains a complementary service across the two channels, RTÉ One and Network Two, ensuring that majority and minority interests and viewpoint are served in a distinctive programme mix. Aertel, a teletext information service is available free of charge in approximately 400,000 Irish homes. The organisation operates a telephone service for news and sports results in Ireland, the UK and the US and RTÉ radio is available across Europe and for 3.5 hours daily in North America. RTÉ also provides information on its services through its Home Page on the Internet. RTÉ nonetheless faces the additional constraints imposed by the changes in the market and the internationalisation of communications. A large part of the difficulties experienced by the national broadcaster, past and present are due to the inadequacy and inherent contradictions of its funding (Bell, 1995; Mullholland, 1995).

2.2 Sponsored Programming, Past and Present

Sponsored programming has been a feature of radio programming in RTÉ from its beginning. Its existence then as now, was largely due to the need to augment production budgets. One of the earliest sponsored programmes was broadcast in 1927, sponsored by Euthymol. In 1930 airtime was let to individual firms that wanted to advertise. The fee charged for the airtime was £5 per hour, the cost of a 5 minute advertisement, but the company had to also provide the programme which further reduced the station's costs. Early sponsors included Independent Newspapers, Sweet Afton, Findlaters and Irish Hospital Sweepstakes. The programmes appeared popular with listeners, the sponsors spent about £30 an hour on the programmes, more than RÉ could afford itself. In 1932 the comment was made in the Daíl that the best programmes broadcast were the sponsored programmes, however such programmes did not enjoy unquestioning support. Gorham (1967) identifies that while there was some opposition to sponsored programmes as they were regarded as promoting foreign culture, fiscal need dictated their continued existence.

In the early 1930s sponsored programmes generated almost as much funds as the licence fees for the service. From the late 1930s, an hour a day was allotted to sponsored programmes, from 1:30 to 2:30pm. The time was let to sponsors in fifteen minute blocks for three months at time. During the 1930s, certain sponsored programmes were strongly criticised but as the revenue they contributed was much needed, the programmes continued (Sheedy, 1989). The Hospitals' Sweep programme that was sponsored and broadcast nightly in the 1930s was disliked by the then director of Radio Éireann, Dr. T.J. Kiernan. In 1937 he tried to cancel it as he did not completely control it and was unhappy with its content (Cathcart, 1984). In 1952 Radio Éireann attempted a formula whereby the sponsor bought the fifteen minute block and provided their own commercials but left the choice of music to the station. This arrangement was not successful with sponsors and did not last. The governing body of RÉ (Comhairle Radio Éireann) was against extending sponsored programming in any case. However, *The Kennedys of Castleross*, a soap opera sponsored by Cadbury-Fry began broadcasting in 1955 and was very successful. It was unusual among RÉ's sponsored programmes which tended to consist of disc jockeys playing music. Despite criticism, sponsored programmes had been found to be highly popular in the 1950s, indeed far more popular than evening programmes which would have had a greater potential audience (Fitzgerald in Kelly and Rolston, 1995).

The sponsored programmes on Radio 1 were not made by RTÉ but by sponsors through independent studios such as Tommy Ellis Studios and Eamonn Andrews Studios. A Sponsored Programmes Officer in RTÉ listened to the programmes and timed the advertisements in order to make sure that they did not exceed the allotted seconds (Gormley, 1996). Commercial content of programmes had to be limited to one and a half minutes in each quarter of an hour. Four sponsored programmes were broadcast daily, each of 15 minutes duration. Amongst the more well-known of them were *Dear Frankie*, sponsored by Jacobs, and *The Birds Programme* sponsored by Birds (Meenaghan, 1995b). *Come Fly With Me,* presented by Harry Thullier in the 1960s, was sponsored by an airline and involved interviews with people on aeroplanes about their travels. Sponsors would typically be credited at the beginning and end of the programme and the programmes were interspersed with advertisements for the sponsor.

RTÉ operated a policy dictating that advertising had to be clearly distinguished from the programme by means of a 'sting' into and out of each advertising break. As this was not a requirement there was often less delineation between programme and advertiser. In keeping with the accepted practice of public service broadcasters, no current affairs or news programmes were sponsored. Sponsored programmes were of comparable quality to in-house productions but were unquestionably 'popular' broadcasting, in the tradition of personality driven, populist shows (Gormley, 1996).

The history of sponsorship on RTÉ has been a problematic one as there was and remains a feeling in some quarters of the organisation that sponsorship is simply not an acceptable means of funding programming on a public service station. Sponsored radio programmes were also seen to be the responsibility of the Sales Division rather than that of radio producers. In 1974 the report of the Broadcasting Review Committee indicated that sponsorship on radio was being phased out in order to allow RTÉ greater control of radio programming.

> The combination of longer hours of broadcasting, more talks and features, more plays and less sponsored programmes suggests a better service in terms of time coverage, range and quality.

In 1978, sponsored programmes represented 322 hours or 4.9 per cent of total radio output (Sheedy, 1979). By 1981 this figure had dropped to 42 hours in a total of 6,822 on Radio 1 and 40 hours from a total of 7,070 on Radio 2 (RTÉ, 1981). The limited use of sponsored programmes on Radio 2 (which began in 1979 and was renamed 2FM in 1990) was a significant indication of the low regard in which sponsorship was held. It was the decision of Michael Carroll the Director of Radio at that time to reduce the number of such programmes in the schedule as there was a feeling that RTÉ's editorial line was compromised by such programmes (Lynch, 1996). Ironically, Radio 2 as a popular music based station would have been a suitable vehicle for sponsored programmes had there been a desire to broadcast them on the part of RTÉ (Gormley, 1996). Today, the use of sponsorship on 2FM is predominantly confined to the Roadcaster, a travelling mobile broadcast unit which is sometimes sponsored by shopping centres etc. when it broadcasts from their premises. However, Levis sponsor an hour of Dave Fanning's programme on 2FM and the music series *Both Sides Now* was sponsored by Irish Ferries (Meenaghan, 1995b).

Sponsorship made no significant appearance on Irish television until 1992 when it first appeared in the form of *Crimeline*, the crime reconstruction programme sponsored by Hibernian Insurance. While it is true that various companies have donated holidays and cars among other items to *The Late Late Show* and Ford donated cars to *Murphy's Micro Quiz-M*, this could be argued to be product placement rather than sponsorship (Oram, 1986). *Crimeline* has been gradually followed by other sponsored programmes on RTÉ, including *Our House, The Movie Show, 2TV, Weatherline* and *Across the Line* among an increasing number of others. Advertisers have been reluctant to sponsor programmes which cater for 'minority' interests such as classical music and the Irish language (Gibbons, 1989). The misgivings of advertisers where programming of limited appeal is concerned have not dissipated as is evident in the premiums they are willing to pay for advertising slots around programmes with the highest ratings. Sponsorship currently accounts for approximately two to three per cent of RTÉ's income and is not expected to grow to any more than five per cent in the future (Murray, 1995; Molloy, 1996). Within the station there appears to be dissension between those who feel that it is an area of potential exploitation and usefulness and those who feel that it has no place in the financing of programmes on a public service station.

2.3 Independent Programmes and the IPU

> The IPU has also reflected the need for timely and relevant material by a commissioning policy which places particular emphasis on intrinsically Irish material, for a discriminating Irish audience in a highly competitive media environment.
>
> - IPU Annual Review, 1994

The Independent Production Unit (IPU) came into being in 1993 in response to the Broadcasting Authority (Amendment) Act. The legislation was intended to promote the small Irish independent audio-visual sector. The commissioning of programming from independent companies has become standard practice among many broadcasters such as the BBC. Commissioned programmes are often argued to be more cost effective for broadcasting organisations, however, in the case of RTÉ some have argued that they are an imposition channelling funds away from in-house productions. Previously the vast majority of domestically produced programmes were made in-house by RTÉ and the independent sector was only involved in the production of advertisements (Bell, 1995). The appearance of the IPU on the broadcasting scene in Ireland has arguably heralded the growth of sponsorship because it is being widely used by independent producers to supplement the budgets they receive from RTÉ. While the IPU monitors sponsorship agreements carefully, it does encourage producers to seek finance from other sources and this often takes the form of sponsorship.

RTÉ is mandated to commission twenty per cent of its programmes from the independent sector by 1999, and by and large the quality of these programmes has been very high (Murray, 1995). The programmes commissioned range from documentaries, both one-off and series, dramas, magazine-format shows, children's and Irish-language programmes. The intention is to commission from a wide spectrum of independent producers, however this has not, in the main, proved to be the case. Fifty per cent of the IPU's spend goes to six companies (Wood, 1996). In recognition of the dramatic growth of the Irish film industry and the economic potential of the audio-visual industry in Ireland, the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht set up STATCOM. This committee is comprised of representatives from the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, FÁS (the national training and development authority) and the Irish Film Board; its remit is to investigate the training needs of the industry and the means to address the deficits. The recent STATCOM sponsored report on the Irish audio-visual industry and its training needs carried out by FÁS, *Training Needs to 2000*, is seen as a recognition of the importance of this area and a desire to promote growth.

The IPU operates within RTÉ's Television Programmes Division, its remit is to enhance the service by expanding the range and diversity of domestically produced programming and to nurture creativity within the independent production sector (RTÉ, 1996). The IPU is involved in the general editorial planning as it is necessary to interact with the channel's programming priorities and scheduling policy in order to serve the needs of the schedule. At present IPU-commissioned programmes account for 280 hours per year. The Broadcasting Authority (Amendment) Act, 1993, imposed certain obligations on the RTÉ Authority regarding the amount of money to be spent on Independent Television Programmes and the conditions governing the expenditure of this funding. The Act requires the Authority to report on an annual basis on its commissioning activities, the operation of the funds and any other matters of concern to the Minister.

Sponsorship is permitted to partially fund independent productions. When an approved programme has been identified as having sponsorship potential, certain procedures, established by RTÉ, must be adhered to, namely;

1. The precise nature of the sponsorship arrangement is agreed between the IPU, the independent producer and RTÉ's Sales and Marketing Division.
2. Negotiations with potential sponsors are undertaken by the independent producer in close consultation with RTÉ.
3. The programme budget as agreed between RTÉ and the independent producer will be disclosed to the sponsor.
4. Sponsorship funding will be paid directly to the independent producer by the sponsor.

In 1994, sponsorship funding of independent productions amounted to £353,500, out of a total amount spent by RTÉ on independent commissions of £5.5 million (IPU, 1994). RTÉ also provides funding to the independent sector outside of IPU activity in terms of funding and/or facilities. In 1994 this figure amounted to £778,000. Expanding the amount of programming from the independent sector extends the range and diversity of Irish-made programming on the schedule (O'Neill, 1995). Many of the commissioned programmes have prime-time slots, a tribute to their quality and an indication of their importance to RTÉ.

2.4 Current circumstances of Irish broadcasting

The Irish broadcasting environment has been recognised as highly competitive since RÉ began transmitting in the 1920s. The availability of the BBC service and later ITV and Channel 4, all acknowledged as broadcasters of quality programming, has determined that RTÉ continues to face stiff competition. Seventy per cent of Irish homes now have a considerable choice of channels

(Finn, 1993). It has been said that RTÉ has been deprived of adequate investment capital throughout its history as the licence has not increased in line with inflation or growing industry costs (Bell, 1988; Mullholland, 1995). The combination of insufficient funding and strong competition makes the efficient functioning of RTÉ more difficult.

The argument could be made that the deregulation of broadcasting in Ireland, rather than bringing about innovation in programme making, broader choice, greater regional production and services or greater public access to cultural production has in fact led to increased homogeneity of programming.[4] Deregulation has generated even greater pressure to maximise audiences in order to maximise advertising revenues and match growing production costs than existed previously. It has been commented in the context of the UK that channels have moved down market as a result of deregulation (Snoddy, 1993). RTÉ has marginalised many of its public service functions in order to streamline the schedule to win larger audiences. This is evident in the area of drama which is expensive to produce. Domestically produced drama is seen to be an important element of the schedule of any broadcaster, however the vast majority of drama transmitted by RTÉ is imported (Deegan, 1994).

The development of the media in Ireland has been impacted upon by the competing forces of the nation and the state. The strength of a culture lies in its ability to appropriate the forms and products of other cultures for its own ends, as well as in its ability to withstand them (Stevenson, 1995). In order to do this, a healthy media production sector, both independent and public, is needed as culture requires support from all sectors of the community. Broadcasting contributes to maintaining social order by articulating a sense of identity and

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[4] Local radio has perhaps been an exception to this as some of the stations have provided a greater forum for expression of regional/local voices.

solidarity. Because culture encompasses the set of meanings and values that informs a way of life, the mission of the state broadcaster should be to contribute to the development of Irish culture in a realistic and progressive manner. A coherent broadcasting policy is needed to aid the creation of a vigorous and innovative national culture (Stokes, 1995; Higgins, 1995). In a society lacking a consensus about national identity, broadcasting could play a valuable role, in helping to construct a consensus about that identity possibly encouraging pluralism. This formula has proved successful in Ireland in the past (Kelly and Rolston, 1995).

The public service broadcaster is holding its own at present against international competitors with greater resources. The main reason for this is that national broadcasters reflect national values, in entertainment, arts, culture, sport, news and current affairs. The national audience remains with the national broadcaster for its interpretation of news and other developments (Finn, 1993). The public service dimension of Irish communications and media systems has eroded quickly in the interests of the market and increased commercialism. Cable delivers programming and services, most of which originate outside of Ireland, predominantly from the US or US-dominated markets (Bell, 1988). Global developments in telecommunications and the information economy have impacted on Ireland's domestic communication policy as elsewhere. Legislation can only bring some order after the dynamic inherent in the communications sector has provoked further change. MacConghail (1984) states that change in broadcasting is more often than not brought about by the need to provide choice. Nonetheless, in a healthy democracy, the state needs an effective critic. The extent to which the media can be said to elaborate a sense of national identity that meshes with the cultural diversity of the groups that comprise that society is a measure of its health and vibrancy.

Broadcasters, especially in the last fifteen years, have understandably been more concerned with how to keep their viewers. There has always been pressure on RTÉ to compete for audiences due to the proximity to the British market. The introduction of satellite through Cablelink, owned in part by RTÉ, further damaged the broadcaster's position and extended the availability of foreign influences. As multi-channel areas increased, particularly in highly populated areas, RTÉ focused its competition policy on these urban areas. Rural programming, once the backbone of RTÉ's output has been sidelined to an extent and urban issues highlighted, as demonstrated by RTÉ's development of a Dublin based soap opera *Fair City*. *Tolka Row* had been the only other significant urban drama on the station, although RTÉ has also been involved with projects such as Roddy Doyle's *Family*, a series which dealt with the grim realities of life in working-class Dublin.

Irish viewers have consistently shown a strong demand for home-produced programmes; a 1988 survey revealed that Irish viewers preferred local programmes to foreign imports. Nine out of the ten top rated shows on RTÉ1 were home produced (RTÉ, 1989). This resulted in a reduction in the use of imports in the schedules in the late 1980s (Hazelkorn, 1996). RTÉ's audience share of peak-time viewing at the start of 1996 was 59.1 per cent (Wood, 1996). It was the performance of domestically produced programmes that prompted RTÉ to fulfil their public service remit more fully (Barbrook, 1992).

There is no apparent agreement on the future development of Irish broadcasting among politicians in Ireland. Conventional political opinion holds that competition between commercial and public service broadcasting will increase the freedom of communications in Ireland, a view held in common with free marketeers across Europe. The other argument is that increased dependency on selling airtime allows the advertisers more control over the content of programmes as certain types of programmes and storylines are more popular. It can be argued that a strong domestic broadcasting organisation, public or commercial, is necessary for the production of programming expressing Irish culture. The availability of electronic media has reinforced major social and cultural changes in Ireland (Barbrook, 1992). The protection of national culture had ceased to be a major aim of the broadcasting policies of the Republic until recently revived by Michael D. Higgins (Mullholland, 1995). In is within this context that the policies pertaining to broadcasting gain even greater relevance. The supporting of a national culture that is outward-looking, progressive and modern seems to be the aim of current regulatory proposals. Thus the debate about the role of public broadcasting, the only form of television broadcasting in Ireland at present, in this effort is highly significant. The financing of this service is also important.

The success of the 'pirate' radio stations greatly contributed to the breaking of the public service monopoly in Ireland as it prompted the Fianna Faíl government to introduce legislation to allow the licensing of commercial radio and television. This coincided with a period when RTÉ was experiencing severe financial difficulties; between 1980 and 1984, expenditure grew by 81% while income grew by only 74% (Bell, 1995). RTÉ funded itself by obtaining an overdraft as the government refused equity financing. The *Review of Radio Telefís Éireann, Report to the Minister for Communications* (1985) by Stokes, Kennedy, Crowley Managment Consultants (SKC) recommended that RTÉ develop an internal market, including the operation and the subcontracting of programming and other services to independent companies. The other main impetus behind this legislation was the desire on the part of Fianna Faíl to introduce another voice onto the broadcasting scene.[5] The regulation of

[5] The party had long felt that RTÉ was not sympathetic in its treatment of the Fianna Faíl government and there was a history of conflict between the party and the national broadcaster

commercial radio stations through the 1988 Radio and Television Act was not based on the protection of the national culture, the basis of previous legislation. The Act also created a national commercial television franchise the justification for which was its provision of a counter-balance to the influx of foreign channels. The frequency it was allotted had been intended at one point to go to a national Irish-language television service. This move highlighted the foregrounding of commercial imperatives in broadcasting at the expense of public service considerations.

New clauses in the 1990 Broadcasting Act introduced a new limit on the amount of advertising time on the RTÉ stations. The total income to RTÉ from advertising was capped to the amount of money granted to the company from the collection of licence fees. The then Minister for Communications, Ray Burke (Fianna Faíl) maintained that RTÉ could make savings by cutting production costs through better resource management. RTÉ was left in a position of trying to meet rising costs with frozen revenues which led to an erosion of the quality of the service provided. The reduction in RTÉ's budget and the drop in the number of commercials screened was however a blow to the independent production sector as well. Ultimately the move damaged RTÉ financially and the legislation also undermined the station's confidence as it demonstrated the vulnerability of the organisation to political whim.

The ultimate aim of the legislation was the establishment of an alternative to RTÉ despite the argument that the expansion of advertising-funded broadcasting had already reached its financial limits. As RTÉ's share of national advertising spending in Ireland fell during the late 1980s, it seems apparent that the commercial radio stations had made some impact on RTÉ's dominance of this market. However, the revenue attracted by the commercial radio stations has not been sufficient to keep all of them in profit due to the limited size of the Irish economy (Hanlon, 1995). This argument can also be applied to the proposed TV3, there is no guarantee that this new commercial station would win a large audience share and thus attract sufficient advertising revenue (Barbrook, 1992). The spend on advertising by Irish companies in 1990 was lower as a proportion of national expenditure than most other European Community states underlines the possibile difficulties.

In the early 1990s not long after the TV3 franchise had been first awarded, the backers had doubts about the financial viability of the station as RTÉ had maintained a strong market presence despite the high level of competition from foreign channels available on cable and satellite (Bell, 1995). Measures were introduced in the 1988 Radio and Television Act to 'level the playing field' between the commercial service and its public competitor by eroding many of the advantages possessed by RTÉ acquired through its long-standing 'monopoly'. In the main, patterns of ownership of new television channels and commercial media organisations cannot be said to be greatly expanding the plurality of broadcasting voices as ownership is tending to concentrate in the hands of a small number of individuals and corporations. However, public service broadcasters, in fulfilling their remits can ensure access to information and entertainment in maintaining a high quality generalist service (O'Neill, 1995). Broadcasting, especially if commercially dependent on advertising and thus on drawing as large an audience as possible, is not encouraged to expand beyond the boundaries of the existing consensus for fear of alienating and losing its audience (Kelly and Rolston, 1995). RTÉ has to earn its living which means that it must hold the audience or risk losing vital advertising revenue. [6] However, it can be argued that it is simply not reasonable to apply full-blooded criteria of public service broadcasting to an organisation which depends for more than half of its income on advertising (O'Tuathaigh, 1984). If people wish to apply the concept of public service to broadcasting then it is reasonable to expect the service to be financed in a manner appropriate to that role.

2.5 RTÉ's Current Position

Ireland has a sophisticated telecommunications network in the MMDS (Multi-point Microwave Distribution System) system and is highly cabled. There is a belief that the communications revolution will necessarily entail a major extension of democratic process and public access. To date, access to new higher specification media technologies has depended largely on the ability of the viewer to pay. However, RTÉ, like many public service organisations, has long been to the forefront in the purchase and implementation of new technologies and are currently investigating their foray into digital broadcasting. The possibilities of digital transmission could bring a new lease of life to public service broadcasters in enabling them to tailor their service more accurately to the needs of specific communities. This is due to the ability to split the transmission spectrum more minutely so that instead of broadcasting three loosely regional variations on a single station, the station could be refined to match the linguistic and cultural programme preferences of a region. The BBC are currently investigating the possibilities for their regional network system (Broadcasting, the Arts and Devolution Conference, Edinburgh, 1996).

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[6] As the only outlet for television advertising in Ireland, RTÉ had a strong relationship with advertisers and advertising agencies and consequently enjoyed huge competition for advertising slots, by 'capping' their advertising revenue the financial well-being of the company was jeopardised.

When the recession of the 1980s occurred, RTÉ was unable to cover rising costs by selling commercial airtime. This crisis accentuated the need to develop a stronger awareness of commercial concerns within RTÉ. A policy of internal restructuring and diversification was implemented. As a result of the measures adopted, RTÉ was able to increase the number of domestically produced programmes, often magazine programmes and quizzes, to half its primetime schedule. However, a large part of this recovery was due to further commercialisation of the company by the end of the decade (Barbrook, 1992). Current expenditure on programming amounts to IR£42 million with an additional IR£17 million being incurred in Television Production Facilities such as sound, lighting, studio maintenance and editing facilities. Marketing and Sales earns an increasingly important percentage of income from radio and television advertisements and sponsorship, while RTÉ Commercial Enterprises Ltd. attracts ancillary revenue from publications, programme sales and merchandising (RTÉ, 1996). RTÉ has a national audience share of 60 per cent. It is increasing its share in multichannel areas (currently an average of 45 per cent) by enhancing its schedule, starting transmission earlier in the morning and continuing later at night. Despite the fragmented nature of the audience, certain programmes still generate national audiences (*Crimeline* being one) and they provide a sense of shared interests and community (news, chat shows, soaps, international sporting events etc.). The limited appeal of some programmes which deal with aspects of Irish culture, such as the Irish language, may attract only limited advertising and may result in their relegation to off-peak broadcast slots. Despite being of a high standard, such programmes generally attract small audiences.

The imperative to be self financing has forced RTÉ to rely on cheaper imports (Gibbons, 1989). The economics of television are such that RTÉ cannot afford to be so specialised in the number of channels and programme services it offers.

RTÉ also competes with far richer British channels. RTÉ has increasingly turned to the 'family audience' as its core target audience on RTÉ1. Increased domestic productions (magazine shows, chat shows, competitions and soaps) have demonstrated this (Kelly and Rolston, 1995). It has been recommended that RTÉ develop the role of publisher broadcaster as this would expand the viewpoints raised and improve quality. RTÉ's inclusion of independent production has been cost-effective and has improved the range of programming represented on the schedule to date.

