

Values in and values of video-on-demand services

The case of Danish DRTV

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ABSTRACT

The growing importance of video-on-demand (VoD) services as a way to expose television programmes to viewers implies that the study of public service media (PSM) must include VoD interfaces. On the basis of politically decided severe cutbacks, the Danish PSM organisation DR launched a new strategy in 2018, in which the VoD service DRTV was announced to become the main entrance to all of DR's content. In addition to this, DR announced a shift in its publishing strategy, from volume to value, and three programme types were highlighted as of special value to democracy, culture, and cohesion in Denmark: news, culture, and content for children and young people. This chapter examines DR's value-over-volume claim and the presence of the three programme types in the VoD service. Finally, it initiates a methodological discussion of how to study the constantly changing interface of a VoD service.

KEYWORDS: publishing strategies, curation, VoD services, Danish media policy, public service media

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Introduction

The Nordic countries have a long tradition of a strong public sector, including the media (Syvertsen et al., 2014). The strength of the public service media (PSM) is historically reflected in profound subsidies, political support of the idea, and a high reach within the population. However, within the past few years, we have seen a change in how PSM is viewed in Denmark, and the PSM organisation DR has been hit by severe cutbacks as well as a politically decided prioritisation of the content (Kulturministeriet, 2018). As a consequence of the cutbacks, DR launched the strategy paper *Sammen om det vigtige* [Together on the important] in 2019, which stated the following:

It is not crucial if each Dane spend 180, 90, or 45 minutes on DR's content on a daily basis. The crucial thing is that the content is being used and makes a difference to democracy, culture, and communities and is of value to each individual user and to the society as a whole. We name that *value over volume* [translated; emphasis added]. (DR, 2019: 11)

Thus, the 2019 strategy paper emphasises quality over quantity. Further, three types of content are identified as of key importance: news, culture, and content for children and young people (DR, 2019). These areas mirror the political prioritisation of DR's content (Kulturministeriet, 2018).

In this chapter, we study whether DR's proclaimed change of focus from volume to value and prioritisation of content can be detected in the way the streaming service DRTV is being curated. We do this by answering the following research questions:

- RQ1. How prominently are the programme types of news, culture, and content for children and young people placed in the interface on the landing page of DRTV?
- RQ2. Which methods and metrics are productive in evaluating the prominence of programming in a VoD interface?

What makes DRTV an interesting case to study is the digital turn DR has announced: In October 2021, DR launched a new digital-first strategy, which means that DRTV will play a still more vital part amongst DR's services (DR, 2021a).

This chapter is neither an evaluation of the value-over-volume strategy, nor an assessment of DR's fulfilment of public service obligations. Instead, our aim is twofold: First, we characterise DRTV's curation through the lens of genres to shed light on how the PSM organisation has reacted to the political pressure and how it – in the present situation – seeks to legitimise its value to society. Second, we reflect on the methodological challenges of studying a VoD interface.

DR and the political headwind

For this chapter, we have chosen the Danish PSM organisation DR as our case. Being one of the Nordic countries, many readers will recognise Denmark as part of Hallin and Mancini's (2004) democratic corporatist model and what Syvertsen and colleagues (2014) described as the media welfare state. This implies that Denmark has a long and strong tradition of public service broadcasting. However, the political view on public media, and especially DR, has changed within the last decade. DR is not the only PSM organisation in Denmark, but it is the oldest and largest – and it has gone through substantial changes since 2018. Some changes are initiated by technology and new patterns of media usage, and some changes are politically decided. In the following sections, we shed light upon the media political changes we have seen within the past five years and DR's immediate strategic response. This serves as backdrop for the following analyses of DR's curation of the streaming service DRTV.

The 2018 political downsizing of DR

From its foundation in 1925, DR has had the status of an independent public organisation. The activities of DR are governed by two instruments: the Danish Radio and Television Broadcasting Act and public service contracts, which are agreements made between DR and the Minister for Culture, based on the media political agreements. The media political agreements and the public service contracts typically run for four years. In 2016 and 2017, prior to the negotiation of the media political agreement, a severe political criticism of DR's size, and also of some of DR's activities and content, was aired by the right-wing and centre-right parties in the Danish Parliament. These parties had a majority in the parliament, and in the media political agreement for 2019–2023, they decided that the income of DR was to be reduced by 20 per cent and DR's radio and television channel portfolio was to be downsized. The political intention with both initiatives was to “secure better framework conditions for the private media [translated]” (Kulturministeriet, 2018: 1).