It has become commonplace to assert that public service broadcasting in Europe is in a state of terminal crisis (Garnham, 1989). It is feared that the proliferation of alternative channels will undermine popular support for publicly funded broadcasting as the licence fee is increasingly perceived as another tax demand on the consumer. In a world of intensifying global competition, both private and public telecommunication and broadcasting companies continue to look to their nation states to secure some measure of competitive advantage (Bell, 1995). In essence, this means that the struggle will remain at national level, to some extent for the foreseeable future, as companies work from a national base first and foremost . The question of whose interests are being served by new regulation is of extreme importance in gaining a more complete understanding of the changes occurring, why they are occurring and what is likely to happen in the future. The commitment of recent Irish goverments to cultural policy and the strengthening of public service aspirations and intervention in the broadcasting and audio-visual industries to this end has been the most optimistic development in this area of policy in a long time.

There will continue to be a need for an indigenous Irish television service, adequate financial provision is essential to the continuation of public service broadcasting in Ireland (MacConghail, 1984). Attempting to combine commercial viability with a public service mandate may have detrimental consequences. This is the double-bind under which RTÉ was set up: it must be self-financing, a stipulation enshrined in the 1926 legislation and continued throughout its history, and it must also play a significant role in the preservation and promotion of Irish culture. Thus, the nature and adequacy of RTÉ's funding remains of concern and importance.

3 The Role of Advertising

3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the use of advertising as a means of funding television with particular but not exclusive reference to public service broadcasting. The historical development of advertising on television is documented and the issues that arise from its employment are assessed. The majority of broadcasting is funded, at least in part, by advertising generated finance. As advertising is a direct manifestation of a commercial interest in television it raises questions of control and competition for broadcasters. Since public service broadcasters which carry advertising find themselves in the position of serving both commercial and public interests, this type of funding can be controversial. It also means that such organisations must directly compete not only for audiences but for revenue with an increasing number of alternative services. However, it also remains unclear and unproven as to whether television advertising is a successful method of promotion, a further factor in its projected usage in the future.

3.1 Advertising as broadcast funding

In 1988, the European Commission established regulations stating that advertising must not exceed fifteen per cent in total of a maximum of twenty per cent in any hour. Religious programmes, news and children's programmes of less than thirty minutes duration must not be interrupted by advertisements; advertisements for tobacco, medicines and medical treatments are prohibited and those for alcohol are heavily restricted (Hirsch and Petersen, 1992). These regulations did not please US interests in their endeavours to further penetrate the European market (Mattelart, 1991).

The value of airtime is determined by its provision of an audience to whom a commercial message can be pitched by advertisers. The worth of a minute of airtime is determined by the total number of people who will potentially be watching the commercial transmitted at that time. This audience figure is translated into a 'rating', a percentage of the total number of viewers available. Buyers of airtime estimate the value of a 'spot' (a unit of commercial airtime) on the basis of the likely audience watching at that time, the estimated demand for the spot among other buyers and an average cost of ratings across the network (in the case of ITV). Airtime is often bought in bulk packages which deliver a certain number of ratings (Sturgess, 1992a).

Arguably the most notable change in the airtime market in the 1990s is the expansion of the supply of airtime from the existence of more commercial channels and their growing penetration of the market (McQuail, de Mateo and Tapper, 1992). An advertising-financed channel's share of the total audience and the commercial audience depends on a number of factors such as the number, reach and success of competitors. The distribution of audiences in a competitive environment is impacted on by the level and pattern of penetration of the new media, the programmes offered by rival stations and the viewing behaviour of the new media households (Sturgess, 1992a). Variations in the penetration of different media into households, the length of time for which different media receive the attention of audiences, and the types of people using different media create differences in the ways media are utilised by advertisers (Picard, 1989). Market size, audience size, network affiliation, and the age of station are some of the variables which affect the demand and price of airtime (Clarke and Bradford, 1992). Consumer expenditure on media has the same characteristics as expenditure on staples such as housing and clothing. Therefore, new media must attract spending from other media rather than spending from other goods and services.

Advertising has historically been a preferred method of finance for broadcasting as it is a way of circumventing the difficulty of realising the value of production directly from the consumer (Garnham and Locksley, 1991). Commercial television was introduced in the UK in 1955, partly in response to lobbying from US advertising agencies. Sponsorship was rejected as a means of funding but advertisers were by then regarding television as a good medium for national advertising (Sinclair, 1987). In Europe, however, the growth of commercial interests in television has been slower but has inexorably spread during the 1980s and 1990s. Like Belgium in 1988, Denmark allowed the introduction of television advertising with various restrictions (Brants and Siune, 1992). In 1989, the Netherlands followed suit while Germany has been slowest to follow the deregulation trail; with advertising still quite curtailed (Mattelart, 1991).

In the US, the world's foremost advertising market, there has been a decline in advertising investment in the major networks; their audience has fallen by more than a third in favour of cable and video, and viewer usage of VCRs (Shergill, 1993). In order to counter the drop in audience, the networks have refused to reduce their tariffs but instead offer shorter spaces; slots were reduced from thirty or sixty seconds to fifteen seconds, with these fifteen second slots comprising thirty eight per cent of total slots in 1989 (Mattelart, 1991). Competition for advertising intensifies the pressure to maximise audiences and places this pressure on all forms of programming, and all days and hours of the schedule. Aiming for anything less than the highest possible audience available is meaningless. The system also bestows on advertisers a sense that they have a right to have their interests served by television, a broadcasting system that is very competitive for advertising fosters great sensitivity to advertiser needs. It encourages competition for mass audiences, for airtime for commercials and encourages the production of familiar, non-threatening programming. In the US, the networks screen programmes for advertisers in advance of their transmission so that they can be assured that they are not advertising around programmes that are controversial or which might alienate their consumers; they are free to withdraw their commercials if they so decide (Blumler, 1991).

The rapid development of satellite television has accelerated the use of television as an advertising medium (Sinclair, 1987). One hundred and seventeen million households in Europe watch an average of sixteen hours television per week compared with thirty three hours per week in the US. In comparison with US forecasted television advertising expenditure of $38,472 million in 1996, European expenditure was forecast to amount to $24,552 million (Zenith Media, 1997).[1] The developments in the European market are due largely to the advent of new technologies of delivery over which Governments have little or no control (Sinclair, 1987). This has been used as a reason to deregulate the industry further and bow to market forces. Before the current deregulated environment, a seller's market prevailed where television channels could dictate their own terms; advertising agencies competed for airtime. This situation persists to a large extent in Ireland as RTÉ is still very dominant in the commercial market, the rate card does not function and there is more or less open bidding on airtime (Gormley, 1996).

[1] In 1988 the US figure was $26 billion and the European expenditure $12 billion (Mooij and Keegan, 1991). There is considerable difficulty in obtaining current data on advertising expenditure as this information is privately owned by companies conducting research and compiling information in the area for advertisers and broadcasters.

As RTÉ faces no serious competition from another Irish national channel at present, its dominance of the advertising market is relatively secure. Its greatest threat to date has been government policy since the late 1980s.[2] Future changes in the Irish market are likely to alter the way the broadcasting system operates and change the overall growth patterns of advertising revenue. This is evidenced by the effect of changes in the UK market where increasing penetration of cable and satellite channels, the separate selling of Channel 4's airtime, and the launch of Channel 5 have created a highly competitive advertising market.[3] ITV currently sells local advertising at a discount which is expected to cause difficulties for Channel 5. Should the new channel be forced to sell advertising at a discount it will not make a profit (Goodwin, 1990). The possible launch of TV3 in Ireland will alter the dynamic of the Irish advertising market comparatively (Sunday Business Post, 1996). The market has become more competitive as UTV and Channel 4 now sell airtime aimed at the Irish market.[4] Studies to date have assumed small changes in supply (Sturgess, 1992) but the advent of a third domestic channel in such a small market would constitute a large change, as would a greater increase in the viewing share of foreign, commercial channels. The change in the Irish market from essentially an RTÉ monopoly to a competitive market would create an even greater incentive for the stations to increase their audience share and consequently their share of advertising revenue.[5] This is likely to increase the amount of commercial viewing, placing RTE's public service remit in a less viable position. Satellite and cable channels can increase the number of advertising minutes they offer; RTÉ (or indeed TV3 should it begin operating) would not be able to offer an

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[2] See previous chapter on the changes brought about by the Broadcasting Act of 1988.

[3] Before the 1990 Broadcasting Act in Britain, ITV was responsible for selling Channel 4's airtime, now the channels are in competition for advertising.

[4] In 1996, RTÉ had an average audience share of 45% in multichannel areas.

[5] In 1996, the spend on television advertising in Ireland amounted to IRL£94.5 million.

increase as they are legally constrained to a certain fixed amount of time per hour.

Advertising, while perhaps not the determining force, has always been a powerful force in shaping the direction of media development (Sinclair, 1987).[6] Although all media compete for the attention of audiences, each provides varying gratifications to audience members, who tend to use a variety of media rather than a single medium to receive messages or information. Competition for advertising revenue exists but is limited to media with similar qualities and which deliver similar types of audience access (Picard, 1989). Television, cable and satellite compete most directly for advertising revenue. Advertisers want access to their targeted audiences at a low price and as supply of airtime increases it is unavoidable that competition will also increase (De Bens, Kelly and Bakke, 1992). In the US, cable penetration in markets resulted in lower prices for advertising time, yet higher prices existed in highly concentrated television markets (Shergill, 1993).

US based transnational corporations tend to favour television advertising above other forms (Sinclair, 1987). Transnational corporations are also best situated to weather recessions in markets as they can offset their decline in weaker markets by their gains in strong ones. Thus, the performance of the national economy directly impacts on the health of the advertising-generated revenues for television. Finance and communication are two highly internationalised sectors which are converging and are the vanguard in the process of globalising the market (Mattelart, 1991).

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[6] The British Broadcasting Act is a case in point, concern on the part of the Conservative Government of the late 1980s for the interests of advertisers was the driving force behind the bill.

Modern television audiences across the world are no longer just consumers of products, they are consumers of TV advertising too, and they have become sophisticated evaluators of that advertising product (Saatchi and Saatchi, 1985). The growing interrelationship of advertising and programming is evidenced by the trend whereby many children's programmes are in fact extended advertising spots with the synergy between toy merchandising and programming continuing to grow (Summers, 1993). Power Rangers, made by Saban, is perhaps one of the best examples of this kind of programming. Disney has also developed the merchandising of its animated films dramatically in the last few years. The synergy of publicity marketing and television is nonetheless problematic as they have very different logics of production (Mattelart, 1991).

It is a truism that it has become increasingly difficult to determine where the programme ends and advertising begins (Wittstock, 1991; Edwards, 1994). Advertisers are increasingly discontent with channelling funds and controlling the appearance of commercials on the screen, and have become major protagonists in the new regime of television (Bell, 1994; Bell, 1990). Procter and Gamble who produced some of the first soap operas in the US, amongst other corporations, continues to pursue prime-time developments. Legislators assume a clearer delineation between commercials and programming than actually exists. The interpenetration of advertising and programme, particularly obvious in children's programming is a response on the part of advertisers to the phenomenon of 'zapping' as it becomes harder to clearly distinguish between the two (Mattelart, 1991; Bell, 1994).

The European Broadcasting Union which incorporates most of the public radio and television stations in Europe has found itself marginalised in EU and Council of Europe debate and legislation about advertising since the early 1980s as the location of decision-making has moved from the national to the international and transnational level (Hirsch and Petersen, 1992). With regard to marketing communication, the world is divided up into areas of similarity as far as culture, trade development and the development of communication channels are concerned (Mooij and Keegan, 1991); geography having less to do with social boundaries than ever before.

Television advertising revenue grew at an average annual rate of 7.1 per cent in the 1980s in Britain. Sturgess et al in their study of 1992 found that the most probable rate of growth of advertising revenue is unlikely to exceed three to four per cent a year in real terms during the 1990s. This drop in growth coupled with an increased share on the part of non-terrestrial broadcasters means that the best case scenario will be an almost static growth in real revenue over the next licence period for ITV and Channel 4. Combined revenue for those stations is estimated to rise from £1,729Stg. million in 1993 to £1,841Stg. million in 2000 (1991 prices).

3.2 Audience Measurement Techniques

In the US, the replacement of the sponsorship system with spot advertising in the 1960s and 1970s inaugurated a new form of commercial influence on programming. The size of audience attracted by a programme became the accepted measurement of its worth. The secondary concern was the composition in socio-economic terms of that audience (Gandy, 1990). Advertisers buy various spots which give them access to audiences selected on the basis of their demographic features and their 'cost per thousand' (CPM). This is the media's basis of charging for such access and is a comparative measure of advertising costs for the advertiser (Sinclair, 1987). Rating is the statistically estimated percentage of persons or homes exposed to a particular print or broadcast vehicle in the survey area (usually a country) (Mooij and Keegan, 1991). The average rating is the percentage of persons or homes tuned to a specific programme during the average minute of programme duration. Cost per rating point relates the cost of the message unit to the audience rating, allowing comparison of media vehicles. Advertisers do not necessarily want large audiences as such but will advertise if the demographics show that television can deliver larger numbers of a certain target audience over another medium (Carter, 1993). Ratings form the basis on which business is conducted (Hulten and Brants, 1992). They have also come to dominate the selection and programming of television content. While there is an element of discrimination on the part of advertisers regarding the audience, the audience maximising imperative still exists for broadcasters as they know that if one advertiser does not want a particular audience another advertiser probably will (Sinclair, 1987).

The area of audience measurement is effectively controlled by two companies: A.C. Nielsen (a US company) and AGB Research (a British company) although there are many others. Such companies do not only provide an audience measurement service; several feed the advertisers directly or indirectly with information concerning the effects of their investment in advertising on the movement of their products (Mattelart, 1991). One of the newest developments in audience measurement is the scanner which is attached to the television receiver and registers the presence of an audience, the channel being viewed and the length of time. It also measures the viewer's compliance with what is being watched since each member of the household signals their presence by pressing their own identification button.

The refined objective of audience measurement is to move from the simple counting of the audience to counting levels of attention because numbers give a false sense of security to advertisers and may not be an accurate representation of the actual audience for a programme or channel. In addition, the most minute non-programmed gesture jams up the whole apparatus of calculation. Children in particular do not consistently push the buttons they are supposed to when watching television. Another difficulty is that people sitting in front of a television set are not necessarily watching it. Europe has seen the development of a device which can count the number of viewers and also recognise the channel viewed and video recorders in use, without human intervention. This provides an instantaneous audience reading whereby advertisers and broadcasters can trace the reception of a transmission. This system, for example, can extract data on the number of women aged between thirty and forty years watching a given channel at a given hour on a given day. The system is comprised of a receiver containing a minuscule camera with a battery of recorders which are software controlled (Mattelart, 1991).

Corporate efforts seems directed towards the creation of integrated but diversified global media empires (Sinclair, 1987). Cross-border television is mostly of interest for international advertising where there is deliberate spillover.[7] Incidental spillover is only of use if it reaches a large enough group in the spillover area (Mooij and Keegan, 1991). There has also been a trend towards 'lifestyle' studies which attempt to categorise and define the socio-cultural mentalities of individuals. This allows trends in behaviour to be registered but without identification of their origins or causes. Marketing pursues the dream of predicting behaviour and perhaps managing to control it, largely through developments in the assessment of the size and behaviour of the audience (Mattelart, 1991).

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[7] 'Spillover' occurs when a channel can be received in places outside of its franchise area or the geographical area it is intended to cover.

3.3 Efficacy of Television Advertising

> Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted. The trouble is, I don't know which half.
>
> \- William H. Lever, founder of Lever Brothers.

The majority of forecasts on the future growth and distribution of advertising revenues have been based on the extrapolation of past trends in expenditure (Sturgess, 1992a). This is too simplistic as the dynamics of the new market are as yet unfolding and the past is an inadequate basis on which to judge the future of broadcasting markets. This is due to the gargantuan changes in the market caused by changes in technology and in society.

Market segmentation results in variance of the types of audience available to advertisers (Picard, 1989). Most media differentiate themselves from their competitors and try to segment their audiences. The reach of a channel is a function of the proportion of total households receiving the channel and the level of appeal of the programmes broadcast by the channel. A newly-launched channel must promptly increase the number of households receiving the channel and broadcast programming with large scale appeal in order to attract viewers away from established channels (Bell, 1991). Placing commercials in segregated blocks instead of in periodic intervals within programmes can be argued to prevent the ratings system from dominating programming (Sinclair, 1987). RTÉ uses the latter method which may server advertiser interests rather better. It is unlikely that the scheduling policy (programming or advertisements) of existing channels will remain the same in response to competition. However, the nature of changes to programming policies is as yet uncertain. Channels have the option to increase their domestically-produced output or to increase the number of 'sure things' such as situation comedies, soap operas or game shows imported from the US and other large markets (De Bens, Kelly and Bakke, 1992) .

Studies carried out by Jacoby et al (1980) suggest that television, the medium that carries most advertising for certain types of products, is poor at communicating product information, particularly information of a complex nature. Therefore, it is difficult to see how television advertising fulfils an informative function about consumer goods, a defence often offered by advertisers and agencies. It can be argued that actual experience of products and more immediate social and situational influences are greater forces in determining purchasing behaviour (Sinclair, 1987). Advertising can thus be argued to have quite a restricted ability to persuade. One of the main functions of advertising is in 'branding' products thereby rendering them easily identifiable and hopefully building a loyalty among consumers to the brand (Carter, 1994). Companies which seek national or international brand name recognition find television the most suitable medium for conveying their message to a mass audience (Picard, 1989). Advertiser demand will never be satisfied by substituting one medium for another; different media suit different types of advertising. For example, advertising that is more information-heavy is best suited to print media rather than audio-visual media.

Advertisers and their agencies are observing which technologies are being adopted and by whom and how they can access these audiences for advertising. Cable, for example, has enabled commercial advertising to circumvent the restrictions put in place by some governments in Europe (Sinclair, 1987). It is as yet unclear as to how the media will adapt in order to deliver audiences to advertisers. The media systems which will dominate the market are those which are most able to provide access to the desired audiences of transnational marketers (Sturgess, 1991). Nevertheless, the influence of transnational media may be impeded by the strength and endurance of local cultures (Kleinsteuber, 1992). Sky and Superchannel encountered difficulties when their strategy consisted of beaming exclusively English language programming from the UK into Europe as it did not take account of the disparate nature of European cultures (Brants and Siune, 1992). Murdoch, pioneer of the supra-national channel decided to change tack and concentrate his channels on the British market. The subtleties of local cultural variations cannot be underestimated or overlooked. The ability of viewers to 'zap' commercial breaks, or record programmes and fast-forward the breaks is a large concern for advertisers and undermines the likely effectiveness of television as an advertising medium. The paradox exists that technology offers increasing opportunities to refine targeting yet advertising on television is still aimed at a mass audience.

Many of the top advertising agencies and groups are diversifying into design, graphics, market research, sales promotion, direct marketing, audio-visual production, video communication groups, sponsorship and public relations. Spending by this 'below the line' sector has steadily outpaced 'above the line' expenditures.[8] In the late 1980s, these non-media activities grew by 102 per cent overall (Mattelart, 1991). Point of sales promotion is increasing in importance as this is where two-thirds of purchasing decisions are made (Cuddihy, Uí Ghallachoir and Hayden, 1995). There now exist new terms such as infomercials, advertorials, Pubbligiornalismo, Publireportage which erode the demarcation between news and commercials, advertising and editorial, publicity and journalism, publicity and reportage, between promotional surface and editorial content and ultimately advertising and the programme. These

[8] 'Above the line' in advertising terms originally meant those media which paid commission to advertising agencies: press, radio, television, outdoor advertising and cinema. 'Below the line' is used for direct mail, exhibitions, point of sale displays etc. The terms have lost a great deal of their significance due to the interpenetration of these areas and the huge growth of non-media activity.

developments in integrated communications are evidence of the advertising industry proposing and creating its own formulae for television, creating genres that are more in harmony with the modes of advertising.

Micro-marketing adopts a more tailored or niche approach in following the splintering of the market and the growing heterogeneity of the public, as well as the relative decline of mass-marketing with its concept of homogeneity of customer and market (Paliwoda, 1993). The globalisation of the media stimulates the global campaigns which now address themselves to segmented audiences, identifiable by their particular interests, their lifestyles or their occupation. The effect of advertising in its aim of 'global persuasion' may be relative due to the divergence of societies (De Mooij and Keegan, 1991). Parallel to this segmentation, the time has come for transnational advertisers to 'capitalise on universally recognised cultural symbols and references...' (Saatchi and Saatchi, 1985). Since contemporary values have ceased to be homogenous and fixed it is not only possible but desirable to aim different messages at different groups. It seems that paradoxically, there is a convergence and divergence of audiences taking place. The convergence results from the increasing common cultural ground bestowed by television which is unrelated to notions of 'local' or 'national' culture, while the divergence is due to the breaking of these national and local links and the resulting fragmentation of social groups.

Advertisers vociferously defend their right to freedom of commercial speech and the concept of free markets and free competition through the World Federation of Advertisers, set up in 1953 which is involved in lobbying issues in both national and supra-national (International Advertising Association, 1995). Their preferred scenario was to have regulation of the advertising industry left to itself. The short term objective of European advertisers had been to push back the limits of the spaces closed by law to advertising investment as the new public space becomes driven more and more by 'images'.

The greatest difficulty faced by advertising is presented by the consumer. The greater the exposure they experience, the less they remember. Advertising misses the target, the great majority of messages get lost, are not decoded, not remembered, or are interpreted according to some other code (Mattelart, 1991). A 1988 poll in France revealed that eighty four per cent of people polled believed that advertising had reached saturation level; sixty seven per cent were against the interruption of films, forty one per cent found the breaks in the news irritating. Channel jumping or 'zapping' went up from eighteen to twenty nine per cent. Approximately eighty five per cent of messages do not persuade because they are not seen or heard, while another five to ten per cent although registered are not believed. At least half of those watching television at any given moment do not tune into the most popular programme on at that time (Barwise and Ehrenberg, 1988).

There is little hard evidence on the benefits or costs of advertising. Advertisers themselves seem unconvinced of its efficacy. The huge increase in spot advertising on both public and private television in Italy caused advertisers to try to contain the bombardment out of a fear of negative reactions from the audience (Mazzoleni, 1991). This scenario may be a warning to advertisers in other countries should the number of channels and the resulting intensification of competition continue to grow. Television viewers have always tried to avoid commercials to some degree; at present viewers have more methods than ever at their disposal to aid the avoidance of commercials (Sepstrup, 1991). Clutter renders the task of successfully transmitting a persuasive message even more difficult and the presence of a large number of channels with homogenous content further facilitates zapping.

Advertisers have adopted a number of approaches to counter zapping. The first, that of the strong plot and soft sell, involves the commercial focusing on the product to a very limited degree and creating a form and content for the commercial that renders it difficult to identify as an advertisement (Bell, 1990). The second, the short commercial approach, involves limiting the length of commercials to fifteen seconds. A third strategy involves integrative measures which endeavour to break down the distinction between advertising and programmes. These integrative measures include i) programme-like advertising, ii) advertiser-initiated product-related shows, iii) advertiser-initiated non-product related shows, and iv) programmes and channels which specialise only in advertising and selling (Sepstrup, 1991).

3.4 Current state of the advertising market

In the 1980s advertising revenue grew rapidly due to the growth experienced by the US and UK economies in particular but this growth collapsed at the end of the decade due to economic recession. The Advertising Association in the UK predicted in 1990 that real growth would fall that year by four per cent and recovery was not expected before 1992. In 1991, expenditure on television advertising was estimated at £2,397Stg. million by the Advertising Association in the UK, in 1995 this figure had increased to £3,115Stg. million (Zenith Media, 1997). It is significant that television advertising expenditure is more volatile than consumers' expenditure but less volatile than company profits (Sturgess, 1992a). It is also extremely difficult to predict the likely development of the television advertising market due to the complexity of anticipating the effects of policies such as deregulation.

There are two main macroeconomic influences on the demand for television airtime; consumer expenditure and company profits. Real growth in either of these usually produces an increase in demand for television airtime, regardless of the price of that airtime (Meenaghan, 1995a). A rise in the price of commercial airtime does not necessarily lead to an increase in the supply as the number of minutes a channel can dedicate to commercials is usually limited by their regulatory body. In the case of RTÉ, the station is allowed to broadcast 7.5 minutes of advertising per hour. An increased number of channels does not necessarily bring with it an increase in the total number of viewers. In the UK despite the fact that ITV and Channel 4's longer transmission time has almost doubled output, average weekly viewing of terrestrial commercial channels only grew by two per cent between 1981 and 1991 (Sturgess, 1992a). Despite the growth of satellite, cable and video viewing, consumption of television has remained around 25 to 26 hours per person per week. In Ireland the average consumption of television is only slightly higher at 26.29 hours per person per week.

There is much speculation about the rate of growth of the new media and its likely impact on household penetration. If the average price for airtime were to remain the static, a growth in supply would equal an accompanying increase in revenue. If, conversely, price were to decrease, total revenue may increase by less, remain the same or even decrease. The impact of the increase in supply depends upon how much it affects price. Forecasts of combined cable and satellite penetration in the UK, for example, by the year 2000 range from a high of fifty nine per cent to a low of forty per cent (Sturgess, 1992b). However, it seems likely that the increase in the amount of airtime available as a result of the establishment of new channels will depress prices and cause revenues to grow more slowly. This does not augur well even for well established channels, while new services may not achieve great market penetration, their presence in the marketplace will adversely affect the advertising revenues attracted by all broadcasters. Perhaps the most realistic assumption is that existing channels will experience disproportionate losses as a result of the new channels (Sturgess, 1992a).

It appears that any growth in advertising will probably be absorbed by the new channels. The pressures on the commercial sector will accentuate the need to reduce costs and increase audience share (Lynn and Olin, 1992). In order to forecast the future of television advertising revenue predictions are needed for the take-up of new media, the share of audiences that each channel can expect and the discount or premium at which each channel will sell its airtime (Sturgess, 1992a). Expenditure on advertising remains relatively constant as a portion of the national economy; the addition of new media would seem to result in a reallocation of the existing expenditure rather than in increased spending (Picard, 1989).

3.5 Advertising and Public Service Broadcasting

Competition for advertising revenue tends to produce mass audience high cost programming in peak time and low cost programming at other times (Sturgess, 1992a). The experience of the US market suggests that the television market favours established channels. It is not an unreasonable expectation that commercial channels will compete more aggressively for audiences as this directly impacts on their funding (Bell, 1991; De Bens, Kelly and Bakke, 1992; Clarke and Bradford, 1992). Market forces and the inability of the market to sustain innumerable channels are potentially as great a threat as protective legislative policies. The share of revenue between commercial channels will also be dependent on their audience share and the price they can charge advertisers for delivering audiences. If relatively undifferentiated audiences are bought and sold, then the share of revenue of each broadcaster will be proportional to its share of the commercial audience. However, if there is some kind of differentiation in the type of audience delivered by each channel, then revenue may be allocated unevenly between channels depending on the nature of the audience they attract.[9] Advertising supported broadcasting tends to narrow the demographic appeals of programmes. The broad-based audience that advertisers and thus broadcasters seek to attract tends to exclude programming of interest to the elderly, adolescents and the disadvantaged in society (Blumler, 1991). The ramifications of this for public service broadcasters may be severe as their audience share could decline and the type of programming they are mandated to provide may not attract advertiser support.

A trend towards programme-led airtime buying which more precisely targets audiences would facilitate a degree of price discrimination based on the value of that audience to advertisers (Meenaghan, 1995). This is premised on the likelihood that narrowcasting to ABC 1 demographic groups, traditionally light viewers of television, would be successful. This might work to the advantage of stations, PSB or commercial, who succeed in broadcasting to young professionals with large disposable incomes but discriminates against programmes of 'minority' appeal, whether the minority is less well off or simply a small group. The value of differentiated audience-driven selling of airtime will rise as the audience fragments. Increasing available advertising time, however, does not change the quantity of time desired by advertisers. The additional quantity of advertising time supplied to the market by the new stations results in the marginal cost for the advertising time and its price growing closer together, thus reducing the profit each produces for broadcasters (Picard, 1989).

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[9] Channel 4 is a case in point. Despite a relatively low total audience share, the channel has the advantage of attracting young, upwardly-mobile audiences which are valuable to advertisers (Thompson, 1993).

The 'cost per thousand' imperative influences broadcasters towards programmes with popular formats with wide appeal. This can lead to a degree of discrimination against minority programming and programmes that attract 'less valuable' audiences. Broadcasters could be argued to be impelled less towards the activity of giving viewers what they want than that of giving advertisers what they want. It is important to note that ratings measure how many people are watching a programme, not whether they enjoy it or appreciate it (Sinclair, 1987). Competition between the schedules of rival broadcasters is usually on the basis of a narrow spectrum of commercially proven genres of programmes. Commercially competitive television, while often causing a narrowing of programme range does not totally suppress quality as is evident in the large number of American productions of quality produced by the networks. These productions are not limited to the area of entertainment, they extend to current affairs; *60 Minutes* being a case in point.

Commercial television can be versatile and high quality if not competing for advertising revenue as there is no latitude for low ratings (Blumler, 1991). This competition causes the lowest common denominator factor to come into play whereby programming must be acceptable to the largest possible number of viewers (Sepstrup, 1991). This may limit the range of programmes, points of view expressed and the complexity of topics. It can be contended that the system of maximising audiences by favouring programming with immediate appeal as opposed to the exploration of meaning and a build-up of involvement predominates. Advertisers require an untroubled comfortable audience and contrarily, high involvement. The two do not easily go hand in hand.

Programming and consequently the audience is being 'flattened', that is to say that common, shared values are foregrounded to try to generate as universal an appeal as possible. Unusual programmes have less chance of being produced and the treatment of public issues is constrained as documentaries are not among the most popular genres of programmes. It appears that if competition for advertising increases, television stations will be forced to try to win audiences with entertainment, movies, sports and popular music (De Bens, Kelly and Bakke, 1992). However, it has been suggested that advertisers could buy a total number of viewer exposures and a number of spots sufficient to meet them. This would mean that advertisers would not pick their own spots on the schedule and therefore their level of influence, overt, covert or imagined by broadcasters, would be reduced (Blumler, 1991)

The general increase in the number of channels is perceived to imply a need for more programmes. This stimulates co-production, programme bartering, televising of sports events (albeit with higher rights fees) and the development of informal networks and facilitates multi-media synergy (De Mooij and Keegan, 1991). In Europe developments in satellite transmission are greatly influencing international advertising practice and increasing its complexity. Technologically there are no limitations, limitations result from language barriers and national legislation (Mazzoleni and Palmer, 1992; De Bens, Kelly and Bakke, 1992). Deregulation will gradually remove legislative barriers although many countries will still try to protect their cultural heritage.

A public service system is defined ultimately not by its source of revenue but by the nature of the system within which the revenue flows (Blumler and Nossiter, 1991). British broadcasters have pursued large audiences despite legislative protection and their experience would lend credence to the argument that when more demanding programmes are given status in the schedules and adequate resources, viewers will choose to watch. Traditionally in Europe, state operated broadcasters have had to subsidise themselves by carrying commercial advertising but this was mainly done on their own terms. This degree of selfdetermination is being eroded by the pressure of increasing competition for funding in order to survive. Quality will decline if the broadcaster is forced to chase mass audiences in order to attract sponsors (Brautmeir, 1995). Advertising is a major source of funding for European television (Hurard, 1995). An increase in advertising revenues and a static situation of the licence fee constitutes a threat to the independence of the media. The kinds of programmes that were once widely available on terrestrial channels are now being transferred to premium rate services so the viewer has to pay a lot more for what was once available by paying the licence fee (Mitchell, 1995). Bell (1991) contended that, as finances grow tighter in television, there are likely to be more opportunities to develop advertiser-funded programmes in the future. This would appear to be borne out by the increase in the number of such programmes in the European market.

The 1980s saw the expansion of the space occupied on television and across most media by advertising world-wide. However, more choice does not necessarily mean better choice (Stringer, 1990). In the near future the arrangement of audiovisual systems will be based on the flexibility of the market for commercials and sponsorship (Mattelart, 1991). The process of deregulation and privatisation of the systems of information and communication have permitted access to that which had previously in the name of public service and interest, or the protection of vulnerable categories of the population, been kept closed. Most of the public service broadcasters around the world are advertising financed to some extent (Meek, 1995). The crisis in public service grows ever deeper, not only in terms of what public institutions represent but also in the function of these institutions; this constitutes a major cultural change. The discourses of advertising encourage consumption and invite a consumerist subject position (Dahlgren, 1995). Despite the lack of success of advertising campaigns or the scepticism of the audience, everyday practices and social relations have become commodified. The patronage of corporations and business is increasingly taking the place of public funding, undermining conceptions of responsibility and citizenship. The growth of commercial financing of public broadcasting is necessitated by the persistent need for funds which are not always forthcoming from the public purse, for whatever reason. As a consequence of this, there has been and continues to be an increase in the sponsorship of television programmes. However, the concern exists that sponsorship of programmes may lead to the presentation of non-controversial, non-distracting, non-significant, non-artistic and consumption orientated programming (Sepstrup, 1991). In the light of this, a critical examination of the history and role of sponsorship is necessary.

4 Sponsorship

4.0 Introduction

This chapter documents the development of sponsorship from its beginnings in the film industry in the US to its present usage in funding television programmes. The difficulties posed by the blurred distinctions between sponsorship, barter and product placement are discussed, as evidenced by the difficulty in defining each practice in a comprehensive and meaningful manner, most notably sponsorship. The advantages and disadvantages of programme sponsorship are reviewed as fully as possible in order to best present an evaluation of the place of sponsorship. It is acknowledged that the use of sponsorship to fund programmes in public service broadcasting is problematic. However, this is not sufficient reason to abandon an examination of the practice as it is without doubt a growing source of funding and merits reasoned consideration.

4.1 Historical development of Sponsorship

It is a fallacy to assume that sponsorship is a recent development in the funding of broadcasting. Sponsors have been involved in one way or another since the inception of both radio and television in a greater variety of ways than paying for a credit. Sponsorship began in Hollywood around 1916 and moved to radio and then television, initially and mainly in the US (Ford and Ford, 1993). The 1927 Radio Act in the US gave companies the ability to develop commercial sponsorship of radio as an official system of funding. This system gave the sponsor the right to use the time bought as they wished (Sinclair, 1989). Although some sponsors used the time to present their commercial message directly, others established their identity through entertainment programmes. In the US these sponsors later became advertisers which in turn became the norm both there and in Europe. However, it was as sponsors that they played a large part in the development of commercial television and continue to play a significant role in the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in the US.

As film-making became an industry in its own right, the symbiosis between marketing and movies began. American corporations recognised the potential synergy between advertising and film, and as early as 1916 began advertising through that medium. As the industry grew and required capital to continue growing, studio executives sought financial support from sponsors. The sponsorship of films was linked to other merchandising and marketing activities; consumer goods such as refrigerators and cookers were featured in films and then featured in advertisements in similar settings. The emphasis of early films on luxury consumer goods was often a result of covert sponsorship deals (Ford and Ford, 1993). By the 1930s it was not unusual for studios to have tie-ins with manufacturers but as some of these films were such crude vehicles for advertising they attracted much criticism. Studios continued to receive timely publicity campaigns in exchange for showing the manufacturer's product in their film.[1] Disney's history of merchandising began in 1930 with the exploitation of the character Mickey Mouse selling over $7 million worth of products with Disney imprints in 1934 (Eaton and Dominick, 1991).[2] As radio was closely linked with Hollywood studios from the 1930s it is hardly

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[1] In the early 1930s Warner Bros. films contain a large number of Buick cars and General Electric refrigerators.

[2] Merchandising of Disney products accounts for over 10 per cent of Disney's total profits.

surprising that it borrowed its sponsorship ethos. Studios served their sponsor's interests by allowing their stars to appear in radio dramas which were owned and produced by the sponsor. Sponsor interests had not inconsiderable influence in the development of radio in the US and later television as the commercial benefits of the heady combination of entertainment and marketing were evident.

While the influence of the BBC caused many broadcasting organisations outside the US not to be dominated by sponsors, the success of US television programmes globally saw the influence of sponsors extend outside the American market.[3] Sponsors helped to create a thriving radio industry but there were also a series of scandals where programmes often existed to serve the interests of companies by improving or repairing their image. The success of the medium allowed for programmes that served public as well as corporate interest as in the case of news and analysis programmes and a diversity of opinions. The radio networks promoted public debate within a commercial system, particularly in the turbulent late 1930s. During wartime however, sponsors used the medium for self-promotion that would pay a dividend once the war was over in terms of public relations (Ford and Ford, 1993). The Advertising Council, the US regulatory body that succeeded the War Advertising Council which had been responsible for deciding which messages were to be broadcast, delegated a large degree of control over broadcasting to sponsors and advertisers.

This control was established as television began to be seriously developed as a medium in the 1950s, assisted by the fact that the major radio networks also came to dominate television. Television soon surpassed the other media as a

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[3] The BBC did have some programme sponsorship in its early days (Ford and Ford, 1993).

disseminator of advertising messages causing cinemas to close and radio ratings to drop.[4] As this new medium became part of the daily life of Americans, its combination of advertising and entertainment made it a powerful promoter of brands and the consumer society (Barnow, 1978). The advent of quiz and games shows allowed sponsors even greater control as contestants promoted products in exchange for gifts. This era marked a shift in the role of the sponsor from one which was socially-orientated and responsible to a totally consumerist one. Educational shows had little or no place in the commercial television sphere and were marginalised and eventually disappeared. The sponsor came to dominate the television industry shaping the development of programming and genres of programming for its own ends.

Soap operas began on radio for a female audience with the aim of influencing the purchasing of domestic consumer goods. The genre was successfully transferred onto television where the control of the programmes rested with the sponsor rather than the broadcaster. The programmes were designed with a target audience in mind by advertising agencies who supervised the production and were provided to the networks to accompany the commercial airtime bought by the sponsor (Ford and Ford, 1993). Many high quality dramas were also supported by sponsors during the 1940s and 1950s such as *Twelve Angry Men* and *Marty*. In general this arrangement was a success but by the mid-1950s sponsors were turning to episodic series which were safer and more formulaic (Barnow, 1978). Many of these series were westerns, action adventures, and situation comedies which had appeal outside the US. *I Love Lucy* is an example of one such series which was sponsored and controlled by a cigarette company, Philip Morris. Documentary programmes were also

[4] By 1952 television accounted for seventy per cent of all advertising revenues.

sponsored. AT&T sponsored documentaries that contained a noticeable number of products and were popular as schedule fillers.

The US networks developed the magazine genre as a way of gaining control over programming from sponsors (Barnow, 1982). Control became an issue in part due to the scandals of 1959, the most infamous of which occurred on the show *Twenty One* where a contestant, Charles Van Doreen cheated, assisted by the producers. It transpired that other shows had been rigged and the control of the shows passed to the networks. Advertising spots around the programme were sold, in essence transferring the basis of the value of the programme to its popularity which rendered the advertising airtime around it valuable. While this change created a sense of unease in advertisers at the time it has since become the modus operandi of television advertising whereas sponsorship is now a cause of unease and suspicion on the part of advertisers. Programmes were designed in many instances specifically to cater for advertiser needs and this became normative. By the 1970s however, the sponsorship system had been overtaken by schedule and spot advertising as part of the networks assumption of greater control (Sinclair, 1989).

The new regime exerts considerable influence on programming as it was essentially a consumer delivery enterprise, vestiges of sponsorship remained in the system nonetheless. This continues today as Procter and Gamble for instance, produce their own soap operas. The popularity of soaps has endured and most countries now produce their own domestic versions. Soaps are valuable to sponsors as they traditionally attract and keep the valuable 'housewife' audience and now attract a wider audience of students, teenagers, older people and a wider age-band of women (Mattelart, 1991). They serve advertiser interests by attracting the audience back, week after week. Many soaps incorporate 'plugs' for a variety of advertisers in the places, products, and life-styles they depict. In the market of today, the growing syndication market and the desperate need for revenue are facilitating a great deal of latitude for sponsors to again devise programmes to fit their requirements.

While sponsorship predominantly concerned itself with commercial television in the US, it was also employed by public television. The Ford Foundation in the 1960s helped establish a network of educational stations called National Educational Television which received an annual grant of $3-6 million and formed the beginning of the Public Broadcasting System. A series *Omnibus* was produced which won awards and acclaim but did not inspire similar efforts (Ford and Ford, 1993). The NET could only produce cheap programming that was not particularly popular and as a result approached corporate sponsors for funding. Some stations were successful in this but it caused conflict with commercial competitors. Commercial plugs were not allowed on educational channels but anyone who provided funding was to be included in the credits. Many channels had established productive relationships with corporate sponsors and in the 1960s more public and federal support was forthcoming (Barnow, 1982). The public television system as it is today was established in 1967 and was divided into three areas:

i. the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a policy making overseer;

ii. the Public Broadcasting System, the actual network; and

iii. the Federal Government.

PBS offered programming that was different from that offered by the commercial stations in both content and style. Viewer donations were part of the funding of the network. Lack of political support under President Richard Nixon caused it to concentrate primarily on cultural programming. This was assisted by increasing corporate support as PBS was seen as useful from a public relations perspective. PBS and its sponsors also helped to fund British productions by co-producing them. Support from Federal government and corporate sponsors has contributed greatly to the quality of PBS although it has a small audience share (approximately four to five per cent). However, the demographic make-up of this audience is attractive to sponsors as they tend to be of a higher socio-economic group (Ford and Ford, 1993). PBS is competing in a highly contested market and trades on the public relations value of sponsoring its programmes as it cannot really contend for commercial advertising. It has been argued that the reliance on corporate sponsors has caused the Public Broadcasting System to deal with less controversial issues, nonetheless it has made a valuable contribution to American and British television.[5] The need for funding provides for a greater consideration of sponsor requirements in public as in commercial television. As with other broadcasters, PBS favours entertainment rather than informational programming and tends to concentrate on cultural and educational programmes (Blumler, 1991).

4.2 Sponsorship, advantages and disadvantages

> ...the communications revolution is impacting on traditional advertising and leading to media fragmentation, audience saturation and the need to further segment target audiences. Sponsorship provides the opportunity to develop alternative ways of communicating with customers and opens up vast possibilities for the development of commercial communications in the future.
>
> - Association of Advertisers in Ireland, 1995

[5] PBS co-produced many quality programmes with British producers such as *The Forsythe Saga, Poldark, Jude the Obscure, War and Peace* and *The Ascent of Man.*

Sponsorship, in common parlance, is a relatively recent phenomenon in European broadcasting which would seem to be ripe for development by broadcasters and advertisers alike. In essence it means that a company or corporation is explicitly associated with a programme by paying for a credit. The term sponsorship is generally used in television to describe the direct or indirect financing of a programme by an outside party not involved in broadcasting with the aim of promoting itself. The European Convention on Transfrontier Television in 1989 defined it as;

> the participation of a natural or legal person, who is not engaged in broadcasting activities or in the production of audiovisual works, in the direct or indirect financing of a programme with a view to promoting the name, trademark or image of that person.

It could be suggested that sponsorship can also facilitate the promotion of the activities and other direct or indirect commercial activities of the sponsor. Perhaps it is even possible to expand the definition of sponsorship to include the purchase and exploitation of a relationship between a programme and its audience (Barnett, 1990; De Mooij and Keegan, 1991). Sponsorship allows broadcasters to raise finance from advertisers in addition to that raised from the sale of commercial airtime (Sturgess, 1992b). Sponsorship money goes to the producer of the programme and thus reduces its cost, thereby reducing the risk on the part of the broadcaster. In some sponsorship arrangements, the sponsor may also negotiate preferential advertising slots for their company.[6] The sponsor is usually credited with a voice-over or caption or both at the start and end of the programme and in many cases in brief pieces in and out of

[6] It is felt by some experts that the most effective usage of sponsorship is when it is used in conjunction with conventional advertising spots around the programme (McDonald, 1991).

advertising breaks.[7] Sponsorship involves a business transaction and as such does not directly represent patronage or philanthropy (Thwaites, 1994).

The relationship between the cost of the deal and its value to the sponsor dictates the level of demand for that deal. Hence, estimating the value of a sponsorship is problematic and largely speculative (Tobin, 1990; Carter, 1995b). From an economic stance, sponsorship tends to be evaluated in terms of the opportunity cost of buying airtime or the 'airtime equivalence net cost'. This is based on converting a sponsorship deal into an amount of commercial exposures that can be valued at market rates. This has generally been related to the amount of money paid for previous sponsorships but this carries with it inherent difficulties as comparing programmes from different genres is complex; account must be taken of audience loyalty and the composition of the audience which the programme attracts. In essence, the sponsorship is converted into an airtime equivalent volume which is valued at current market rates for airtime. Multipliers are applied to this to account for any positive or negative factors that may affect the efficacy of the sponsorship package (Sturgess, 1992b). The purpose of this process is to enable the sponsor to compare the deal on offer with the cost of buying the equivalent amount of airtime and to enable the broadcaster or producer to contrast it with the amount of revenue that could be gained from selling the airtime in spots.

Sponsorship is considerably less developed in the UK than in the US and some other European countries and less developed again in Ireland (Meenaghan, 1995). It was estimated that sponsorship was worth about £7 million in the UK in 1990 (Sturgess, 1992b). This has unquestionably grown significantly since then. The sponsorship of *Coronation St.* by Cadbury was

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[7] These credits generally take the form of 'Brought to you by.....' and 'In association with......'.

rumoured to be worth £10Stg. million to Granada, the producers of the programme (MacDonald, 1996). This is a considerable evolution from the £300,000 paid by International Distillers and Vintners for the sponsorship of six episodes of *Rumpole of the Bailey* in 1991 (Powell, 1991).[8] 1992 saw the sponsorship of *Inspector Morse,* ITV's highest rated drama (Hidalgo, 1992). At that time, not all of the programmes offered by ITV to sponsors were taken up, however commentators did believe that the market for sponsorship would grow and this has certainly proved to be the case.

The use of a sponsor's logo in association with a programme has characterised the sponsor-programme relationship in British television to date. However, on programmes such as the *Coca Cola Chart Show* on MTV there is a logo on-screen for the duration of the programme (De Mooij and Keegan, 1991).[9] In this way, sponsorship does offer the advantage of there being less likelihood of the audience missing the advertiser's presence on screen if their name is attached to the programme rather than in an advertising break (Barnett, 1990; Turner, 1989). While there may be scepticism on the part of viewers about sponsorship, a relationship has been shown to exist between the popularity of a brand and its having a high sponsorship and advertising profile (Hoek, Gendall and Stockdale, 1993). Sponsorship also facilitates more careful selection of an appropriate environment in which to present the name/logo or product/service of a company. In fact, sponsorship that promotes the company name reflects well on the products or services offered by that company

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[8] ITVA's (Independent Television Network Association) research figures in February 1992 showed that Croft's (the brand that sponsored *Rumpole of the Bailey*) image was boosted by 4 points as a result of the sponsorship (Hidalgo, 1992).

[9] This phenomenon has spread to television station who now 'brand' certain segments of the schedule such as 'Den TV' and 'The Swamp', two children's strands on Network 2.