In January 2020, the art and culture-oriented television channel DR K was closed down, while the youth channel DR3 and the channel for children aged 9–14, DR Ultra, were transformed to an online brand and an online universe, respectively. As of 2022, DR runs three linear television channels: The main channel DR1; DR2 with a profile that is oriented towards society, debate, and current affairs; and DR Ramasjang for children aged 4–8. In addition to the downsizing of the channel portfolio, the cutbacks resulted in a (politically initiated) prioritisation of the programme content: While DR was to broadcast less of certain genres (sports, entertainment, and fiction from abroad), other genres (news, information, debate, culture, Danish music, and Danish drama) were regarded as core public service genres and

thus to be prioritised (DR, 2018a; Kulturministeriet, 2018). In 2019, a Social Democratic government took over, and in the new media political agreement, which covers 2022–2025, DR’s subsidy is increased (Kulturministeriet, 2022).

DR’s strategic response: “Value over volume”

As a consequence of the politically initiated changes, DR has published several development plans and strategy papers. One element of DR’s strategic response to the cutbacks, which appears in the plan *The New DR* from September 2018 as well as the strategy paper *Sharing the Important* from 2019, is what is referred to as “value over volume” (DR, 2018b: 8; DR, 2019: 11). Value over volume as strategy refers to the fact that DR, as a result of the cutbacks, will offer less content, but will enhance its focus on value: “DR will become smaller with fewer channels and programmes. But our beacon will be that we will have a DR where value is prioritised above volume [translated]” (DR, 2018b: 8). In the subsequent strategy paper, this ambition was translated to two objectives: first, that three out of four Danes experience DR’s content as being of value to them; and second, that Danes know of and make use of three specific programme types – news, culture, and content for children and young people (DR, 2019). These programme types (which mirror the political ambition of DR as expressed in the media political agreement for 2019–2023) are highlighted as of special value to democracy, Danish culture, and cohesion in Denmark. This reflects the findings of Bengesser (see Chapter 3 in this volume), who discusses the genres typically used for legitimising PSM. As such, our discussion of how value is being operationalised by DR takes its starting point in an analysis of how the three programme types are prioritised, placed, and promoted in the VoD interface of DRTV. First, however, we reflect theoretically on DR’s role as a curator and the challenge of directing users’ attention in a VoD service.

Curation and interaction: Characteristics of a video-on-demand interface

Since 2017, DR has, occasionally, verbalised its role as provider of DRTV as that of a curator, for instance, that it is a strategic ambition for the streaming service “that it must be a distinct alternative to the commercial streaming services – when it comes to the content and the way the content is connected, curated, and made available [translated]” (DR, 2017: 22). Also, in interviews we conducted, employees at DR have used the term curation to describe the editing of the VoD interface (Lassen, 2018; Sørensen, 2020). For DR and other digital public broadcasters, the idea of verbalising its online activities as curation is that it is platform neutral. As such, our reason for including the term here is that we consider the idea of curation to be a way for the digital broadcaster to legitimise its role as a provider of a VoD service.

The notion of curation originates in the art world, where it describes how a person – a curator – is “selecting artworks; directing how they are displayed in an exhibition; and writing labels, interpretational material, catalogues, and press releases. The curator is basically in this case acting as a kind of interface between artist, institution, and audience” (Graham & Cook, 2010: 10). In several respects, there is a clear parallel between the work of a traditional curator and an editor of a VoD service: They determine which programmes are selected, how they are displayed in the interface, and how they are presented through headlines, labels, and programme descriptions. As such, it is not a new idea to link curation with the work of a television company: Doyle (2016), Johnson (2013), and Sørensen (2014) have all described broadcasters’ online activities as curation. By articulating its activities on DRTV as curation, DR points at its active editing of the service. But, what about the role of the user? After all, interaction is a key characteristic of *video-on-demand* services, as stressed by Chamberlain (2010: 86):

Television interfaces demand interaction from viewers. They require viewers to make choices about how they will negotiate the streams and databases of possible viewing options, calling on viewers to scroll through choices, make selections, respond to prompts, and otherwise engage with the devices that control the delivery of content.

At the same time, Webster (2014) interestingly pointed at the fact that due to the comprehensive content supply, only a few services are actual pull media. Most often, recommendations and personalisation are used to guide and direct the user in choosing content. Thus, we must understand VoD services as a mixture of free choice and interaction on the one hand, curation and guided decisions on the other.