(Witcher, Craigen and Culligan 1991; Wragg, 1994). The growth of sponsorship in recent times is largely attributable to the necessity of breaking through media clutter to reach an audience (Crowley, 1991). The sponsorship may also have the benefit of longevity in some cases if the programme is a success and is rerun (Turner, 1989). Many brands or companies that have been in existence for a long time have little opportunity for media exposure in their own right. A sponsorship can afford them exposure they might not otherwise receive (Wragg, 1994).

It appears increasingly possible to interpret sponsorship guidelines with greater latitude than before (Bell, 1991b; Barnett, 1992). This is exemplified by *Blind Date*, ITV's extremely successful dating programme. A main feature of the programme is that the lucky contestants are sent away on a week long date in an exotic holiday location. The show has recently been sponsored by a travel company, Going Places, who also appeared on the programme to welcome the couple at their holiday destination. While the company is not a dating service and thus their business is not directly related to the programme, the holiday is a predominant feature of the show. Thus, the company or product can bask in the reflected glow of a successful or popular programme and gain an association that might not otherwise be easily obtained. *Crimeline* is another case in point; Hibernian Insurance draws benefit from an association with crime prevention and household security because of their support of a programme whose aim is to aid the police force.[10]

It is very important to find a synergy between the company and the sponsorship in order to indirectly exploit a link; in other words to match a programme to a sponsor is extremely important (De Mooij and Keegan, 1991;

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[10] See chapter 5 for a detailed discussion.

MacCann, 1995). Kelloggs have done this particularly well in their sponsorship of *Gladiators* by promoting the health and energy characteristics of cereal and linking it to athletic activity. In a sense these types of arrangements are almost informal barter as the sponsor provides some goods or services in exchange for making these services visible within the programme (Ford and Ford, 1993). This raises questions about the nature of programme/sponsor linkage as there is clearly some considerable advantage to the sponsor arising out of the association even if it is not 'direct'.[11] The restrictions are clearly not as onerous as they first appear because of the liberal way they can be interpreted. Barclaycard were able to sponsor a travel programme despite the fact that many people pay for their holiday by credit card (Wragg, 1994).

In the cases of the arts and sports, which have many sponsored events, a potential difficulty arises from the fact that the event and the sponsorship may be both supplied to the broadcaster. That is to say that as the event is sponsored and increasingly, the broadcast coverage of the event is sponsored, businesses may choose to sponsor either the event or its transmission. Advertisers may transfer money from the financing of the event to reducing the cost of the broadcast production (Sturgess, 1992b). The broadcaster would raise finance from the sponsorship of the programme of the event but at the expense of the event itself which may then raise the cost of supplying the event to the broadcaster. This could potentially lead to a reduction in the number of events broadcast and eventually in the number of events. Concern on the part of the audience regarding the editorial integrity of sponsored programmes

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[11] The same can be argued to be true of *Crimeline* and its sponsor Hibernian Insurance; the link is not 'direct' but there is clearly an over-lap of interests between a programme that reports crime and an insurance company.

particularly factual and documentary programming could also reduce the range of sponsored programmes.

Sponsorship and the practice of product placement have the potential to affect the content of programmes directly, shaping what will be said and shown, in line with corporate interests (Murdock, 1992).[12] BT, Toyota, Honda and ICL are among companies that have appointed product placement specialists to act on their behalf; others such as AEG and Rank Xerox have asked their advertising agencies to develop placements (Carter, 1993). Supplying products at no cost to the production without paying for the privilege is not in breach of any codes. It is almost impossible to screen as many products are props in contemporary dramas and soap operas (Barnett, 1992). It can nonetheless be classified as a type of sponsorship, but it has been, and continues to be, controversial due to its implicit and arguably subliminal nature.

In 1989, half of the marketing directors of the top 150 UK companies said they believed that sponsors should have some influence over content (Murdock, 1992). Concerns are raised however regarding the objectivity of programmes where the sponsor is concerned, and thus the objectivity of the channel (Turner, 1989). A broadcaster may not wish to alienate their sponsors by transmitting material that promotes the sponsor's competitors or that reflects negatively on the sponsor. The difficulty is exacerbated when the broadcaster is a public service broadcaster as pressure, be it real or imagined, to favour one party or other conflicts with their ethos of impartiality (Nossiter, 1991). These concerns can be particularly strong regarding children's programming where the programme can essentially become an infomercial for a certain toy or game

[12] Product placement is defined as the inclusion of a product or service within a film or programme in return for payment in cash or in kind to the producer or broadcaster and is seen as an investment raising consciousness (Goldston, 1991).

and thus alienate parents and legislators and leave a perception of underhandedness regarding the sponsor (Turner, 1989; Mattelart 1991; Nossiter, 1991). The RTÉ Authority recently put a policy in place that forbade the sponsorship of children's programming and mandated the replacement of advertising with 'infomercials' that would inform and educate children on a range of issues (Murray, 1996).[13]

As is evident, most of the programmes that are sponsored tend to be light entertainment or popular programmes. It is important to note that this is not exclusive; less obvious programmes such as the *Cutting Edge* documentary stream on Channel 4 has also been sponsored and has offered good value to sponsors. This is due to the fit between the audience the sponsor needs to access and the nature of the audience attracted by the programme. Lloyds Bank sponsored the BBC Young Musician of the Year which had an audience of almost twenty million viewers, many of whom belonged to higher and more affluent social classes and were thus an important audience for the bank (Wragg, 1994). As an example of 'value added sponsorship', it was deemed a 'worthy' effort on the part of the bank and consequently a good public relations exercise by targeting a valuable audience.

While the sponsorship of major international events also gives access to very large audiences, it is difficult to ascertain the efficacy of such sponsorship (De Mooij and Keegan, 1991). The merging of the Olympics and marketing is such an example as brand names are now ubiquitous in Olympic Stadia but the impact of this is uncertain (Meenaghan, 1991a). While it is widely acknowledged to be very difficult to determine the effectiveness of

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[13] This policy applies in the main to the segment known as *Den TV*, broadcast Monday to Friday on Network 2, RTÉ's second channel from 3pm to 6pm. The segment is comprised of a variety of children's programmes for children from the ages of 2-3 to about 12 years old.

sponsorship, Philips conducted extensive research on the effects of their sponsorship of the World Cup in Mexico in 1986 (De Mooij and Keegan, 1991).[14] The general conclusions were:

- Where image and recognition are well established a great increase cannot be expected but relatively unknown brands will achieve a relatively stronger effect. Modifications are gradual and depend on factors such as connecting promotional activities and exploitation.
- In many countries the association between the sponsor and the World Cup was based on the share of voice of the sponsor (number of links) but this was not very significant due to the level of clutter in the information.
- There needs to be more integration between event sponsorship and regular marketing activities; it must be part of medium to long term planning as it can only then be exploited to maximum advantage.

These results reinforce general opinion on the potential effectiveness of sponsorship which depends to a large extent on the exploitation of the link; the case of programme sponsorship is different as the link between sponsor and show may be subtle but more effective. Obviously, the greater the involvement the greater the effect (De Mooij and Keegan, 1991). With greater linkage between the sponsor's business or product and the programme and greater presence of the sponsor on the show, the sponsor is more likely to benefit in terms of awareness and promotion from the sponsorship. More detailed crediting of the sponsor and strong reinforcing of the link through the sponsor's advertising and public relations efforts is also an advantage. The trend is currently towards a 'holistic' approach, where all promotional strategies are inter-related, to corporate communication (Mattelart, 1991).

[14] The legitimacy of sponsorship as a means of promotion is closely related to empirical validation of its effectiveness (Thwaites, 1994).

Awareness of a brand name is only beneficial if the brand is established to some extent, therefore sponsorship is most effective when supported by other promotional activities (De Mooij and Keegan, 1991). More needs to be done by the sponsor than merely setting up the sponsorship deal; there must be more expenditure and effort put into the exploitation of the sponsorship (Hidalgo, 1992; Wragg, 1994). Large corporations sponsor sporting and cultural events, and increasingly television programmes, in addition to their advertising campaigns (Sinclair, 1989).[15] The integration of all these marketing strategies of are of utmost importance (De Mooij and Keegan, 1991, Thwaites, 1994). Sponsors are becoming much more sophisticated in their usage and commercially demanding of their sponsorship investments (Meenaghan, 1991a). Sponsorship offers a mechanism for promoting a human and modern image.

There is a possibility that advertisers might compare and contrast the relative yields of both sponsorship and advertising as means of promotion and, in considering one a substitute for the other, transfer money from advertising to sponsorship budgets (Sturgess, 1992b). There is no direct link between the cost of producing the programme and the cost of the sponsorship which is negotiated, thus sponsorship might appear a cheaper alternative to spot advertisements (Wragg, 1994). Essentially this means that a broadcaster might raise considerably less funds from a sponsorship arrangement than from the sale of advertising spaces. Thus, a large scale transfer of advertiser interest from spot advertising to sponsorship would be financially damaging to broadcasters. Substitution of one for the other is not necessarily good business practice for advertisers either, as the two may be more effective in

[15] The most significant developments in sponsorship are taking place in the broadcast area (Thwaites, 1994).

combination. Furthermore, just as there is no definitive proof of the efficacy of advertising, there is equally no proof of the efficacy of sponsorship. On the other hand, it is important to be cognisant of the fact that advertisers could and may opt for alternative methods of advertising such as direct marketing (Shergill, 1993). Nevertheless, while broadcast sponsorship is still relatively new it can be argued that it is generating a significant amount of revenue for broadcasters as can be seen from the increasing number of sponsored programmes on ITV, Channel 4, and in Ireland on RTÉ (and now TnaG) (Meenaghan, 1995).

4.3 Barter

Barter is defined as the exchange of a programme for commercial advertising time in and around that programme, via a third party, generally a syndicator or advertising agency (Ford and Ford, 1993). There is no explicit link between the programme bartered and the advertiser. Barter emerged in the US for three reasons:

i) as a result of the system whereby programmes were sold on a market by market basis to individual television stations (Kassaye and Vaccaro, 1993),

ii) from anti-trust legislation which disallowed the direct ownership of most of the entertainment programming by the networks and which boosted production companies by creating a new programme market, and

iii) from the pressing need for programming that arose from an increase in television hours which could not be funded by station revenues (Turner, 1989).

By 1990 the barter market was worth $1.2 billion involving sponsors such as Proctor and Gamble, Unilever, Colgate Palmolive and General Foods (Sinclair, 1989; Garrett, 1991; Mattelart, 1991; De Mooij and Keegan, 1991;

Ford and Ford, 1993). As most television stations in the US mainly produce news and community programmes, they are dependent on the networks and programmes syndicators for other types of programming. After programming received from the network affiliate is taken into account, the station usually has four to eight hours to fill, mainly between 4pm and 8pm, with some time in the morning and after 11pm (Ford and Ford, 1993). Lack of funds means that a station will barter for the programming it needs from the network with commercial airtime, usually ninety per cent of the airtime during the bartered show. The network will give back some of the proceeds from the national spot advertising in the form of 'network compensation' (approximately four per cent of a station's revenues). The situation is complicated by the harsh barter deals the network operates and the drop in audience share they are currently experiencing.

More first-runs and established off-network programming are offered to independent stations as a result of barter syndication. As part of this deal, the programme syndicator takes fifty to eighty per cent of the commercial airtime which compares well against the ninety per cent demanded by the network. The syndicator then puts together a network of stations of its own and sells the collective airtime to a national advertiser. Almost all first-run syndication programmes are sold and pre-sold in this way to diffuse the risk. By offering programming on a programme by programme basis, the station has the opportunity to be more selective in choosing where and for how long to place the programme in the schedule (Ford and Ford, 1993). These shows cost the station less because they were sponsored and thus cost less to produce. A number of syndicated programmes on European television at present, the most well-known of which is *Wheel of Fortune,* made by Unilever and syndicated globally, are offered in this way (Carter, 1995b).

Sponsors, however, are not allowed by law to be directly involved in programming. To minimise the risk, programmes are usually sold in a barter and cash mixture.[16] Many soap operas, quizzes, cartoons and series are sponsored and carry product placement and merchandising rights which makes them very attractive to advertisers (Carter, 1995b). This involvement also facilitates the closer matching of the programme with the audience profile.[17] Barter has given sponsorship an increased presence in television. In 1991, barter syndication and sponsorship revenues were worth $2.4 billion (Ford and Ford, 1993). The use of barter appears likely to grow well past the year 2000 (Kassaye and Vaccaro, 1993).

The existence of stations in Europe, particularly in the east, which lack finances has led to the emergence of barter on this continent also (De Mooij and Keegan, 1991). Both US and European syndicators are bartering programmes in Eastern Europe. The significant presence of US programmes on European television has meant that both commercial and public broadcasters have bought programming from US syndicators. While there has been a definite advertising recession in the US, UK, Italy and France, sponsorship, barter and syndication are growing (Ford and Ford, 1993). In 1991, barter was worth in excess of $100 million in Europe and programming has been tailored to individual markets by both sponsors and broadcasters. Some of the leading companies involved are large scale manufacturers of domestic goods. Unilever through its marketing agency, Interpublic, has established a presence through its show *The Price is Right*, King World through *Wheel of Fortune* and Proctor and Gamble through a variety of soaps that it produces (Bell,

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[16] Disney and Warner are both involved in syndication and the average cost of half an hour of their children's programmes ($400,000) comes mainly from sponsors.

[17] Many talk shows such as the *Oprah Winfrey Show, Donahue, Geraldo* and *Sally Jesse Raphael* are syndicated as are sit-coms such as the *Cosby Show, M*A*S*H* and *Who's the Boss.*

1991b).[18] Proctor and Gamble also have an interest in developing children's programming for confectionery manufacturers, business programming for financial service institutions, etc.

In Eastern Europe, sponsors are involved in programming in order to establish their brand name with a potential market of around 300 million consumers. Many Walt Disney programmes are syndicated to this part of Europe. Many Japanese companies like Sony, Matsushita and Fuji Sankei are also involved in the barter market. Barter represents a strong investment in sponsorship on the part of major corporations in programming (De Mooij and Keegan, 1991).[19] New companies are forming to operate in the barter, syndication and sponsorship markets, and as the BBC world television service also allows sponsorship, it is undeniably a growth area (Ford and Ford, 1993, Kassaye and Vaccaro, 1993).

The barter market was whole-heartedly embraced by Saatchi and Saatchi who announced the setting up of a production unit in 1987 to provide 'free' programming to the market. Advertisers and advertising agencies are clearly showing increased interest in sponsorship and production. The barter system both encourages and facilitates this. The market is also witnessing the amalgamation of players into huge conglomerates and is increasingly dominated by fewer and fewer companies; this further suggests a risk of a reduction in diversity (Mattelart, 1991). The growth of barter, product placement and sponsorship are strongly linked. Much of the programming now broadcast, especially programmes originating in the US, contain some element

[18] Proctor and Gamble bartered at least 100 hours of game shows in 1991, customized for local markets.

[19] When broadcasting into Russia, MTV sold 15 second advertising spots at $4,000 each; a huge proportion of the station's output is sponsored also.

of sponsorship. While it is true that sponsored programmes can have high production values, the vast majority of sponsored and bartered programmes are soaps, light dramas, quizzes, talk shows and sit-coms which generally endeavour to influence consumerist behaviour (Mattelart, 1991).

4.4 Place of Sponsorship in broadcasting

Over the past decade, sponsorship has grown from an occasional presence on television screens to a regular feature of the credits of many programmes in the UK and Ireland, particularly on ITV and increasingly on RTÉ. ITV has pursued a policy of actively seeking sponsors for their programming, both domestically produced and imported programming, in order to supplement revenue gained from advertising. This is a radical departure from its founding principles as sponsorship was specifically rejected as a means of funding for commercial television when ITV was set up in 1955 (Sinclair, 1989). Many of its top-rated programmes are however now sponsored and this number is increasing steadily.[20] In 1995, ITV decided for the first time to offer sponsorship of foreign made programmes including *Baywatch,* and *Home and Away* (Dignam, 1995). The network also decided to provide agencies with advance information on the subsequent year's schedules in order to make sponsorship more attractive to advertisers and allow it to be built into media planning. Some estimates of the future size of the sponsorship market for ITV range from £32Stg. million to £68Stg. million by the year 2000 (Sturgess,

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[20] Among the ITV programmes currently sponsored are *Coronation St., Inspector Morse, London's Burning, Blind Date, ITN Weather, UTV Weather, Gladiators, Wish You Were Here, Baywatch, This Morning* and the *ITV Drama Premiere*. On RTÉ, *The Tuesday Movie, Crimeline, The Movie Show, Our House, Weatherline, Head 2 Toe, Across the Line, Top 30 Chart Show, National Lottery Draw, Winning Streak* are/have been sponsored.

1992). [21] These estimates must, however, be considered in terms of how much money is generated by sponsorship as opposed to how much money is diverted away from conventional advertising.

In 1991, the Independent Television Commission (ITC) Code allowed all categories of programmes to be sponsored with the exceptions of news, current affairs and religious broadcasts (Hidalgo, 1992). In addition, the opportunity for on-screen credit of the sponsor has expanded in duration and prominence. The main restrictions currently imposed by the ITC concern the impact of sponsorship on audience appreciation and on the perceived value to other advertisers buying airtime around it. As is the case generally, the actual expenditure on sponsorship will depend on the level of supply and demand in the market. France has had a code governing sponsorship similar to that of the ITC since 1988, and saw sponsorship revenue grow to five per cent of total commercial income by 1990 (Sturgess, 1992b).

Sponsorship was deemed to be at odds with the Reithian conception of broadcasting with a role to inform, educate and entertain, in short to provide a 'public service' (Ford and Ford, 1993). This ethos was broadly adopted by public service broadcasters around the world, though adapted by individual countries. The lack of presence of sponsorship until now on European television has been due largely to the dominance of public service broadcasting. Recently, commercial interests have gained influence on all types of broadcasting in many countries due to deregulation, increasing production costs and the political support for market economics.

[21] This estimate is at 1991 prices.

The establishment of ITV, in part a result of American influence, introduced these influences into Britain. The new broadcaster transmitted quiz shows and many American drama series and soaps which led to ITV-produced soaps. The BBC had to change in order to keep audiences as well as attract them in the face of new competition, and thus created one of the most highly competitive broadcasting environments. In its early years, the BBC accepted sponsorship, worked with American stations on productions, and bought American sponsor-initiated programming (Ford and Ford, 1993). The changes of the 1960s saw the BBC moving more towards professionalism and catering to the public taste rather than endeavouring to create it; it became a pragmatic broadcaster more than an ideological one. Similar to other public service broadcasters, the BBC currently finds itself having to justify the licence fee and compete more fiercely for audiences. This pressure for financing has led the corporation from bartering programmes for programmes to bartering programmes for commodities which it can then sell on the commodities market.[22]

It is increasingly difficult to provide programming for a diversity of concerns, tastes and interests in the marketplace. Should the BBC decide to take sponsorships it could be argued to possess certain advantages over ITV. The extra coverage it provides, its non-commercial reputation and its slightly more upmarket reputation could justify charging a premium (Meerabeau et al, 1991). This could be reinforced by not selling commercial airtime. The experience of the Public Broadcasting System in the US could prove useful in evaluating the potential for sponsorship of public service broadcasting in Europe. Funding has been raised for quality programming without the loss of editorial independence as the PBS example shows. In many cases, sponsorship

[22] The BBC operates this arrangement with East European countries and barters for wood, ore, minerals and icons etc. (Ford and Ford, 1993)

financing can exceed six times the airtime equivalent compared to the 1:1 ratio achieved in the early ITV deals (Sturgess, 1992b). The value of such deals would also be based on the care taken in selecting a sponsor and offering a limited number of programmes. The BBC has not opted for or been given the option of raising funds in this way because it was not deemed suitable, in keeping with the long held antipathy of the corporation for a commercial presence on the BBC.[23] In contrast, ITV has and continues to pursue sponsorship deals. ITV is presently suffering a shortage of funds as the market forces down costs causing profit margins to fall to as low as five per cent in the case of many of the ITV companies in the 1990s (Law, 1994). It seems likely that commercial pressures will however lead to opportunities for sponsors on even the most 'purist' channels in the future (Turner, 1989).

In the case of Ireland, the size of the population and the national economy meant that it was never practicable to fund RTÉ by licence fee alone. Hence, the station became dual funded while still espousing the public service ideals embodied by the BBC. Over fifty per cent of RTÉ's funding currently comes from advertising; the broadcaster is now more reliant on commercial revenue than publicly generated revenue which complicates its status as a public service institution. Irish broadcasting has been strongly influenced by British and American programming as RTÉ broadcast productions imported from both countries. Furthermore, British stations were and are widely received in Ireland. The limited finances available for production budgets has meant that RTÉ has been operating at a disadvantage as its production standards have suffered in comparison to imported programmes made with larger budgets. This has been a paradox in the ethos of RTÉ: commercialism necessitated by

[23] This is also a feature of German television which is suspicious of product placement and sponsorship (Brehm, 1993).

financial concerns combined with serving the public interest which was not experienced by the BBC until 1955 and the introduction of commercial broadcasting in the UK.[24] Increasing commercial pressures has resulted in the renewed exploitation of sponsorship despite the reservations held in regard to the use of the practice in public service broadcasting.

The sponsorship that exists today has its foundations in sports sponsorship which had been prevalent for some time before spreading into other areas. Sport was strongly affected by television, losing supporters to the new competitor for leisure time attention. As a result, sports turned to sponsors for funding, while sponsors in turn sought to maximise their presence by publicising it through billboards and other forms of advertising. This proved a useful exercise for tobacco and alcohol manufacturers, providing a means of advertising even after the products were banned from spot advertising on television (Ford and Ford, 1993; Thwaites, 1994). Cigarette and drinks companies began to sponsor teams and events thus gaining exposure on posters at venues. Motor racing provides apt examples as tobacco companies often sponsor teams, and the cars and helmets of drivers carry the brand name and colours of the product. In fact, much event sponsorship has come from advertisers trying to circumvent regulations pertaining to the advertising of certain products such as tobacco (De Mooij and Keegan, 1991). Sponsoring televised events has further allowed companies to reach national and perhaps international audiences without direct involvement in television (Crowley, 1991).

[24] The London subsidiary of the US advertising agency J. Walter Thompson led the campaign to create a new commercial television service based on advertising in the UK.

Sponsorship has become integral to many sports; soccer being an obvious and highly visual example. Players and stadia bear company logos in the UK and elsewhere, and the sport has become big business particularly because there is a regularity to its events.[25] Sponsors have gained valuable linkages from events such as *Embassy* Snooker, the *Budweiser* Irish Derby, and the *Murphys* Irish Open. Here the sponsor and event have become inextricably interlinked.[26] In the UK, Cornhill Insurance sponsored test cricket and found that awareness of their name rose dramatically as a result among a predominantly male audience which accurately matched their needs (Wragg, 1994).

Sport accounts for a large part of the schedule of most channels and the emergence of specialist subscription channels while benefiting sports organisations and some commercial broadcasters has negative consequences for sports fans as viewing depends increasingly on ability to pay. The situation also discriminates against public service broadcasters and some commercial broadcasters; they are constantly being out-bid for sporting event that were once a staple of their schedule. [27] The premium placed on ownership of sports rights is purely economic (Ford and Ford, 1993); they attract large audiences and generate high advertising revenues which gives a significant advantage to a broadcaster over its competitors. Much sports coverage has moved to prime-time slots and consequently generates a lot of advertising revenue. Studies

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[25] In some instances sports and sporting events are being altered to suit the needs of television and thus sponsors. The soccer season is changing to suit the television schedule and in the last World Cup in the US 'quarters' were introduced to facilitate commercial breaks on US television.

[26] The Carrolls Irish Open golf tournament is no longer sponsored by Carrolls but a large number of people still accredited them with its sponsorship in a recent study (MacCann, 1995).

[27] RTÉ has recently lost its rights to English Premiership soccer as the broadcast rights were bought by BSkyB who keep them exclusively for their subscription channels.

have shown that when viewed in a social context, more beverages and snacks are consumed during this programming thus making it even more attractive to sponsors and advertisers (Meerabeau et al., 1991). The sheer volume of money spent on sports rights by many broadcasters at present can be argued to be compromising other areas of programming since the money simply does not exist to invest in them.

The Arts also attract sponsorship but to a lesser degree despite its escalating public interest over sport since the 1980s (Rix, 1993).[28] Corporate sponsorship is now an established means of support for the art world, contributing around £10 million a year in the UK (Bailey, 1994). Corporations have also begun to use images associated with the arts. In fact, the arts are represented to an increasing extent in television schedules in their own right and in magazine programmes such as *Black Box* (RTÉ), *Beo le Bridóg* (RTÉ), *Late Review* (BBC). Opera, for example has become a popular part of the BBC2 schedule. Arts sponsorship is a growth area and in an era where state support for the arts is dropping in the main, needed money is coming from corporate sponsors (Odling-Smee, 1994). The Arts have an image of 'quality' with many audiences and it is an area where sponsorship carries overtones of altruism and good citizenship (Turner, 1989). Sports traditional popularity with sponsors was based on its ability to attract mass audiences; in a fragmenting market where broadcasters target more segmented audiences, arts sponsorship on television is an option with growing potential. Arts programming may benefit greatly from the development of sponsorship as a means of funding broadcasting.

[28] One factor may be that leisure budgets are controlled by women in greater numbers than ever before and they tend to prefer cultural and arts activities to sports (Wragg, 1994).

From a broadcaster's perspective, it is important that event sponsorship does not become a cheaper alternative to television advertising or programme sponsorship (Wragg, 1994). They must protect their interests and this is reflected in RTE's monitoring of sponsorship deals in independent productions. In the case of *Crimeline* no on-screen presence of Hibernian Insurance is allowed so as to prevent free advertising to escape onto the screen. As a system of finance, sponsorship arguably has less positive connotations for many broadcasters, particularly for public service institutions (Murdock, 1992). Concern is expressed that increasing commercialisation, through sponsorship, barter or any other method, may mean that the size of the audience would become more important than the programme (Nossiter, 1991). Despite this, the pressure to maintain or increase audience size is universal (Henry, 1990). Sponsorship has been said to be causing more difficulty in distinguishing between programmes and advertising. It would appear from emergent trends that sponsorship is likely to grow as a means of broadcast funding in Europe and in Ireland. As addressed in this chapter, this type of finance may be contentious, particularly in the case of public service broadcasting. Careful regulation of funding is required in order to protect broadcasters and advertisers. Deliberate consideration of the implications of sponsorship is necessary.

5 Survey of Advertisers, Agencies, Broadcasters and Independent Producers

5.0 Introduction

Any discussion of the use of sponsorship as a means of funding broadcasting in Ireland would be remiss without an assessment of the level of interest among the broadcasting and advertising communities on the issue. No data exists on this subject or of the sponsorship arrangement. As sponsorship has grown considerably on Irish television over the last decade, it is of interest to establish the extent of its usage and its likely use in the future. While some of this information was gained through interviews, more extensive information was sought through a survey of Advertisers, Advertising Agencies, Broadcasters and Independent Producers. These groups were surveyed as they comprise the parties involved in sponsorship arrangements.

5.1 Survey Methodology and design

The survey is a common method of identifying attitudes, opinions, and beliefs (Berger, 1991; Fowler, 1993). It also enables the researcher to discover actions that people have taken or are thinking of taking. This information is often important, but difficult to access (Stacey, 1982). Unfortunately surveys do not necessarily reveal the 'why' of something although they do provide some information about relationships. Thus, surveys are limited in what information they provide (Layder, 1993; Lindlof, 1995).

The objectives of this survey were threefold. The main purpose was to determine whether or not sponsorship of television programmes is likely to grow in Ireland. To this end, the questions sought to ascertain the attitudes held by each group of respondents to sponsorship on a number of issues. The most important of these were:

i) whether or not the respondents believe that sponsorship constitutes good business practice,

ii) whether it is a useful means of financing programming in the case of Broadcasters and Independent Producers and,

iii) whether it is a useful method of advertising in the estimation of Advertisers and Advertising Agencies.

It was also necessary to establish an indication of the extent of sponsorship by eliciting information about the experience of respondents in this area. This would provide a useful indication of whether sponsorship is seen as a negative or a positive by people with actual experience of it. Among the most significant data required from the research was an estimation of the level of interest among advertisers towards programme sponsorship, clearly a major determinant in its future. As the thesis also discusses product placement and advertiser-produced programming, questions were included in order to determine each respondent's attitude to these trends. All results are presented in tabular form in Appendix D of this thesis.

As the information required from each group surveyed was very similar, it was decided to design a single questionnaire that would elicit the required information from each. In order to facilitate ease of reply, the questionnaire endeavoured to be concise and consequently was four pages in length. Pilot tests were conducted on staff and postgraduate researchers working on the Communications and Advertising courses in the Dublin Institute of Technology in order to render the questions easy to answer, a significant part of the process

(Stacey, 1982). As is standard with many surveys, the respondent was required to state the name of the company, their name as a contact person in that company, a contact telephone number, and the number of employees. As the questionnaire was designed to deal with each of the target groups, it was necessary to establish the area of business of the respondent so that each could be categorised on receipt of the completed survey. The respondents were however given the option of remaining anonymous as the subject matter pertains to confidential areas of their business. While the data is displayed and discussed, individual companies are not named as respondents. A five point response scale was devised:

1 = strongly agree

2 = agree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = disagree

5 = strongly disagree.

A group of eighty respondents was chosen and exclusion and inclusion criteria applied in this study (Fink, 1995a). There are a limited number of people at the necessary level of decision making in RTÉ who could sanction or have in-depth knowledge of sponsorship arrangements; included was the chairman of the TV3 group as he would be responsible for the sponsorship policy of the station, should it begin broadcasting. This group comprised seventeen people. Among independent producers, the inclusion criteria applied was the regularity of programme production. This information was obtained through industry interviews and reference to the annual reports of the Independent Production Unit which list the names of companies that received programme commissions and to the list of production companies compiled by the FÁS/STATCOM report on the training needs of the audiovisual industry. Approximately 24 production companies met these criteria. There are a limited number of advertising agencies who are major operators in the Irish market, with probable experience of sponsorship. In consultation with Mr. Michael Hayes, Director, Diploma in Advertising at the Dublin Institute of Technology, it was determined that this group consisted of approximately 16 agencies. A rather larger number of advertisers of considerable size exists and, to balance the survey and obtain a better reflection of the views and experiences of each group, this group was limited to a size comparable at least to the others involved. Therefore, in consultation with Mr. Hayes a list of 23 companies was drawn up. These companies represent a cross-section of providers ranging from providers of services (financial services, travel services etc.) to providers of many kinds of consumer goods (from newspapers to foods to clothing to cars).

Of the 80 surveys sent out, 38 were returned, representing a response rate of 47.5 per cent. The vast majority of those who returned the survey opted for anonymity. In the interests of fairness, it was decided not to name any of the respondents in the writing up of the survey.

5.2 Findings

The data collected from this survey is unique as a survey of this nature has not been carried out previously. It is not claimed that the results are definitive but they do represent the views of some of those responsible for the development of broadcast sponsorship in this country. The findings of the survey and a discussion of the trends and issues raised follows. All tables referred to are to be found in Appendix D where all survey results are presented in tabular form.

Sponsorship

There was overwhelming agreement among all respondents with the statement that television sponsorship is a growing trend as shown in Table D.9. The majority were also in agreement that it is a useful method of securing advertising or funding: advertisers (55.6%) agencies (66.7%), and broadcasters (77.8%) [fig. 5.2(a)]. Independent producers exhibited more mixed responses, with a higher proportion of disagreements and 'neither agree nor disagrees' among this group. It may be that independent producers have less experience of sponsorship deals than broadcasters and are yet to be convinced of its usefulness. The results shown below in figures 5.2(a) and 5.2(b) would however suggest that there is strong support for sponsorship, and consequently, the number of sponsored programmes is likely to increase.

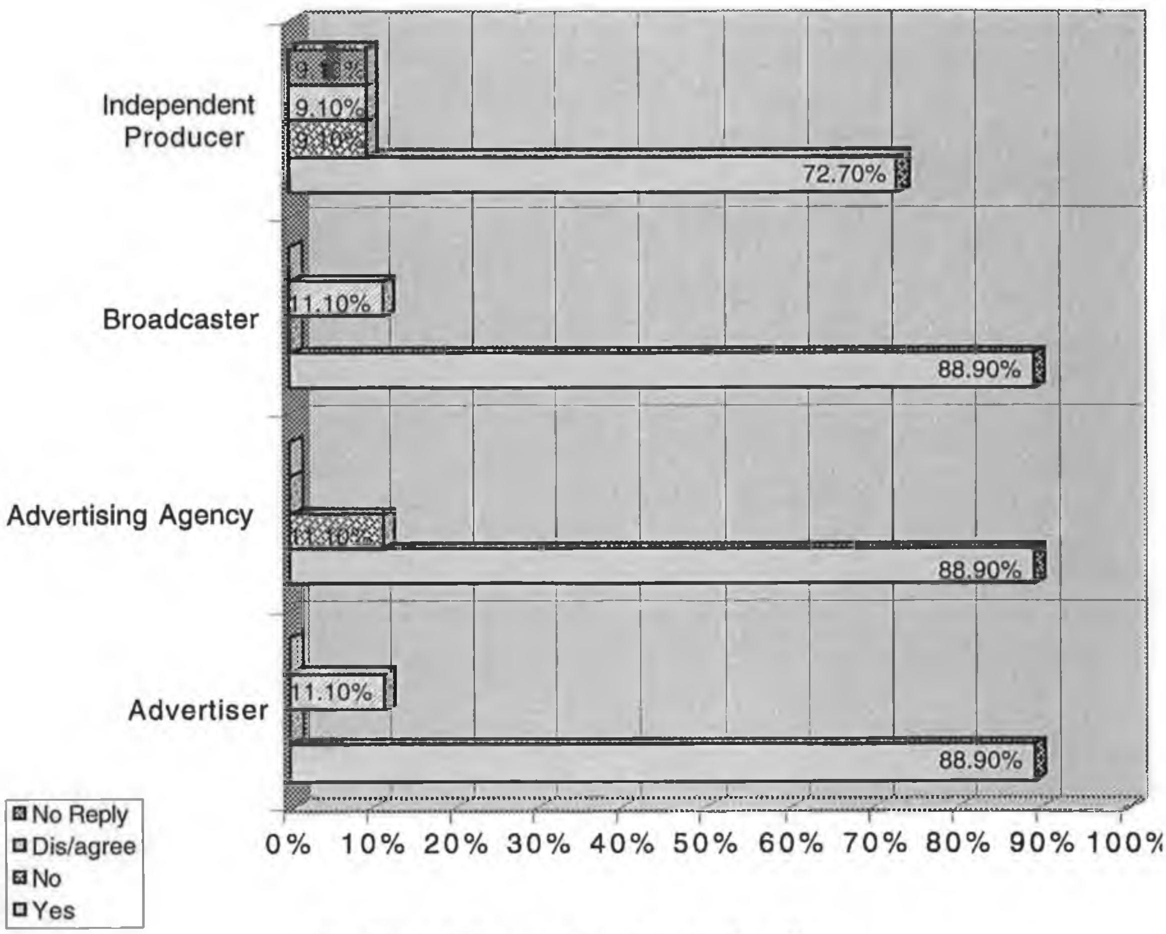

Fig. 5.2(a): Is Sponsorship a Growing Trend?

Sponsorship is predominantly felt to be a more subtle form of advertising, although there was a significant proportion of non agreement or disagreements (see Table D.11) with this view. The majority opinion of all groups was that it is a more subliminal way to influence consumers. Broadcasters were the exception as they were equally divided between disagreement (44.4%) and no agreement or disagreement (44.4%). This could be linked to the fact that most of the respondents from the broadcasting group have had some experience of sponsorship. They did, however, view it as a useful funding option, and were less inclined to view it negatively, or to have found it to be a negative experience. It is interesting to note that while sponsorship is seen as being of a subliminal nature, this is not seen to be a bar to its growth by advertisers, agencies or independent producers.

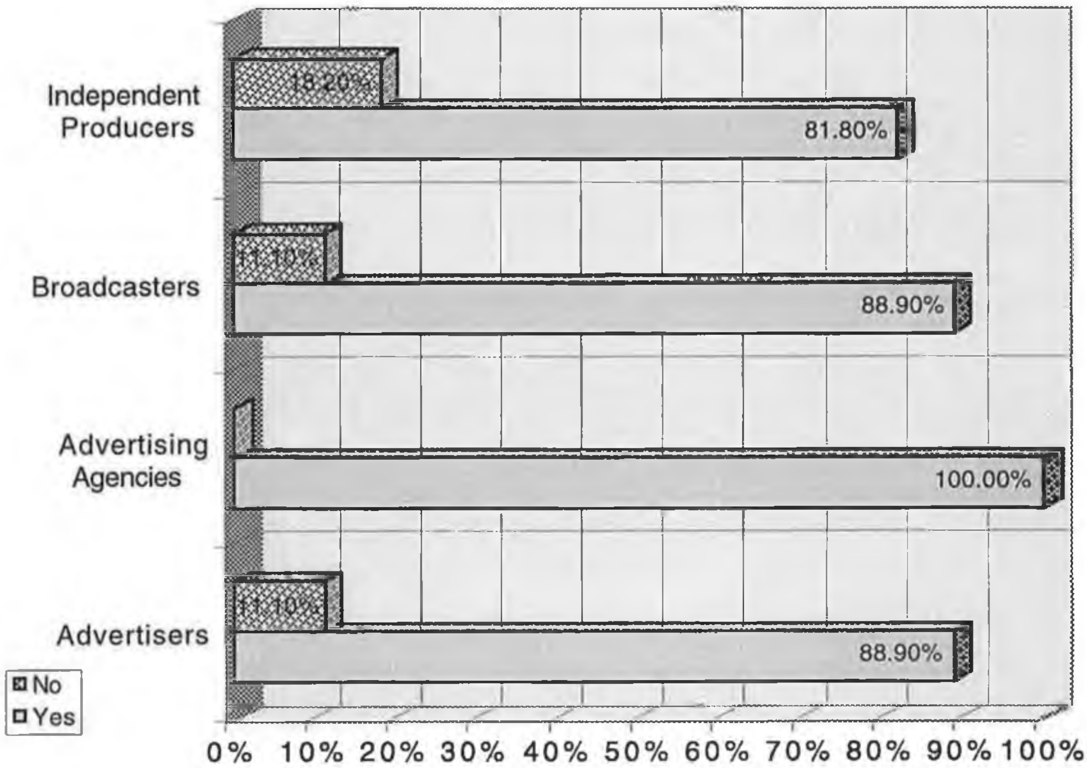

Fig. 5.2(b): Is Sponsorship Likely to Increase?

Another important factor in the growth of sponsorship is whether it is considered good business practice, and whether the practice of programme sponsorship is seen to be growing. Unlike previous questions, the answers were posed as a binary so that respondents were encouraged to make a definitive statement. There was very strong support for the statement that sponsorship is good business practice. All categories said that the practice was more prevalent. A large majority felt it is a growing trend unless regulation prevents it. These results suggest that it will increase, which reinforces the results on the usefulness of sponsorship described above.

Among advertisers who are or were involved in programme sponsorship, the attitudes exhibited are completely positive across all three statements posed in this question. For those advertisers who have had no experience of programme sponsorship, their attitudes are also totally positive. This could be interpreted to indicate that the practice of programme sponsorship is likely to increase if advertisers can access programmes they deem suitable. However, the kinds of programmes of interest to potential sponsors are likely to be programmes with wide appeal. This may marginalise minority programming as there will be little commercial incentive for them to be produced. This information is nonetheless valuable to broadcasters and independent producers as it suggests not inconsiderable interest on the part of potential sponsors.

Advertising agencies also exhibit a positive attitude towards sponsorship among those who have been involved. Only two respondents stated that they felt it was not good business practice. For agencies with no involvement, there is also a positive attitude with only one respondent stating it is not a growing trend. Sponsorship is perceived as a threat by some advertising agencies to spot advertising which allows them a greater role and greater control in the advertising process. This is however, unlikely to hinder the growth of the practice.

Only one of the 9 broadcasting respondents had had no experience of sponsorship; of those who had, all but one said their experiences had been positive. This again bodes well for sponsorship suggesting further willingness to engage in sponsored programming.

Independent producers who are or were involved in sponsored programmes are also predominantly positive in attitude toward the practice. Only one respondent expressed a totally negative opinion of the practice. Among those not involved, there was more uncertainty regarding sponsorship. This ambiguity may be due to less experience of sponsorship and/or a concern for editorial integrity. It is interesting to note that while they expect sponsorship to grow, independent producers appear to have some reservations about such arrangements.

As the results demonstrate, the vast majority of respondents believe that sponsorship is likely to increase. A summary of reasons cited for this for each survey group are as follows:

1. Advertisers:

- The increasing number of independent producers who need funds supports the growth of sponsorship.
- Sponsorship is more memorable than advertisements.
- An association with a programme is beneficial.
- Sponsorship differentiates itself from clutter.
- It is possible to target a specific audience.
- It helps to meet higher advertiser demands for airtime and it is cost-effective.

Sponsorship apparently meets certain advertiser needs that are not met by conventional advertising. The existence of a growing production sector in need of finance affords advertisers the opportunity to gain positive associations with programmes. This also enables the company to be distinguished from competitors. The potential for efficient targeting through sponsorship is clearly recognised. It was apparent from the comments of respondents that Irish companies are acquainted with current thinking on the benefits and uses of television sponsorship and are, in the main, convinced of its efficacy.

2. Agencies:

- Sponsorship provides more advertising options to the advertiser.
- RTÉ is more progressive in its attitude to sponsorship than previously.
- *Crimeline* has set a good precedent for sponsored programmes.
- TV3 is likely to pursue sponsorships.
- There is a need to maintain brand awareness which supports the growth of sponsorship.

Advertising Agencies were more cautions in their endorsement of sponsorship. That *Crimeline* is perceived as a good vehicle for the sponsor is perhaps an indication of interest in programmes that provide a synergy with the sponsor's business. Sponsorship may bring additional benefits that differ from those of spot advertising as it may benefit the sponsor through positive associations; it could also result in a combination of the two being employed, which is considered the better option as they reinforce each other. This may be good financial news for RTÉ as the growth of sponsorship would not dilute the advertising spend; rather it may increase it.

3. Broadcasters:

- The need for funding for television makes the growth of sponsorship likely.
- The need of advertisers for an increased presence on television in addition to spot advertisments also supports this growth.
- It is better for the image of the advertiser than spot advertising.

Broadcasters appear to hold very functional attitudes to sponsorship. This is not surprising as it is seen as necessary but not desirable in a public service institution, according to many employees. The convergence of the need of broadcasting for funding and the need of commerce to gain greater access to consumers seems to indicate the presence of the sponsor is rather likely.

4. Independent Producers:

- Independent producers need the extra money to supplement IPU budgets.
- It is a good form of both advertising and funding.
- Both advertisers and RTÉ welcome sponsorship.
- As the market grows in strength and public service broadcasting weakens, it is more likely to grow.

The reasons for the growth of sponsorship cited by independent producers carry overtones of disquiet. The impression given is that sponsorship is necessitated by the economic difficulties of production in Ireland but it is not welcomed. It is also interesting that the growth of sponsorship is equated with a decline in public service broadcasting.

It is important to note that those who felt sponsorship is unlikely to grow feel so because it is uneconomical for all but the largest companies; sponsorship is seen to dilute the advertising spend, is dull and has 'lost its novelty value'. While this is also a concern of broadcasters and producers, there is no evidence to support or negate the argument that sponsorship dilutes the advertising spend. This has as yet to be discovered. By virtue of the fact that there is a growing number of sponsored programmes on RTÉ, ITV and BSkyB, it seems unlikely that sponsorship has as yet lost its 'novelty'.

Sponsorship in other countries has predominantly centred on game shows, dramas and soaps. It was of interest to this research to determine which types of programmes are particularly favoured for sponsorship and if there is any agreement between the groups. Therefore, respondents were invited to nominate categories or genres of programmes suitable for sponsorship. The survey offered a choice between current affairs, drama, game shows, talk shows, soap opera, and 'other'.

	Current Affairs	Drama	Game Shows	Talk Shows	Soap Opera	Other
Advertiser	-	4	2	2	3	6
Advertising Agency	2	6	7	4	6	2
Broadcaster	-	5	6	1	6	5
Independent Producer	-	3	6	5	5	5

Table D.17: Programming Most Suited to Sponsorship

(number of nominations received by each genre per respondent group)

Among the other suggested genres of programming suitable for sponsorship were: Sports (10), Special Interest (5), Documentaries (3), Movies (2), Music (2), Detective series (1), All types of programmes (1), Weather/News (1), Special events (1), Light entertainment (1), Cookery (1). Only one respondent stated no form of programming was suitable for sponsorship. It is surprising that current affairs were nominated at all as the issue of editorial integrity generally precludes sponsorship of such programmes, both in regulations and in popular opinion. Indeed, advertisers demonstrated no interest in this category.

In contrast, it is not surprising that the popular areas were drama, soap opera, and most popular of all, game shows, in other words types of programmes which attract large audiences and are usually uncontroversial. These programme genres provide safe, reliable vehicles for sponsors, and carry positive associations. Sport received many nominations, indicative of the high level of sports sponsorship that already exists. In general, factual programmes were not considered suitable for sponsorship by any of the respondent groups.

The ability to separate sponsor influence from programme content was felt to be a determinant of suitability. In this way the editorial integrity of the show could be protected. In the case of dramas, soaps and game shows editorial integrity was not felt to apply. Only those programmes that reflected well on the corporate image and had large ratings rendered them suitable. Programmes that offer a synergy between the product and the programme or which engaged the viewer were also described as suitable. Concerns were raised about protecting editorial integrity, and on the part of advertisers, to programmes devaluing brands. Thus, it appears from this research that the best interests of both parties are served by confining sponsorship to 'safe' programming such as drama and game shows. The potential difficulty is that this may result in a preponderance of this genre of programming on the schedules in preference to factual or more challenging programmes with lesser or minority appeal.

Regulation

While it is clearly important to ascertain the possible development of sponsorship, it was also felt important to evaluate the attitudes of the respondents towards regulation of this area and of the regulation currently in place. Attitudes towards state versus self regulation of the advertising industry were also seen as relevant. It was of interest to observe any differences between the various groups and how this may relate to the interest of that group.