Within the past few years, we have seen an increased focus in academic literature on the power of interfaces. As stated by Johnson in her book *Online TV* (2019: 117): “However, beyond the actual content available within the service, the design of online TV interfaces can affect the user’s ability to discover content”. Also, Hesmondhalgh and Lotz (2020), Lobato (2018), Mazzoli and Tambini (2020), and McKelvey and Hunt (2019) have – with notions such as prioritisation, placement, prominence, and discoverability – pointed at how influential a good position in an interface is. This is due to the nature of the interface: As described earlier by Johnson (2017), the vertical axis of a web page entails a hierarchy of the content, in the sense that the content placed at the top typically gets more attention (viewing or clicks) than that at the lower part or bottom of the page. This structure is what Bideau (2020) termed prime space, as a spatial counterpart to the temporal prime time of the linear television schedule. The hierarchy becomes a self-reinforcing mechanism in that users do not necessarily scroll all the way down to the bottom of the page, and the curator of the page therefore places the content deemed most important at the top.

On VoD interfaces, we most often find that content is not only structured along a vertical axis, but also along horizontal rows. As rows are often wider than users' screens, users must click to view all the content presented on the row. Thus, with the words of Hesmondhalgh and Lotz (2020: 389): "Merely being available in a library of programs means relatively little; such programs must also be discoverable". As such, curators of VoD interfaces take on the role of gatekeepers, strongly influencing which content, and thus which kind of experience, the users will discover, pick, and choose "within complex information environments" (Lobato, 2018). Further, Hesmondhalgh and Lotz (2020) have argued how placement can either be guided by a wish to produce revenue or to be strategic. Predicting where users will look and click has thus created much research attention, for example, at Google (Granka et al., 2008) and for VoD recommender systems (Zhao et al., 2016). In the context of non-commercial PSM, the prioritisation of content reflects the strategy of the company. Following this, we suggest that studying the placement of programme types on DRTV provides us with valuable insight into DR's content curation, and thus the PSM organisation's response to regulation, competition, and usage.

Quantifying public service video-on-demand services: The case of DRTV

The counting of public service

The literature on public service provides many examples of quantitative research, for example, to assess the linear broadcasting in relation to public service obligations (Nissen, 2006; van der Wurff, 2004; Youn, 1994). For public broadcasters' VoD services (what is also referred to as BVoDs), we find, despite the growing importance of reach, relatively few research contributions. Kelly and Sørensen (2021) have presented a longitudinal comparison of BBC iPlayer and DRTV, and Lassen and Sørensen (2021) have offered an analysis of the relationship between DR's linear channels and its VoD service. Bruun and Bille (2022) compared the linear channels and VoD services of DR and Danish TV 2, while Bruun (2019) touched upon the VoD of TV 2. Within a Norwegian context, Spilker and colleagues (2020) have conducted a comparative study of the BVoD and linear channels of NRK and Norwegian TV 2. For the present study, we have collected a comprehensive dataset of the videos (tiles) on DRTV.¹ Over a period of 17 months from November 2019 to May 2021, we have, on a daily basis, registered the titles and positions of the so-called tiles on DRTV's front page (www.dr.dk/drtv/) as well as several of the subpages. We borrow the term tile from Bruun and Bille (2022), as it is used in the television industry to signify the appearance of an on-demand video at a VoD web page. A "tile" typically consists of a thumbnail picture, a programme title, and supplementary text indicating genre, publication data, or

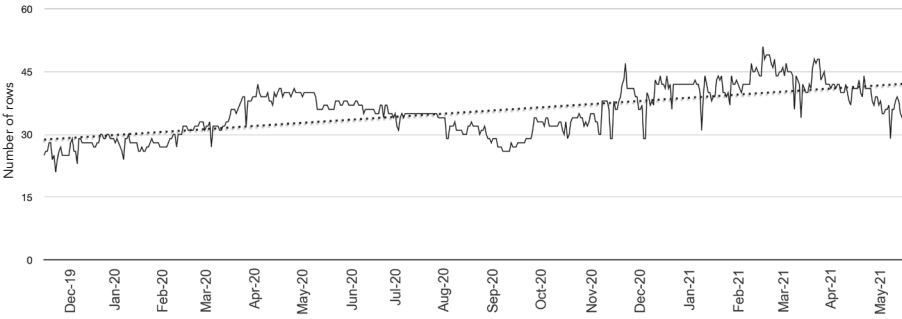
similar. Our unit of analysis is the programme title, thus, we do not consider thumbnail pictures or supplementary text. Tiles typically appear several days in a row; to signify this, we use the phrase “number of tile appearances”, which means the number of days a specific tile has been shown. In some cases, a specific tile may be shown more than once at the web page on the same day, also known as shuffling or repurposing (Bruun & Bille, 2022). As this possibly provides more attention to the programme, we have counted all instances of the programme in our calculations. To the visual effect of showing the same tile in several places, we use the terms double exposure, triple exposure, and so on. The television and VoD industries use different terms for the horizontal organisation of the tiles, such as decks, collections, or rows (Bruun & Bille, 2022). We use the term rows to emphasise the visual appearance at the VoD page, indicating the length of the page.