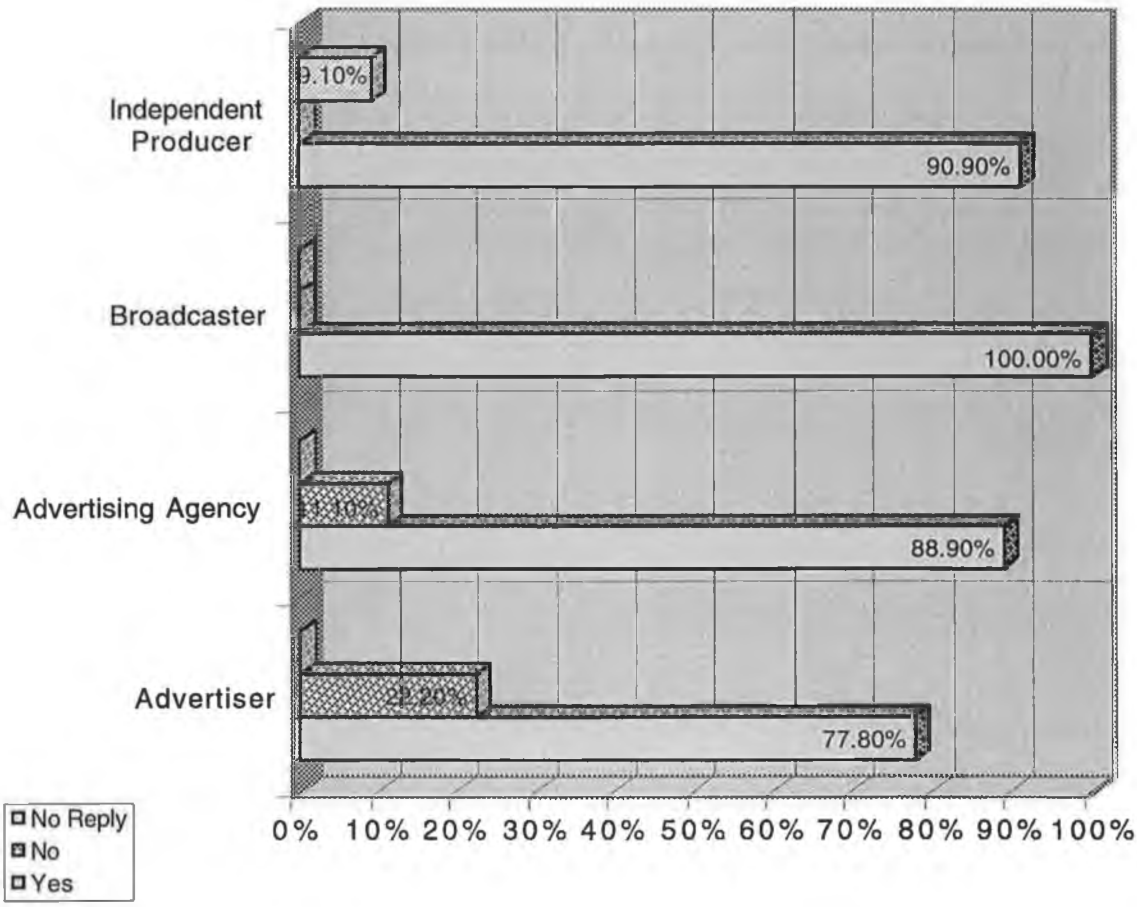

Fig. 5.2(c): Should Sponsorship be Regulated?

There was strong support for regulation of sponsorship across all groups [fig. 5.2(c)]. It was however felt that current regulation is sufficient, the exception being broadcasters, among whom 66.3% disagreed. Advertisers alone felt that current regulation is too strict.[1] Advertisers and agencies strongly felt that the advertising industry should self-regulate in contrast to broadcasters and

[1] This may well be a fault of the questionnaire design, in seeking to supply every possible variation it may have confused respondents by over-complicating the question. There was confusion among respondents with regard to whether or not current regulations are not strict enough; in many cases respondents did not seem clear on what they were saying.

independent producers who did not. Only a majority of independent producers felt that the media industry should not self regulate. However, only advertisers and independent producers felt that the state should regulate the advertising industry, broadcasters and agencies did not.

Advertisers involved in sponsorship felt that current regulation is sufficient, with a majority in favour of self regulation. Of those not involved, all favoured regulation, half believing that current regulation was sufficient, and half favouring self-regulation of the advertising industry. Agencies favoured regulation and predominantly felt that current regulation is sufficient; all were in favour of self-regulation. All Broadcasters were in favour of regulation, with the majority believing that current regulation is not strict enough. A majority favoured self-regulation of the media industry.

Overall, each group favoured regulation and were satisfied with regulations with the exception of broadcasters who would like clearer guidelines having concerns for public service broadcasting. This information is valuable in the light of impending legislation of broadcasting. RTÉ would clearly benefit from a clear and unambiguous set of sponsorship regulations; such a move would be appropriate given the increasing presence of sponsorship on the schedule.

Experience of Sponsorship

The majority of respondents in each group are or have been involved in a sponsorship arrangement, details of which are presented in Table D.26. This can be taken as a further indication of the growth of television sponsorship in Ireland. Among the sponsored programmes respondents were/are involved in are: *The Movie Show, Wrangler Top 30 Video Hits, Up and Running, National*

Lottery, Winning Streak, Crimeline, Kelly (UTV), *2TV, The Tuesday Movie,* documentaries and sporting events.

The vast majority of respondents believed that it is not reasonable for the sponsor to influence programme content. Instances of sponsor influence appear, however, to be few and far between and were not deemed to have been a good experience in the majority of cases. That relationship is not on-going in most cases. It was interesting to note that advertisers themselves did not support sponsor influence (66.7% against), which bodes well for sponsorship deals in the future.

A cited justification for sponsor influence on the part of advertisers was the need to ensure a return on the investment. Despite this, the majority who were not in favour, listed distortion of the truth and fairness, sponsor bias, and the necessity of programme independence as reasons against sponsor influence. Respondents predominantly felt that it was not the role of the sponsor to exert an influence.

Agencies cited the fact that advertisers can see opportunities in a programme as reason to exert influence. However, the majority said that by definition sponsorship does not influence content. It was felt essential that the programme be independent and that changing the programme might make it too commercial, ultimately defeating the objective of the exercise.

Only one broadcaster felt it was reasonable for the sponsor to exert an influence. This was where the programme goes against the interests of the sponsorship; a quoted example was of an energy conservation board sponsoring a programme where energy was used inefficiently. Those who disagreed (88.9%) listed as reasons the compromise of editorial integrity and programme independence as.

Independent producers who felt the exertion of influence was reasonable gave the reason as 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'. The majority, however mentioned the compromise of editorial integrity and independence, that the influence would be totally negative, and that such influence would be inappropriate on a creative level. One respondent also mentioned that one company should not be allowed total sponsorship.

In summation, there is very little support for sponsor influence in programming. There was however, a marked reticence in giving information about the sponsor - programme/producer relationship which makes analysis of the dynamic of sponsorship, its benefits and pitfalls, difficult, suggesting that it may indeed take place.

Interest in Sponsorship

It was deemed important to determine the level of interest among the advertising community for sponsorship in order to assess its likely growth [see fig. 5.2(d)]. As it was also relevant to understand why any interest of lack of interest existed thus far, respondents were requested to supply reasons (see Table D.30).

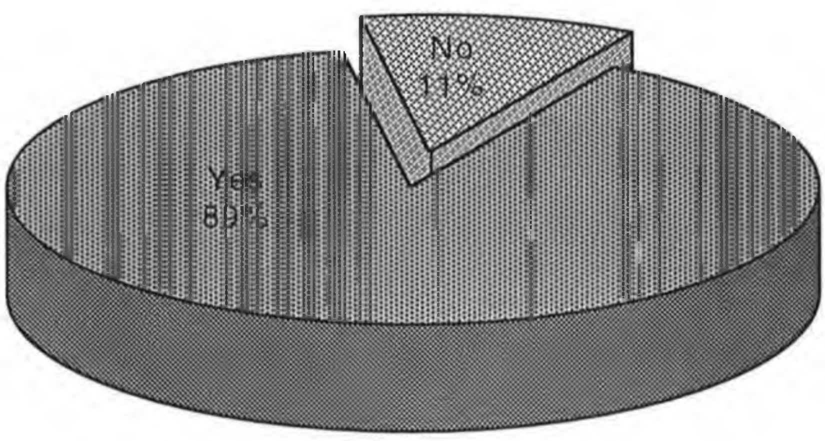

Fig. 5.2(d): Interest in Participating in a Sponsorship Arrangement?

Eighty-nine percent of all respondents indicated an interest in sponsorship. The reasons given were that a programme/event offered a clear branding opportunity and could add value to the marketing mix for integrated marketing. The possibility that sponsorship of a programme/event could attract an audience that could not otherwise be reached was also mentioned as was the targeting of key audiences. The majority of respondents deemed most types of programming suitable for sponsorship except for Current Affairs which was not nominated by any respondent. As a mix of companies were surveyed, including service providers, food manufacturers, clothing manufacturers, etc., there seems to be a broad base of interest in sponsorship and a feeling that it is suitable for most types of businesses. Advertisers indicated an awareness of general trends abroad and an understanding of the less tangible benefits offered by sponsoring a television programme; it was seen as a worthwhile investment.

Beneficiaries of Sponsorship

As part of the process of evaluating the role of sponsorship, present and future, it is important to establish which group or groups are perceived to benefit most from the sponsorship. The reasons given for why sponsorship benefited broadcasters and independent producers centred predominantly around the fact that it provided additional funding. For advertisers, it provided an opportunity for increased exposure and an association with a programme that could prove valuable. Agencies saw the benefits to advertisers as similar but also mentioned the fact that the advertisers could be linked to success, appear altruistic and potentially receive a boost in revenue. Broadcasters echoed these reasons and in several cases drew attention to the belief that in a good sponsorship arrangement all parties benefit. Independent producers also felt that all concerned benefit, one pointing out that agencies in fact receive a good percentage of the sponsorship.

Product Placement

As discussed in an earlier chapter, product placement involves the placing of products by a company either free of charge or with the payment of a fee in a production so that they will appear on screen. As the practice is not permitted in Ireland or the UK, product placement is not as wide-spread here. The number of answers indicating a lack of knowledge regarding product placement may therefore be due to a lack of information regarding the concept and a lack of research on the effects, perceptions and efficacy of the practice. However, Advertisers are strongly of the view that Product Placement (see Table D.2) is a growing trend, a view shared by Producers. The high percentage of 'neither agree or disagree' answers among Independent Producers (36.4%), Agencies (55.6%) and Broadcasters (44.4%) may be interpreted as a lack of certainty about its practice. Product placement may be perceived by broadcasters and producers as a possible compromise or perhaps as the introduction of unwelcome corporate interest. For Agencies, it is seen as having no benefit as it may not involve their services.

Table D.3 reveals that the responses to whether product placement is a useful method of securing advertising or funding are predominantly negative, particularly among broadcasters(66.7%) and Independent producers (45.4%). The answers of Advertising Agencies are mainly in the neither agree nor disagree category. This is interesting as it may indicate a conservatism among the advertising community that is unusual in other markets.

As regards product placement being a more subtle form of advertising, there was agreement from all categories with the exception of Broadcasters (44.4%). This is perhaps not the outcome one might expect as product placement can be seen as representing the increasing presence of commerce in television and is often regarded with suspicion by broadcasters. On the other hand, placements represent a considerable economy for broadcasters in search of ways to supplement production budgets. A high level of 'neither agree or disagree' answers from all categories may indicate that respondents equated 'more subtle' with 'bad' form of advertising and were reluctant to commit to a particular stance. There was general if not overwhelming agreement on product placement being a subliminal way to influence consumers from all respondent groups (Table D.5).

Advertiser-produced Programming

Advertiser-produced programming is a growing trend in both the US and Europe, (see Chapter 4). The purpose of this particular set of questions was to provide a fuller picture of developments envisaged in the Irish market by the various players. Of interest to this research was to establish the level of support for this development in programme production, in general and in the Irish context.

Advertisers were marginally in agreement with advertiser-produced programming, while Agencies were evenly split between agreement and disagreement (Tables D.6, D.7, and D.8). Perhaps not surprisingly, broadcasters (88.9%) and Independent producers (54.5%) were almost unanimously against it. The number of 'no replys' (see tables referred to above) from Independent producers was equally interesting being interpreted perhaps as a lack of knowledge of the practice. These results would seem to indicate that there is no strong feeling favouring the introduction of this practice in this country and only some strong feeling against.

There was a predominantly positive response to the question of whether advertiser or advertiser and agency produced programming was likely to grow, with most respondents feeling it would; only Broadcasters were split on the issue. The significantly high level of positive responses from both advertisers (66.7%) and agencies (66.7%) demonstrates a clear interest amongst them for programme production. If pursued, such a development would alter the dynamic of the Irish production sector dramatically as advertiser-producers often have greater resources at their disposal. It is also likely that, following international trends, they would be most interested in popular programmes such as quiz and game shows, and soap operas. It would seem from the results of the question on prevalence of advertiser produced programming that it is likely to be a future development in production. The responses indicated that while it is currently perceived to be only slightly more prevalent, it is seen as definitely likely to grow.

The predominant view that advertiser-produced or co-produced programmes are not growing may be inaccurate as trends elsewhere indicate that the number of such productions is growing. Whether advertiser produced programming is more prevalent drew a very slight majority of agreements. The level of disagreement suggests that some respondents are not aware of the currency of industry trends in the UK, the rest of Europe, and the US. This lack of awareness about new developments in programme production raises the concern that Irish media players could be unprepared to counter the challenges of larger foreign producers should they target the Irish market.

5.3 A final summation

To recap, the key results obtained from the research suggest the following:

- There is definite interest in sponsorship among each of the respondent groups.
- There is a perception that sponsorship is more prevalent than previously.
- A majority of all groups believe that sponsorship will grow.

- A majority of all groups believe that sponsorship is useful.
- The majority of advertisers are interested in becoming sponsors of programmes.
- There is a widely held belief that certain types of programmes are more suitable for sponsorship than others. These include gameshows, dramas and soap operas.
- The majority hold the view that current regulation is sufficient.

Respondents were given the opportunity to make additional comments should they so desire. Among broadcasters the comment was made that sponsorship will not increase much as a source of funding for RTÉ due to the public service nature of the station. It was also advocated by one respondent in this category that a sponsorship code be enforced universally in Ireland by the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht or another such body. Advertisers mentioned the benefits for themselves in terms of image and prestige as well as finance. Attention was also drawn to the belief that should sponsorship be unregulated its credibility would become questionable. Independent Producers raised the issue of sponsored television being a form of cheap television and consequently undermining the long term funding of the Independent sector in Ireland. In essence it takes some of the financial pressure off the broadcaster. One respondent commented that Advertisers or Agencies producing their own programmes is an unlikely concept. Advertising Agencies, without exception, had no additional comment to make.

6 *Crimeline*: A Case Study[1]

6.0 Introduction

This chapter is a case study of the sponsored programme, *Crimeline,* shown monthly on RTÉ since 1992, in order to explore the dynamics of a sponsorship arrangement more fully. The issues are more complex in the case of this programme because RTÉ is a public broadcaster. The origins of the programme are examined as is the role of the four parties involved in the production of the programme: Midas Productions, the production company that makes the programme; RTÉ, the public broadcaster; Hibernian Insurance, the sponsor; and the Gardaí Siochana who are associated with the programme and its production. A content analysis of three *Crimeline* programmes is detailed in order to illustrate how it functions as a crime programme. The level of detail provided by the content analysis of three *Crimeline* programmes provides an understanding of the ambiguity on the distinction between sponsor, genre and message. The chapter addresses the issues arising from the sponsorship of a programme of this nature which raises general questions concerning sponsorship as a means of funding for television programmes.

6.1 Genesis of *Crimeline*

In 1992, a new genus of crime programme appeared on RTÉ. Replacing *Garda Patrol, Crimeline* began broadcasting once a month in a prime-time Monday night slot. The programme was a radical departure from *Garda Patrol* which

[1] A version of this chapter was published as 'Problems of broadcast funding: *Crimeline* and sponsorship' in the *Irish Communications Review*, Volume 6, 1996 pp 18-27.

was a low-budget programme presented by the Gardaí with no use of live-action or security footage and predominantly concentrating on lost property. It would be fair to describe the programme as functional in a limited way, though unsophisticated and uninteresting. The programme was produced and controlled by the Gardaí; RTÉ contributed the studio and transmission crew but had no real input as the programme was not 'directed' (Lynch, 1996).

By the late 1980s, there was a general feeling on the part of the Gardaí that *Garda Patrol* had outlived its usefulness. RTÉ saw merit in moving in the direction of the type of crime prevention programme exemplified by *Crimewatch UK*. RTÉ made a number of approaches to the Gardaí around this time but failed to attain the level of co-operation necessary to produce such a programme. From a broadcasting perspective, it was felt imperative that the production team would be given access to the level of detail required to reconstruct serious crimes, including access to witnesses and scenes of crimes. Furthermore, the programme would require access to security videos inside banks and building societies. Thus, while the desire to produce a programme of this nature was there, RTÉ did not possess the wherewithal in terms of Garda assistance to realise the concept.

David Harvey, an independent producer, was able to bring together the disparate elements to make such a programme in 1991. He approached RTÉ with a proposal for the programme and secured the involvement of the Gardaí at a very high level having presented the Garda Commissioner with a detailed proposition. He also organised the sponsorship of the programme through Hibernian Insurance. David Harvey had previously suggested the idea for the programme to Liam Miller, RTE's Controller of Programmes, who affirmed RTE's interest in the concept but also the inability of the company to finance it.

It was at this stage that Harvey set about finding a sponsor; this element of the deal was known to RTÉ from the outset.[2]

From a content point of view, the proposed programme matched precisely RTÉ's vision for the programme. However, the issue of whether the programme was appropriate for sponsorship was and remains contentious. RTÉ do not deem news and current affairs suitable for sponsorship though *Crimeline* can be argued to belong to some extent to this category. It also holds the view that the programme must be clearly removed from the product area of the sponsor (Murray, 1995; Molloy, 1996). It would, therefore be inappropriate for a music programme to be sponsored by a record company, and in the case of *Crimeline*, a cited example of an inappropriate sponsor, was that of a security company. As Hibernian were not considered to be selling a direct security product, it was deemed 'not to be too much in conflict with the programme'. The problematic nature of *Crimeline* results largely from the fact that it is part crime prevention, current affairs, community affairs and drama, is neither made by RTÉ nor commissioned by it, and involves the uneasy marriage of public service broadcasting, commerce and the state police force. Due to the difficulties arising from the sponsorship of such a programme, RTÉ, in order to ensure the editorial independence of *Crimeline,* appointed its own editor, originally John Caden, to the programme.

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[2] There appears to be some disagreement among those concerned regarding the chronology of the arrangement of the deals which allowed *Crimeline* to be produced.

6.2 Structure of the Programme

As in the case of *Crimewatch UK*, the programme's model, the structure presents an unchanging opening sequence which clearly identifies the programme as *Crimeline* and unambiguously represents the programme as belonging to the genre of factual 'law and order'/crime programmes. However, the programme allows for some variations within that structure to accommodate 'special features': the episode almost exclusively on drugs during the winter of 1995 or the occasional 'semi-reconstruction', a crime accompanied by some extra footage but which is not fully reconstructed.

The shot sequence that begins each programme represents the process of justice from crime to sentencing in powerful visual motifs, accompanied by dramatic and stirring music (see Table 6.2a). It also visually represents the link between the Gardaí and *Crimeline* and, later, *Crimeline* and Hibernian. The association of the Gardaí and Hibernian is broken by the shot sequence. The piece is dominated by a sense of tension and urgency and the pace blurs the boundaries between the differing elements of the piece created by fast paced editing and fast paced shots. The sequence is in 'postbox' format with a telephone cord on the top and bottom of the frame, while the colour changes from black to blue during the sequence.

00.00	Garda Logo.
00.04	Sequence of one long shot from each of the three reconstructions. Edited on a crescendo with a 'tearing' effect on each edit. Accompanied by a voice-over by David Harvey beginning ‘On *Crimeline* tonight...’.
00.28	Montage of shots: (Phone being dialled 1850 40 50 60 appears beneath the picture.) • Person talking on phone. • Garda on radio with flashing blue lights behind. • People running down shadowy alley. • Dusting for fingerprints. • Squad car travelling at speed. • Fingerprinting. • Person being put into a squad car. • Person being handcuffed. • Judges' gavel striking.
00.52	Fades into the *Crimeline* logo.
00.58	The logo flips over turning into ‘HIBERNIAN’ logo. The titles ‘in association with’ and ‘Insurance’ fade up above and below.
01.03	Opening Sequence ends.

Table 6.2a: Crimeline Opening Sequence

Following this, is a menu of the main items of the night, usually three reconstructions, comprising a long shot from each reconstruction separated by ‘tearing’ edits, edited on the beat, and accompanied by David Harvey’s voice over: ‘On Crimeline tonight...’. This fades into the Garda logo/badge and the programme logo, then fades into an overhead shot of the studio, the presenters names fade up and the introduction begins, welcoming the audience to the programme with mention of some items and some stills from security videos and a description of the crime. The use of two presenters, one male and one female, creates a balance between the need for authority and sympathy/empathy. Harvey's style of presentation is that of a newsreader, unemotional and factual in contrast to Marian Finucane's which is warmer and somewhat more emotive.[3] Finucane, usually introduces the show during which the name of the programme is reiterated and the telephone number is given out:

> Well here in the studio the Garda Crimeline team are standing by to take your calls, as usual, we're at 1850 40 50 60 and you can reach this number from any part of the country for the price of a local call.

This standard piece (said by either presenter) is elaborated upon in this series of *Crimeline* with some variation on the following:

> The regular team is joined by detectives who are involved in investigating the crimes. Your calls will get immediate and expert attention and of course, every call is treated in utmost confidence'
>
> (*Crimeline*, September, 1995)

This set-piece serves to further underline the link between the Gardaí and the programme, emphasise audience familiarity with the programme and its objectives (demonstrated by the use of 'as usual') and reassures the viewers of the competent and trustworthy nature of the Gardaí.

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3 Marian Finucane is arguably one of the most respected broadcasters in Ireland where her Radio 1 lunchtime show deals with the topics of the day in a phone-in format. She has a very high credibility rating with the general public which according to sources in RTÉ, contributed to her selection by RTÉ to co-present the programme.

The programme then continues with the introduction of the first reconstruction, which is done by one of the presenters who then also provides the voice-over for the reconstruction and interviews the investigating officer afterwards. There is generally a map of the area in which the crime was committed intercut with the reconstruction. The map is also intercut, along with stills from the reconstruction; a garda interview follows. A second reconstruction is next in the running order, generally done by the other presenter and follows the pattern described above faithfully. This reconstruction is in turn followed by a teaser into the advertising break using shots from the third reconstruction and security videos, with 'tearing' edits and a voice-over (usually by David Harvey):

> That's all we have for you in part 1 of *Crimeline.* Coming up after the break, some more security footage on the Crimedesk. Can you help us to identify these guys who held up staff in a service station in Dublin (TEAR) A brutal assault on a young woman in the Coolock area (TEAR) We're looking for your help in identifying the attacker and our drugs feature continues. In studio Supt. John McGroarty with more advice on the problem of ecstasy. Join us on *Crimeline* after the break.

In the 'sting' into the advertising break the *Crimeline* logo fades into a shot of a blue car and pans around to the window.[4] The word *'hi'* appears on the window; the lock is engaged to the sound of a car alarm system switching on (14 seconds).[5] There is bleeping and the Hibernian logo fades up (3 seconds).

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4 A sting is a short piece, similar to an advertisement which shows a logo and possibly a sound-bite.

5 'hi' is part of Hibernian Insurances's logo.

The sting out of the advertising break comprises a magnifying glass panning across a word 'HIBERNIAN' to the sound of dialling and phones ringing and the Hibernian logo is revealed (10 seconds). It then spins into the *Crimeline* logo. The single break in the programme is positioned once the attention of the audience is engaged and promises further opportunities to be amateur detectives.

After the break, the presenter appeals for viewers to continue trying to telephone despite the lines being very busy. The two Garda co-presenters on the Crimedesk (a segment presented by a male and a female Garda that appears in every programme) are introduced. The Crimedesk is usually comprised of seven items, generally featuring stolen property, missing people or absconders from bail. Security footage is shown and stills of people and/or property accompany the voice-over. An item on recovered property is often featured, a 'good' item. This is the segment of the show most similar to *Garda Patrol.* The third reconstruction follows and replicates the formula described above. A miscellaneous item is often featured at the end of the programme (although occasionally it may be placed at the beginning): this takes the form of a semi-reconstruction of a burglary or missing person.

Each episode is concluded by one of the presenters narrating over a sequence of shots from the reconstructions as mentioned previously:

> Well that's all we have for you this evening here on *Crimeline*. These are the crimes we hope you'll be able to help us with...

Marian Finucane puts the programme to bed with a final appeal:

> So if you can help us with any information you have on any of the crimes featured tonight, do call us here on *Crimeline* at 1850 40 50 60. The *Crimeline* team will keep the lines open until midnight and we'll be back as usual with an update at

twenty past eleven. That's just after *Questions and Answers*, talk to you then.

There is a wide angle shot of the studio and the credits begin to roll (see Table 6.2b).

00.00	High angle shot of studio with presenters at the desk with the team in the background while credits roll.
00.06	Studio shot fades into a still shot of a computer control room with a bar on the left side with the Garda logo, '*Crimeline*' in association with Hibernian Insurance, and finally the time of the *Crimeline* Update.
00.36	Garda logo appears.
00.37	Fades into a blue rectangle and the *Crimeline* logo zooms on to it.
00.42	Rectangle rotates and becomes the Hibernian logo and the titles 'in association with' and 'Insurance' fade up above and below.
00.49	Sequence ends.

Table 6.2b: Crimeline Closing Sequence

Later in the evening there is an 'update' which lasts no more that four to five minutes but rarely reveals additional information.

Throughout the programme there are appeals for the public to telephone; the telephone number appearing in 'straps' as well as another strap bearing the programme and Garda logos.[6] The reconstructions aim to jog memories re-creating the crime based on information supplied by the Gardaí. The protagonists are played by actors and the Garda in charge of the investigation

6 A strap is a band at the bottom or top of the screen which displays information in a text based format.

speaks about it afterwards. In some instances, the reconstruction will include interviews with friends or relatives of victims or with victims themselves. The juxtaposition of the recreated crime and the actual victim contributes to the sense of reality conveyed by the programme. *Crimeline* tends to reconstruct particular types of crime, primarily violent ones, such as murder, rape and robbery with assault. It also reconstructs a large number of missing people cases. These reconstructions are the most popular part of the programme with the public and have been integral to its success (O'Higgins, 1995; Harvey, 1995). Interestingly, missing people cases get the best response rate with rape cases also receiving a high level of responses (Murray, 1995).

The connection between the programme and the Gardaí is religiously reinforced. The programme is suffused with shades of blue: the maps are blue, the set is a blue-grey, there are blue backgrounds on many sequences and in the reconstructions and the lighting is often very blue. This provides a visual linkage with the Gardaí whose uniform is blue.

6.3 Role of the Sponsor

Crimeline is sponsored by Hibernian Insurance, one of the largest insurance companies in Ireland. The company covers the cost of all elements of the programme with the exception of the studio time and facilities supplied on the night of transmission by RTÉ. The estimated cost of one programme is approximately £18,000, a considerable investment on the part of Hibernian as the format had been untried in Ireland and could have failed miserably. However, as the programme currently achieves ratings in excess of 900,000 viewers each month, and topped the TAM ratings in 1994/95, the investment has represented good value for money.

The approach adopted by David Harvey was to seek a synergy between law, order and security, and the proposed programme. The programme is a 'good fit' for the company and affords them an 'opportunity to be a bit altruistic, to support the Gardaí, to do something decent for the community' (MacCann, 1995).[7] It has also provided an opportunity to develop a very positive association for Hibernian with the Gardaí and crime prevention, as MacCann believes that sponsorship should be relevant to the business of the sponsor. This can be argued to be the strength of sponsorship over conventional advertising: it creates an environment where the sponsor can bask in the reflected glow of a programme's success and absorb some of the attributes of the show.

Within the business community, there is a belief that Hibernian's sponsorship of *Crimeline* is an excellent and enviable deal and may pave the way for future programme sponsorships (MacCann, 1995). In concrete terms, research has shown that the awareness level of Hibernian as sponsors is fairly high and is increasing with each series. In February 1995, ninety five per cent of the population were aware of *Crimeline* and slightly more than twenty per cent of adults were spontaneously aware of Hibernian as the sponsor. This is slightly more than double the linkage level recorded two years previously (Hibernian Insurance, 1995). For those viewers aware of the sponsor, the link appears to induce a positive feeling among them towards the company. People already insured by the company are more aware of the sponsorship and see it as an endorsement of the company.

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[7] Norman MacCann is Marketing Manager with Hibernian Insurance and is the company's representative in the sponsorship arrangement with *Crimeline*.

Each party involved, RTÉ, the Gardaí, Midas Productions and Hibernian, assert categorically that Hibernian is not involved in the production process and has no editorial control. However, if unhappy with the treatment of a particular story, the sponsor can raise it at the monthly meeting between the production team and Hibernian. This has occurred only once or twice, the major complaint being raised was the feeling of too much repetition throughout the programmes. From RTÉ's viewpoint, there was a feeling that the reconstructions were often more violent and graphic than necessary during the early programmes and that this was frightening to some viewers (Murray, 1995). It could be argued that this feature helped to establish the programme and grab viewer attention, however this negative criticism did lead to some modification in approach. As the programme has matured so also have the reconstructions which are now acceptable to the broadcaster.

To safeguard the public and ensure that the policy on regulating commercial influence is followed, RTÉ introduced certain regulations:

i. Companies are not allowed to use the programme to promote their products.

ii. The employees of the sponsor are not to be present on the programme.

iii. No items that relate to the sponsor's business can be shown, used or referred to on the programme.

iv. The actual presence of the sponsor on the programme is not allowed in any way.

The function of these guidelines is to prevent programmes becoming infomercials for a particular company. However, by virtue of the fact that the subject of the programme is crime and the sponsor is involved in the insurance of people and property against crime, it is impossible to preclude items that relate, even if indirectly, to the sponsor's business. Therein lies the conundrum. Despite the best intentions of all concerned to prevent *Crimeline* becoming a tool of the crime industry, the nature of the *Crimeline*-Gardaí-Hibernian association is ephemeral and therefore difficult to regulate. Bryan O'Higgins of the Garda Press Office believes that a linkage does exist in the viewers minds. Similarly, Norman MacCann believes that the programme is seen as a Garda endorsement of Hibernian; it is perceived to be 'acceptable in the eyes of the Gardaí' (O'Higgins, 1995; MacCann, 1995).

A further concern regarding the role of the sponsor is their exploitation of the sponsorship (Carter, 1995). This may be within their rights but from the broadcaster's point of view it is also almost impossible to regulate. Hibernian are reputed to be considering developing a '*Crimeline* Roadshow', which would travel to certain provincial and Dublin suburban centres with a panel possibly chaired by David Harvey, and a representative from the Gardaí, Hibernian, and the security industry. This illustrates the difficulty created by the fact that RTÉ cannot control the usage of the sponsorship outside of the context of the programme; it further serves to re-emphasise the conundrum posed by the programme whereby the sponsorship deal is between Midas Productions and Hibernian Insurance, but, as the broadcaster, RTÉ must regulate its televisual manifestation. This problem has already become apparent in Hibernian's dissatisfaction with their level of presence on the show. They have pursued an audio link at the start of the show where a voice-over will inform the audience that '*Crimeline* is brought to us by Hibernian Insurance'. Even this is rife with difficulties; Hibernian would prefer a more definitive link with stronger and clearer language while RTÉ will not entertain the idea.

6.4 Role of the Gardaí

The Gardaí play arguably the most important role in the production of the programme. They offer certain cases to Midas Productions for inclusion in the programme and give access to the details of the case in order to reconstruct it; each month they suggest six crimes for inclusion but have learned that 'five armed robberies doesn't make good viewing' (O'Higgins, 1995). They also supply two officers to the production team who work on the programme almost full-time. The Gardaí have become increasingly aware that they must take account of the needs of television when participating in a crime prevention programme; the time had come to 'move into a more attractively visual presentation'. In participating in *Crimeline*, the Gardaí have three objectives:

- to elicit help,
- to promote crime prevention,
- to develop the public relations value of the programme in creating a good corporate image.

The greatest successes of the programme in terms of solving cases are on the Crimedesk; about eighty five per cent of cases featured are solved. The programme has less success on major crimes despite receiving upwards of two hundred calls per programme. In Ireland, there are approximately thirty murders a year and most are solved quite quickly. The more difficult ones are featured on *Crimeline*. All assault crimes are featured, but it is maintained that no one type of crime is particularly 'popular'; rather it is the location and circumstances of a crime that determines the response. In addition, there is no particular type of crime that is deemed unsuitable for the programme; however, reducing the shocking nature of a crime is of concern, as is the worry of acquainting viewers with how to commit a crime.

The Gardaí have no reservations regarding the sponsorship of the programme. Hibernian is regarded as being in the same business: crime prevention. While O'Higgins acknowledges the possibility that the public could draw a link between Hibernian and the police, this did not constitute a concern on the part of the Gardaí as it is felt that the presence of the sponsor is unobtrusive. Indeed, feedback on involvement with *Crimeline* has been positive, albeit that the effect on the Garda profile is difficult to assess; recent statistics show a very high satisfaction rate with the Gardaí among eighty nine per cent of people having dealings with the force (Communique, 1994). This is not likely to be due to *Crimeline* although it has played a part as the Gardaí are seen to be doing their job in a very high profile manner.

The Gardaí therefore benefit greatly from the programme. They receive prime-time coverage of their efforts to contain the criminal element in Ireland. During reconstructions, the prompt arrival of the Gardaí is often mentioned. There is also the possibility that some members of the audience may be able to help their investigations but, more importantly, it is the creation of a sense that we, as a society, are all together in the fight against crime. It appears that one of the greatest concerns of the Gardaí is whether their officers appear unsophisticated and inarticulate beside Marian Finucane and David Harvey. Of broader concern is the somewhat cavalier or casual attitude with which *Crimeline* is approached; the Gardaí continually emphasise the need for impact, after all 'its no use being terribly balanced if no-one is watching' (O'Higgins, 1995).

Crimeline may be editorially independent but it is engaged in the process of policing using garda personnel, information and procedures. This method of turning viewers into agents of law and order raises many questions (Woolley, 1984). The analysis of crime provided by the programme is limited by the ideology in which the Gardaí and the production team operate (Hall et al, 1978). In essence, this is a middle-class ideology and further marginalises the underprivileged in Irish society. It tends to disregard white-collar crime, a significant problem in Ireland because it simply is not visual (McCullagh, 1995). Due to the fact that television is where many people actually experience crime, how it is represented actually informs their perception of its causes and cures. The depictions invite a certain 'right' response on the part of the citizen or viewer to crime (Sparks, 1992). Much reporting of crime focuses on detail rather than the entire context surrounding it; there has been a tendency to over-simplify complex issues. It also determines whose voice is heard (Fennell, 1993). This raises further questions about the function of the *Crimewatch UK/Crimeline* genre of programmes. Such programmes contribute less to a meaningful debate on the social origins of crime (unemployment, educational failure, etc.) than on the immediate solution (McCullagh, 1995).

6.5 The *Crimeline* dynamic

In November 1995, *Crimeline* dedicated an entire programme to the problem of drug abuse and related crime in Ireland. The programme had featured drugs in a programme broadcast the previous season and the response had been high (Harvey, 1995). The issue of drug abuse, in particular, the use of ecstasy featured prominently on the news and political agenda in 1995: the first ecstasy-related death had occurred that autumn, the number and popularity of 'raves' was growing and petty crime was increasingly attributed to young people purchasing or dealing the drug.

The introduction to the programme clearly framed the issue. The problem was revealed to be among the youth, traditionally a problem group in crime reporting (Sparks, 1992). Crime has often been attributed to young people with the stereotype of the rebellious teenager as a convenient scapegoat for mugging, joy-riding, petty theft etc. (Hall et al, 1978). Certain kinds of crime are often highlighted which involve young people, a group perceived to be problematic and of little use to society (McCullagh, 1988). The fight against drugs was represented as a problem for both the Gardaí and parents. *Crimeline* assured the audience of the validity of the problem in that it ranked highly in the news and Garda agenda and in the devotion of most of the valuable programme time to the issue. By returning to the problem throughout the programme it became part of the urgency of the programme, and it assumed that urgency and tension.

Such sustained attention to crime, be it fictional or factual, tends to heighten anxiety about crime. The media, as they rely on garda sources to provide them with information about crime, receive the Gardaí's interpretation of the crime problem and their solution to it becomes the frame of reference through which crime is observed in society (McCullagh, 1988). As the fear of crime increases despite any radical increase in the actual incidence of crime, political action has been taken to increase the recruitment into the Gardaí in the last few years.[8] An atmosphere of fright often nurtures the demand for stronger public authority (Hall, 1978). What is at issue is the equality of publicly exchanged discourse about crime and law enforcement (Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994).

Programmes like *Crimewatch UK* and *Crimeline* employ the same syntax of depiction, narration and editing as crime fictions (Sparks, 1992). However, unlike fiction, where justice almost always prevails (Gunter, 1987), this is not the case with 'real-life' crime drama, its sole reason for being is that justice has not triumphed. In a very real sense the reconstructions in *Crimeline*, in their

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[8] An ESRI study carried out on behalf of the gardaí found that only 14 per cent of respondents said that they or a member of their household had been a victim of crime in the past three years (Communiqué, 1994).

'realist' style, using location sound and dialogue, voice-over and commentary and point of view shots (Nichols, 1991) are directed towards the area of tension between anxiety and resolution. This structures the discourse of crime to be dominated by images of fear and threat (Herbert, 1988).

The fear of crime is becoming as much a problem as crime itself and television is one of the ways through which this fear is disseminated. This is not to say that *Crimeline* and programmes of this genre actively promote crime but they carry with them inherent problems of decontextualisation, selectivity, stereotyping and emotive language (Gunter, 1987). This can affect particular societal groups. For example, *Crimeline* usually features a rape each month and sometimes more than one which arguably fosters fear among women. Some depictions will have a higher degree of modality because they deal with things that actually concern us, in a sense, there is something for everyone (Gunter, 1985). Depictions indicate courses of action and the reactions that are justifiable; this nullifies the complex social environment in which crime occurs (Fennell, 1993). Perhaps these new developments in crime programming can be seen as evidence of public disquiet regarding crime and law enforcement. In this context, the reporting of crime has consequences for the practical conduct of criminal justice and for the politics of law and social order (Sparks, 1992). This is evidenced by recent calls on the part of politicians and the legal profession for greater punitive measures to be taken against rapists.

It is possible that it is the rapid social change in Irish society over the past number of years that has contributed most to this fear of crime; collective attention can be focused on something tangible rather than the dramatic alterations in the fabric of society. Questions of morality, once the exclusive domain of the Catholic Church are now in the domain of the state, and church authorities are consulted to a lesser degree than ever before in the history of the

Irish state. Concern about crime often serves to deflect attention from the difficult political issues of the day (Elliot, 1980). One of the major contributory factors to the incidence of crime is longterm unemployment which has long posed problems for Irish politicians. As a more general sense of social and political crisis grows, 'the events which initiate the panic are dramatised against a repertoire of motifs about public safety and national identity crystallising in a horrified condemnation of ... (sic)' (Hall et al, 1978). The 'dots' indicate a space that can be filled by any public outcry, any prevailing sense of unease or anxiety that can be transferred from one issue to another.

Crimeline operates within this socio-political and theoretical context. The structure of the programme is hugely significant to the way in which the programme operates. The structure of *Crimeline* serves to create a sense of dramatic urgency in the hunt for the criminal through regular promises of more crime/drama yet to come and an unrelenting pace from one genre of crime to the next. The impact of this type of programme is hugely dependent on the visual, the reconstructions are extremely important (Harvey, 1995). Due to their dramatic and arguably voyeuristic nature, reconstructions make good television (Sparks, 1992). As mentioned previously, the single break in the programme occurs after the viewers are likely to have engaged with the programme, and it lures viewers with the promise to offer further opportunities to be amateur detectives. The update renews this sense of urgency and further exhorts the viewing public to telephone before midnight.

Due to its unique position in the television spectrum as a sponsored, arguably current affairs programme, broadcast by a public service station with major input from the state police force, *Crimeline* raises many issues. RTÉ, while maintaining editorial control, has no actual control over the exploitation of the programme by the sponsor nor does it own the concept, the latter resting with

Midas Productions. RTÉ is however open to the criticism that behind the worthy exterior of the programme, it is simply a vehicle for audience-maximising violence, an issue raised with regard to *Crimewatch UK* (Dunkley, 1988).

The interaction of three different parties in the production process, each with their own agendas and motivations, is also highly problematic. Essentially the sponsor and broadcaster have competing agendas; the sponsor's intent is clearly commercial, to exploit the opportunity to sell to an audience, while RTÉ seeks to inform in line with its public service obligations. The Gardaí have a pragmatic involvement in seeking public assistance; in a sense they are also using the audience. The programme is, however, a significant prime-time draw, having out-stripped RTÉ's own in-house productions and RTÉ would be loath to lose it (Murray, 1995). Indeed, programmes of this nature appear to be here to stay; in the UK, *Crimestoppers, Crime Monthly* and the spin-off *Crimewatch File* (Minogue, 1990) are televised. In Ireland, *Thou Shalt not Kill*, a sort of retro-reconstruction programme using old murder cases was broadcast in 1995 and 1996. These programmes' success suggest that there are audiences to be won with crime.

The structure of the programme however implies a linkage of *Crimeline* with the Gardaí and with Hibernian, and raises the thorny issue of whether it is ethical to allow one insurance company an association with the Gardaí, however indirect. This does however raise the issue of the subjectivity of interpretation; how indirect a security product is insurance and, though the business of the sponsor is not thought to be too much in conflict with the programme, much how much in conflict is too much? For Hibernian the association has been a positive one which reflects well on the company but viewer awareness of them as the sponsor is lower than they would like. There also seems to be some ambiguity in the minds of the audience as to whether the link takes the form of advertising or sponsorship. For the Gardaí, the programme provides a useful public relations platform on which they are portrayed in a positive and sympathetic manner. It gives a sense that something is being done (Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994). The interaction of these four parties in the production process with their very different agendas and motivations remains problematic. In an era of increasing commercialism, with RTÉ increasingly pressured to deliver audiences, the complex dynamic of Crimeline is a microcosm of the larger pressures and issues facing the broadcaster.

7 Conclusion

7.0 Difficulties facing RTÉ

In any examination of a national broadcasting system, it is imperative that the debates and issues be placed in a more global context. This is due to the incontrovertible fact that global pressures are acting on national markets. In small, peripheral countries such as Ireland, developments in the neighbouring UK and European markets can strongly impact on the national media. The formula of the free market is more prominent than ever and it underpins the expansion of transnational media systems (Streeter, 1994). While RTÉ does not as yet have another domestic competitor, it faces significant competition from British channels (both terrestrial and satellite) for audiences and advertising revenue (Molloy, 1996). Technical change and increasing competition are inevitable and will further highlight the contradictions between commercialism and public service obligations (Snoddy, 1993).

The deregulation of markets and the expensive nature of broadcast media has contributed to a concentration of media ownership. As a consequence, the entry of new broadcasters may be barred by dominant players who inter alia control the pricing of media products (Congdon, 1995). Such concentration can arguably lead to a reduction in cultural diversity and the breadth of political views expressed. Public service broadcasting can uniquely assist in sustaining the plurality of voices necessary in a democratic society. Both commercial and public broadcasters have a distinct role to play in the provision of a competitive, quality system of broadcasting. However, Green (1995) argues that there is no commercial reason for private broadcasters to provide a universalist service and it is unreasonable and unrealistic to expect otherwise. It may be true that a concentrated media industry would be more economically efficient than a more dispersed one, however the prospect of a dramatic reduction in news sources for example, is less than reassuring. For smaller countries, cross-media concentration is especially threatening as it might possibly push domestic media to the margins. However, cross-media empires carry no guarantee of success (Bell, 1996). In the case of television, cultural variations may result in the failure of a formula in one country or territory that was a success elsewhere (the failure of Sky in the European market in the past due largely to its broadcasting in English, for example).

It seems that there is little space within dominant conceptions of broadcasting for a service that is dedicated to the provision of mixed programming available to all on national channels. Within a strictly market construct, where commercial considerations are paramount, broadcasters tend to deliver a service only to the most profitable markets (Scannell, 1989). Public service broadcasters are thus compelled to compete because much diminished audiences would not constitute a justification of the licence fee. However, over-commercialisation resulting from that competition could lead to a weakening of their mandate providing no greater guarantee of survival. The risk lies in the possibility that broadcasters will respond to advertisers rather than to the public because money is limited (Siune, McQuail and Truetzschler, 1992; Webster and Phalen, 1994). Public service broadcasters funded by public monies and advertising are no longer needed to reach a large audience; furthermore, the commercial revenue does not exist to support the multiplying number of channels (Seaton, 1994; Sepstrup, 1991; Garnham, 1994). The issue of broadcast funding is now of critical importance.

In the case of RTÉ, fundamental questions need to be asked about its future funding. Firstly, should there be public funding of RTÉ? If this funding is deemed to be justifiable as is the case in most European countries with respect to their national public service broadcasters, how should it be spent? For example, should the money be allotted to certain types of programmes or programme producers or, as is the situation at present, to an institution such as RTÉ or BBC? Secondly, how should the funds be raised: by licence fee or by some other funding mechanism? If by licence fee, how should it keep pace with inflation and increasing industry costs (Graham and Davies, 1992)? These questions are not easily resolvable and are further complicated by the fact that in Ireland, public funding is supplemented by commercial funding of the public service broadcaster, which in turn is outstripped as a percentage of the overall financing of the station. Public broadcasters like RTÉ have evolved as vertically integrated organisations with responsibilities ranging from programme production to the operation of the transmission network, the latter at a notable cost disadvantage (Foster, 1992). A strong argument in favour of preserving public service broadcasting is that it has developed a comparative production advantage in areas such as sporting events, news and current affairs, and other highlight events (Graham and Davies, 1992).[1] Yet the Irish public cannot afford to sustain RTÉ solely through public funds and it is claimed by RTÉ that the organisation is currently underfunded (Murray, 1995; Molloy, 1996). Consequently, the broadcaster must supplement its finances through commercial activity. As the licence fee is unlikely to increase greatly in the foreseeable future, new means of exploiting commercial funding in a public service context merit investigation.

[1] The RTÉ proms and the Eurovision are areas where RTÉ's productions tend to excel in terms of programme standards and innovation.