The collected data was subsequently stored in a database and processed with python scripts. DRTV is available via different platforms (including smart-TVs, PC web browsers, tablets, and smartphones). In our case, we collected data via a PC web browser.² When preparing the data for analysis, we consolidated some programme or series titles to correct for typos in the collected material. We have completed missing cases of DRTV’s genre information (the so-called display categories shown below the title of the programme) by inferring the display category or categories from other instances of the programme or series. For the 520 days between November 2019 and May 2021, we recorded in total 183,284 tile appearances on DRTV’s front page, with an average of 352 tiles per day. We found 5,867 unique programmes, of which 4,023 belongs to one of the 472 series we identified.

Discoverability

The average of 352 tiles per day indicates a large VoD front page, but following Hesmondhalgh and Lotz (2020), the user could only see a fraction of this content without scrolling either vertically or horizontally. Below the top row, the user could see two or three rows of content, effectively limiting the number of tiles immediately visible to the user to about 23 tiles at one glance without scrolling. Of each row, only the first six tiles were visible, but on average, a row had 8–9 tiles and may have contained up to 36 tiles. DRTV’s front page was also long, so that users must scroll vertically to see most of the content. With an average of 35–36 rows, it grew longer during our sampling period, as can be seen in Figure 5.1. The curation of DRTV has resulted, however, in a good circulation of programmes: 57 per cent of the programmes have at some point been shown at the top of the DRTV page.

Figure 5.1 The number of rows at DRTV front page over 520 days



Value over volume in the DRTV interface?

Over time, the content of DRTV’s front page changed, but how did the display of content reflect DR’s strategy of value over volume? Whereas we cannot say anything about the users’ perception of value, we can at least assess the volume of content offered, as well as its novelty. DRTV’s volume – understood as the number of tiles presented on DRTV’s front page – fluctuated over time, but the total number of tiles per day (the solid line in Figure 5.2) grew over time. The growth can be partly attributed to an increase in the number of tiles with double or triple exposure, but the number of unique tiles per day also grew (see the dashed line in Figure 5.2). This contradicts somehow DR’s strategy of value over volume. However, the strategy seems reflected in a relatively tight curation of the most visible parts of DRTV.

Figure 5.2 Number of tiles per day at the DRTV front page over 520 days

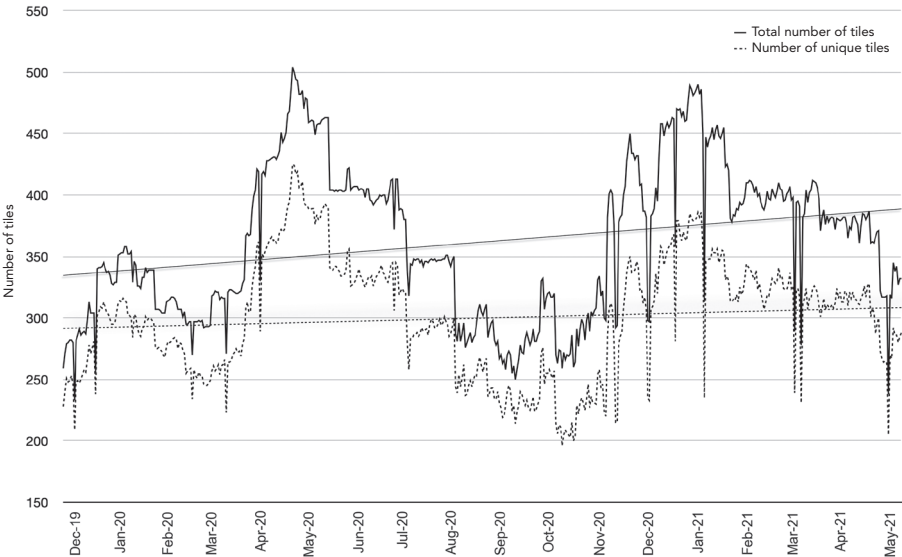
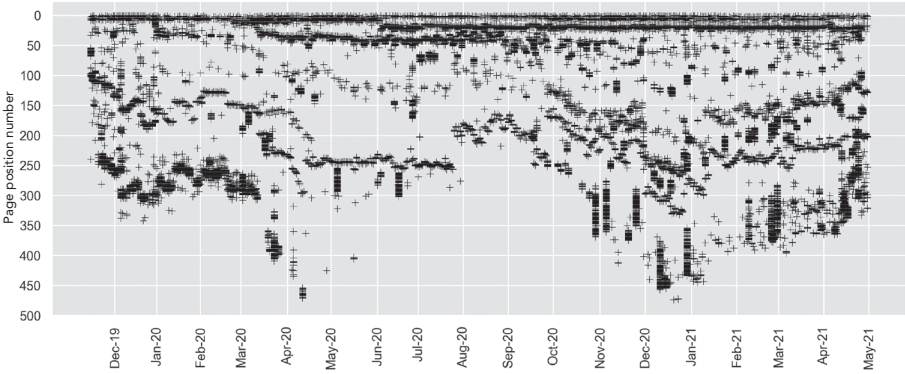