The publication of the Government Green Paper (1995) *Active or Passive? Broadcasting in the Future Tense* heralded a new departure in Irish broadcasting legislation focusing on the public sphere and the role of broadcasting. In the decades since the 1960 Act, the broadcasting scene has changed fundamentally and recent legislation has sought to address these changes. In the recently drafted prototype bill, a commitment to a public service broadcaster is affirmed, as is the need for clear structures under which all broadcasters will operate (Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, 1997). The proposed bill also contains quite radical changes for broadcasting in Ireland, the most significant of which is the proposed establishment of an Irish Broadcasting Commission (IBC). This commission would be responsible for both the commercial and public broadcasting organisations. Such a move would result in a redefinition of the RTÉ Authority with lesser powers. It would be within the remit of the Commission to draft a charter for RTÉ and to ensure that RTÉ fulfils its public service obligations. To protect the autonomy of broadcasters the proposal seeks to create a distance between the regulator and the Government. The IBC would also take over the administration, maintenance and development of the transmission network. The Commission would draw up codes for broadcast advertising and sponsorship, and control advertising minutage on all broadcast services. The collection of the licence fee would also be within its remit.

While the legislation represents a significant removal of power from the RTÉ Authority, the emphasis is on the public service functions of RTÉ. This assertion of a strong pledge to public service broadcasting on the part of the Government should serve to ensure the continuation of RTÉ as a public service institution for the foreseeable future.[2] In a time of uncertainty regarding the role of public service broadcasting, RTÉ may have gained some measure of political support.

It is possible for a legislative framework to contain the principles by which a public system of broadcasting could operate satisfactorily. The judgements about these principles could then be the domain of a broadcasting authority such as the Independent Television Commission in the UK or the proposed Irish Broadcasting Commission. This nonetheless presents potential pitfalls as the judgements are to an extent discretionary and the absence of concrete regulations could prove problematic (Graham and Davies, 1992). If the guidelines governing the operation of the IBC are sufficiently clear-cut, the new Authority should operate adequately as it would have greater power to affect the course of broadcasting than its counterpart, the ITC. While the legislation will be significant in its impact on Irish broadcasting, it does not resolve the serious issues concerning the funding of the national state broadcaster.

The question of whether advertising is a suitable method of funding for a public service broadcaster remains. Advertising is less efficient than pay television as a method of noting consumer preferences (Graham and Davies, 1992). As stations must compete, in most, if not all cases for advertising revenue, the pursuit of ratings often results in a narrowing of choice for the viewer. A study of methods of broadcast funding, particularly with reference to the BBC, conducted by Leeds University and cited in Congdon et al (1992:188) states:

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[2] The recommitment on the part of government to public service broadcasting may be modified by a new policy and approach by the new incoming government of Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats (the previous government being made up of Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left, 1994-1997).

> On this option [complete reliance on competitive advertising], the international lessons are full and unambiguous. They warn that competition for advertising on any scale would be quite destructive of programme range and a threat to the many facets of programme quality.

Despite the obvious drawbacks, RTÉ simply cannot afford to operate without commercial funding; the licence fee provides inadequate financing and a large increase would lack popular support. Should TV3 begin broadcasting in Ireland, it could succeed in attracting fifteen to twenty per cent of the audience, consequently causing RTÉ to lose £11-15 million in revenue per annum (Wood, 1996). The worst case scenario is that the channel would damage RTÉ's finances and be of a poor quality itself. However, even if the station should never begin transmitting, RTÉ still faces increasing competition from UTV and Channel 4 for advertising revenue (Molloy, 1996). The question of funding is extremely current for RTÉ in any eventuality.

According to Graham and Davies, (1992) it is doubtful that a better means of funding other than the licence fee exists, despite its drawbacks. Nonetheless, judicious employment of sponsorship could be used to generate commercial revenues in addition to or in the absence of advertising (Foster, 1992). As the survey of advertisers, advertising agencies, broadcasters and independent producers revealed (see chapter 5), considerable interest in sponsorship exists. However, the relationship of sponsor to programme is not without difficulty as the case study of *Crimeline* illustrates. Advertising money will tend to migrate to channels which provide the maximum coverage of target markets (Sturgess, 1991). There are, however, genres of programming that require universal access as they contribute to the maintenance of a national culture (Green, 1995). The provision of a place for these programmes generally falls within the remit of public service broadcasting. To this end, the service needs adequate financial resources to provide the comprehensive range of programmes required by this mandate.

A great hazard for existing suppliers of airtime is that new suppliers will cannibalise viewing, reducing the audience share of each broadcaster (Sturgess, 1991). The pressure for funds manifests itself everywhere (Cottle, 1995). The BBC decided in 1995 to hire out its stars and sets as a means of raising money (Hellen, 1995). Irrespective of the health of ITV's position in the advertising market, many commentators believe that competition for ratings will diminish the network's public service role in favour of purely entertainment-driven schedules (Leapman, 1995).

Despite reservations in RTÉ, sponsorship is seen as a growing means of funding although it is as yet a relatively unexploited form in Ireland. A view among RTÉ management is that it will not exceed five per cent of the total income, nonetheless this is still a significant amount of money (Murray, 1995; Molloy, 1996). As discussed in chapter 2, sponsorship is also particularly valuable to independent producers as a means of augmenting the revenue gained through commissions. As a result of *Crimeline's* success, more companies are becoming interested in sponsoring programmes (MacCann, 1995). The programme is widely regarded as an excellent promotional vehicle among advertisers in Ireland (Cummins, 1997). According to the survey, advertisers see the benefits of sponsorship as manifold; there is a belief that it can bring with it an association that reflects well on a product or service, and that it is capable of targeting audiences that would be otherwise difficult to reach. Italian *Serie A* soccer on Channel 4 is an example of a programme with such desirable characteristics. This programme attracts an audience of middle-class, AB1 and AB2 males in the 25-34 age-group which conventional spot advertising can not reach (Stevenson and Smedley, 1989).

Sponsorship may be a superior means of promotion for more abstract goods and services, as in the case of electricity suppliers for example. Advertising cannot really sell electricity; sponsorship of a popular programme may however, generate goodwill towards the company and improve consumer relations. In addition, sponsorship, if it establishes a complimentary relationship with spot advertising rather than a competitive one, will allow greater exploitation of the advertising market. The greatest difficulty faced by sponsorship is in the perception that it constitutes a subliminal form of advertising. There is a contrasting, but not contradictory view, that sponsorship is less intrusive than advertising because it does not entail breaking the programme into segments to broadcast commercial messages.

Advertisements have only a weak influence on consumers (Barwise and Ehrenberg, 1988). This is in all probability due to the awareness of the viewer that the intent is to persuade. Then why advertise? It is felt that firms advertise to defend and protect their existing market share. In an era of lessening tolerance among the viewing public for advertising, it may well lose whatever efficacy it possesses. While advertising may not be particularly persuasive, it can and does raise awareness of products and services. Sponsorship offers another method of generating awareness and can be more cost-efficient; it may also prevent the audience from 'screening out' the message. It is a means for an advertiser to form an attachment to a programme that is already established and this relationship may be reinforced if the programme is re-run.

The survey of Advertisers, Advertising Agencies, Broadcasters and Independent Producers revealed that there is definite interest in the sponsorship of television programmes among each group. There is also a belief that sponsorship is likely to grow within the Irish context and a majority of advertisers surveyed are interested in becoming sponsors. This interest is concentrated on certain types of programming, in particular gameshows, dramas and soap operas. Sport, which was not offered as a category, was nominated in the 'other' category ten times. Despite constituting a large proportion of sponsored programmes, it nonetheless received less nominations than gameshows, dramas, soap operas and talk shows. Current affairs was perceived to be least suitable for sponsorship. These results support the argument that in the main, sponsorship tends to be attracted by mainstream, popular programmes where the editorial line is less likely to be compromised by the presence of a sponsor. *Crimeline,* however, exemplifies the complexities of the sponsorship arrangement. The programme is seen to be an extremely successful sponsorship among advertisers, yet it is does not fall into the categories of programme seen as most appropriate for sponsorship. The difficulty in balancing the needs of the various parties involved in a sponsorship arrangement have also been highlighted. These difficulties are significant as it seems likely that independent producers will seek sponsors for their programmes in order to supplement funding. This means that there could be a minimum of three parties whose interests need to be considered in the production of a programme, further complicating the role of RTÉ as a broadcaster. The sponsorship arrangement may dilute control over production and raise questions regarding the encroachment of commerce on public service broadcasting.

Ultimately, sponsorship increases commercial presence on public service broadcasters. The unavoidable reality of the need for funding may force an acceptance of, or at the very least, a tolerance for its place on the screen. Sponsorship is undeniably present on all types of services as is evidenced by the recent *Heineken/Hot Press Music Awards* shown on BBC1 on February 24, 1997. Many events, particularly of this type, would not be feasible without the presence of a sponsor and this problem is extending to many other programmes.

It is most likely, that in common with advertising, sponsorship will be attracted to programmes of mass appeal. However, if the pool of funds is increased, this may enable the production of more 'public service' programmes for minority groups or of minority interest, facilitating advances in innovation and experimentation. It is beyond the scope of this work to determine or indeed investigate whether or not sponsorship is a subliminal force of advertising. It may be that viewers pay it as much or as little attention as they do spot advertising. It seems however, that sponsorship as a means of funding for television has established and will maintain a presence, at least for the foreseeable future. Thus, the most rational approach seems to be to exploit it as fully as possible for the benefit of the broadcaster within reasoned and responsible regulation.

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Crimeline, RTÉ1	November, 1995
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INTERVIEWS:

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Tom Gormley (RTÉ)
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Bryan O'Higgins (Garda Press Office)
Norman MacCann (Hibernian Insurance)
Ken Cummins (Zenith Media)
Raymond Snoddy (Financial Times)
Caroline Thomson (Channel 4)

Appendix A: 1996 Licence Fee levels in EU.

BROADCASTER	Licence Fee in US$	Overall rank
funded by licence fee only:		
Denmark - DR	240.46	3
Sweden - SVT	204.29	6
United Kingdom	139.18	8
funded by licence fee, public and private funds:		
Finland	205.73	4
funded by licence fee, public funds and advertising:		
France - FR2,3	139.62	7
Italy - RAI 1,2,3	100.63	11
funded by licence fee and advertising:		
Austria - ORF	275.12	1
Belgium - BRTN, RTBF	249.71	2
Germany - ZDF, ARD	205.05	5
Netherlands - NOS, BA	120.52	9
Ireland - RTE	102.12	10

source: *Institute for Public Policy Research*, 1997

Appendix B: RTÉ Projected budget for 1996.

EXPENDITURE:	**£**
Personnel costs	68.9
Other operational costs	68.6
Depreciation	7.1
Staff reduction	1.8.
TOTAL	**146.4m**
INCOME:	
Licence fee	51.7
Broadcast & Commercial income	82.4
Miscellaneous	2.2
TOTAL	**136.3m**
DEFICIT:	**10.1m**
Interest received:	2m
Interest charged	300,000
Dividend from Radio Tara	**100,000**
Income from RTE Commercial Enterprises	**4.5**
Non-operating income	**6.6**
SURPLUS	**3.5m**
TOTAL LOSS	**1.5m**

Appendix C: Survey

Future Sources of Broadcast Funding

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate future sources of funding for broadcasting with specific reference to sponsorship. Please answer all questions as fully as possible, indicating your agreement or disagreement with a statement by marking the appropriate number or ticking the appropriate box.

Company: ______________________ Number of employees: ______

Contact Name: ______________________ Do you wish your answers

Contact Phone: ______________________ to remain anonymous? ______

1. Nature of Business:

Advertiser ❑ Independent Producer ❑

Advertising Agency ❑ Broadcaster ❑

Please detail your company's activities:

____

____

____

____

2. Product Placement is a:

(1=strongly agree 5=strongly disagree)	1	2	3	4	5
Growing trend within the industry.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Useful method of securing funding/advertising *(delete as appropriate)*.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
More subtle form of advertising.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Subliminal way to influence consumers.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

3. The Practice of Advertisers and Agencies Producing their own Programing for Television is:

	Yes	No
A good business practice.	❑	❑
More prevalent than in previous years.	❑	❑
Likely to grow in scope.	❑	❑

4. Sponsorship is a:

(1=strongly agree 5=strongly disagree)

	1	2	3	4	5
Growing trend within the industry.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Useful method of securing funding/advertising *(delete as appropriate)*.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
More subtle form of advertising.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Subliminal way to influence consumers.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

5. The Practice of Programme Sponsorship is:

	Yes	No
A good business practice.	❑	❑
More prevalent than in previous years.	❑	❑
A growing trend in the industry.	❑	❑

6. Do you think Sponsorship is likely to Increase?

YES ❑ **NO** ❑

Please outline your reasons for your answer:

____

____

____

____

7. What types of programming do you think are most suited to sponsorship:

Current Affairs	❑	Talk Shows	❑
Drama	❑	Soap Operas	❑
Game Shows	❑	Other: ____________	

Please outline the reasons for your answer(s):

____

____

____

____

____

8. Attitudes Towards Regulation of Sponsorship:

	Yes	No
Should there be any regulation of sponsorship?	❑	❑
Is current regulation sufficient?	❑	❑
Is current regulation too strict?	❑	❑
Are current regulations not strict enough?	❑	❑
Should the advertising industry regulate itself?	❑	❑
Should the media industry regulate itself?	❑	❑
Should the state regulate the advertising industry?	❑	❑

9. Has your company ever been involved with a sponsored programme?

YES ❑ **NO** ❑

If YES, please specify the programme and the nature of your involvement:

____

____

____

____

10. Do you think it is reasonable for a sponsor to influence programme content?

YES ❑ **NO** ❑

Please outline the reasons for your answer:

____

	Yes	No
a) Has this ever happened in your experience?	❑	❑
b) If 'Yes' was this a good experience?	❑	❑
c) Is this an ongoing relationship?	❑	❑

11. Would your company be interested in being involved in a sponsorship deal?

YES ❑ **NO** ❑

If YES, please provide details of the type of involvement you would be interested in;
If NO, please outline the reasons for your reticence:

12. Whom do you think benefits most from sponsorship?

Advertisers	❑	Independent Producers	❑
Advertising Agencies	❑	Broadcasters	❑

Please give reasons for your answers:

Please use the space provided below to expand upon any questions or make any comments you would like to make on future broadcast funding.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. You may use the enclosed envelope to return your completed survey to: Amanda Dunne, Communications Department, Dublin Institute of Technology, Aungier Street, Dublin 2 (tel. 402-3002). Alternatively, you may submit your survey by facsimile to (01) 402-3003.

Appendix D: Survey Responses

Responding Group	Number	Response Rate
Advertiser	9	23.68%
Advertising Agency	9	23.68%
Broadcaster	9	23.68%
Independent Producer	11	28.95%
Total Response Rate	*38*	*47.5%*

Table D.1: Response Rate by Target Group

Product placement is a growing trend:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	88.9%	-	11.1%	-
Advertising Agency	22.2%	22.2%	55.6%	-
Broadcaster	22.2%	22.2%	44.4%	9.1%
Independent Producer	54.5%	-	36.45	9.1%

Table D.2: Product Placement Trends

Product placement is a useful method of securing advertising/finance:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	22.2%	33.3%	33.3%	11.1%
Advertising Agency	22.2%	22.2%	56.6%	-
Broadcaster	11.1%	66.7%	1.1%	11.1%
Independent Producer	27.3%	45.4%	18.2%	9.1%

Table D.3: Attitudes Toward Product Placement

Product placement is a more subtle form of advertising:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	55.6%	-	44.4%	-
Advertising Agency	44.4%	22.2%	33.3%	-
Broadcaster	11.1%	44.4%	33.3%	11.1%
Independent Producer	45.4%	9.1%	18.2%	27.3%

Table D.4: Subtleties of Product Placement

Product placement is a more subliminal way to influence consumers:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	55.6%	-	44.4%	-
Advertising Agency	44.4%	33.3%	22.2%	-
Broadcaster	55.6%	33.3%	-	11.1%
Independent Producer	54.4%	-	18.2%	27.3%

Table D.5: Product Placement Influences

Advertisers and Agencies producing their own programming is good:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	44.4%	33.3%	-	22.25
Advertising Agency	44.4%	44.4%	-	11.1%
Broadcaster	-	88.9%	-	11.1%
Independent Producer	9.1%	54.5%	-	36.4%

Table D.6: Attitudes to Advertiser/Agency Programming

Advertisers and Agencies producing their own programing is more prevalent:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	44.4%	33.3%	11.1%	11.1%
Advertising Agency	55.6%	33.3%	-	11.1%
Broadcaster	44.4%	44.4%	-	11.1%
Independent Producer	45.4%	27.3%	9.1%	18.2%

Table D.7: Prevalence of Advertiser/Agency Programming

Advertisers and Agencies producing their own programming is likely to grow:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	66.7%	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%
Advertising Agency	66.7%	22.2%	11.1%	-
Broadcaster	44.4%	44.4%	-	11.1%
Independent Producer	54.5%	18.2%	9.1%	18.2%

Table D.8: Growth of Advertiser/Agency Programming

Television sponsorship is a growing trend:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	88.9%	-	11.1%	-
Advertising Agency	88.9%	11.1%	-	-
Broadcaster	88.9%	-	11.1%	-
Independent Producer	72.7%	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%

Table D.9: Assessment of Status of Sponsorship

Television sponsorship is a useful method of securing advertising /finance:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	55.6%	11.1%	22.2%	11.1%
Advertising Agency	66.7%	22.2%	11.1%	-
Broadcaster	77.8%	-	22.2%	-
Independent Producer	36.4%	27.3%	36.4%	-

Table D.10: Sponsorship as Finance

Television sponsorship is a more subtle form of advertising:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	66.7%	22.2%	11.1%	-
Advertising Agency	44.4%	22.2%	33.3%	-
Broadcaster	55.6%	11.1%	33.3%	-
Independent Producer	45.4%	27.3%	9.1%	18.2%

Table D.11: Subtelties of Sponsorship

Television sponsorship is a more subliminal way to influence consumers:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	44.4%	22.2%	33.3%	-
Advertising Agency	55.6%	22.2%	22.2%	-
Broadcaster	11.1%	44.4%	44.4%	-
Independent Producer	45.4%	18.2%	18.2%	18.2%

Table D.12: Influences of Sponsorship

The practice of programme sponsorship is good business practice:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	77.8%	22.2%	-	-
Advertising Agency	88.9%	-	11.1%	-
Broadcaster	88.9%	11.1%	-	-
Independent Producer	72.7%	18.2%	-	9.1%

Table D.13 Attitudes to Television Sponsorship

The practice of programme sponsorship is more prevalent:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	100%	-	-	-
Advertising Agency	100%	-	-	-
Broadcaster	100%	-	-	-
Independent Producer	63.6%	9.1%	9.1%	18.2%

Table D.14: Prevalence of Sponsorship

The practice of programme sponsorship is a growing trend:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	88.9%	11.1%	-	-
Advertising Agency	100%	-	-	-
Broadcaster	100%	-	-	-
Independent Producer	63.6%	18.2%	9.1%	9.1%

Table D.15: Trends in Sponsorship

Is sponsorship likely to increase:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertisers	88.9%	11.1%	-	-
Advertising Agencies	100%	-	-	-
Broadcasters	88.9%	11.1%	-	-
Independent Producers	81.8%	18.2%	-	-

Table D.16: Potential Sponsorship

	Current Affairs	Drama	Game Shows	Talk Shows	Soap Opera	Other
Advertiser	-	4	2	2	3	6
Advertising Agency	2	6	7	4	6	2
Broadcaster	-	5	6	1	6	5
Independent Producer	-	3	6	5	5	5

Table D.17: Programming Most Suited to Sponsorship

Among the other suggested genres of programming suitable for sponsorship were: Sports (10), Special Interest (5), Documentaries (3), Movies (2), Music (2), Detective series (1), All types of programmes (1), Weather/News (1), Special events (1), Light entertainment (1), Cookery (1). One respondent stated that no form of programming was suitable for sponsorship.

Should there be regulation of sponsorship:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	77.8%	22.2%	-	-
Advertising Agency	88.9%	11.1%	-	-
Broadcaster	100%	-	-	-
Independent Producer	90.9%	-	-	9.1%

Table D.18: Attitudes towards Regulation

Is current regulation sufficient:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	77.8%	-	11.1%	11.1%
Advertising Agency	66.7%	22.2%	11.1%	-
Broadcaster	33.3%	66.7%	-	-
Independent Producer	54.5%	18.2%	9.1%	18.2%

Table D.19: Sufficency of Regulation

Is current regulation too strict:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	55.6%	11.1%	22.2%	11.1%
Advertising Agency	11.1%	77.8%	11.1%	-
Broadcaster	11.1%	55.6%	11.1%	22.2%
Independent Producer	27.3%	45.4%	9.1%	18.2%

Table D.20: Regulations too Strict

Are current regulations not strict enough:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	11.1%	44.4%	11.1%	33.4%
Advertising Agency	22.2%	66.7%	11.1%	-
Broadcaster	33.3%	33.3%	-	33.3%
Independent Producer	27.3%	36.4%	9.1%	27.2%

Table D.21: Regulations not Strict Enough

Should the advertising industry regulate itself:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	66.7%	33.3%	-	-
Advertising Agency	77.8%	11.1%	-	11.1%
Broadcaster	44.4%	55.6%	-	-
Independent Producer	45.5%	54.5%	-	-

Table D.22: Advertising Self-regulation

Should the media regulate themselves:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	55.6%	22.2%	-	22.2%
Advertising Agency	100%	-	-	-
Broadcaster	66.7%	33.3%	-	-
Independent Producer	45.5%	54.5%	-	-

Table D.23: Media Self-regulation

Should the State regulate the advertising industry:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	44.4%	33.3%	-	22.2%
Advertising Agency	-	100%	-	-
Broadcaster	33.3%	66.7%	-	-
Independent Producer	54.5%	45.5%	-	-

Table D.24: State Regulation

Has your company ever been involved in a sponsored programme:	Yes	No
Advertiser	55.5%	44.5%
Advertising Agency	66.7%	33.3%
Broadcaster	100%	-
Independent Producer	54.5%	45.5%

Table D.25: Experience of Programme Sponsorship

Is it reasonable for a sponsor to influence programme content:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	22.2%	66.7%	-	11.1%
Advertising Agency	22.2%	77.8%	-	-
Broadcaster	11.1%	88.9%	-	-
Independent Producer	18.2%	81.8%	-	-

Table D.26: Attitudes towards Sponsor Influence

Has this ever happened in your experience:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	11.1%	66.7%	-	22.2%
Advertising Agency	33.3%	33.3%	-	33.3%
Broadcaster	22.2%	66.7%	-	11.1%
Independent Producer	9.1%	54.5%	-	36.4%

Table D.27: Sponsor Infulence Experience

Was it a good experience:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	11.1%	-	-	88.9%
Advertising Agency	22.2%	22.2%	-	55.6%
Broadcaster	-	22.2%	-	77.8%
Independent Producer	9.1%	9.1%	-	81.8%

Table D.28: Experience of Sponsorship

Is it an on-going relationship:	Yes	No	Dis/ agree	No Reply
Advertiser	-	11.1%	-	88.9%
Advertising Agency	22.2%	22.2%	-	55.6%
Broadcaster	11.1%	22.2%	-	66.7%
Independent Producer	9.1%	9.1%	-	81.8%

Table D.29: On-going Sponsor Influences

Would your company be interested in being involved in the sponsorship of a programme/event:	Yes	No
Advertiser	88.9%	11.1%

Table D.30: Advertisers Interest in Sponsorship

Who benefits most from sponsorship:[†]	Advertisers	Advertising Agencies	Broadcasters	Independent Producers
Advertiser	4	-	3	7
Advertising Agency	7	-	5	5
Broadcaster	5	1	4	2
Independent Producer	8	5	6	8

Table D.31: Beneficiaries of Sponsorship.

[†] In most instances respondents nominated more than one beneficiary.