Figure 5.3 shows that the most intensively curated part of DRTV’s front page, in terms of new content added, was the top, with each + representing a new or re-introduced tile. The vertical groups or lines of +’s show us that several new tiles were added on the same day. The horizontal group or lines show the specific areas of the page where new content was added. It appears that certain areas of the page were subject to intense curation, while the rest of the DRTV page was left untouched. The upper areas of the page were renewed very often, whereas curation for the rest of the page seemed to shift focus from one area to another.

Figure 5.3 Positions of new or re-appearing tiles at the DRTV front page over 520 days

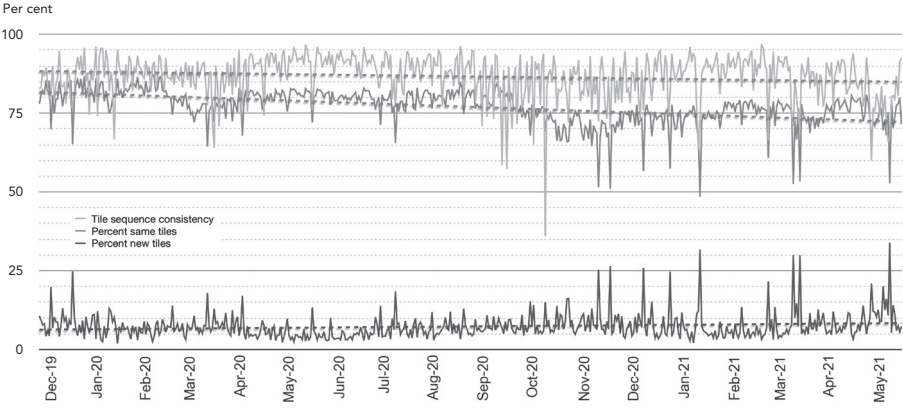


Comments: The y-axis shows not rows but video content position at the page, with “0” signifying the top-left corner.

The curation and publishing dynamics for a VoD interface is different from the scheduling of linear channels. In the latter case, the number of re-runs may be a topic for discussion when the value for the viewer is evaluated, but in the case of VoD interfaces, the questions might rather be how much new content is being added every day, and to what extent the composition of content in the interface is identical from day to day. Quantifying these two questions could help us to assess how actively the VoD service has been curated. In Figure 5.4, the upper light grey line illustrates the extent to which the composition of DRTV’s front page was identical from day to day – that is, the tile sequence consistency. We see that the tiles – with small fluctuations – remained at the same positions on the page. On average, the DRTV front page was 92.5 per cent identical from day to day. As shown by Figure 5.3, the curation took place at selected areas of the page. The darker grey line in the middle of Figure 5.4 shows the percentage of content which was the same from one day to the next, regardless of its position on the page. From day to day, an average of 71.6 per cent of the content was also shown the previous

day; however, this declined over time. Finally, the dark grey line shows a slightly increasing percentage of new content being added to DRTV’s front page every day. On average, 7.3 per cent new content was added every day.

Figure 5.4 The percentage of 1) interface similarity, 2) same videos, and 3) new videos between consecutive days



Comments: Peaks may be attributed to missing data.

During the 520 days, most of DRTV content changed. However, some genres seldomly offered new content (e.g., Politics, with 449 tile appearances of 2 programmes; Science and Technology, with 738 tile appearances of 9 programmes); Nature, with 845 tile appearances of 11 programmes; and Culture, with 8,239 tile appearances of 114 programmes). Six titles, for example, *Den Store Bagedyst* [*The Great Bake Off*], could be found on DRTV all 520 days.³ DRTV was thus rather static in its curation, particularly at the lower part of the page. The overall impression of DRTV was more that of an archive, where users can access a large catalogue of programmes, than as a tight curated service (for a discussion of the size of respectively BBC’s iPlayer and DRTV, see Kelly & Sørensen, 2021).

Categorising DRTV’s video-on-demand content

The literature on linear public service offerings often discusses which types of programmes gain a high visibility from being scheduled in prime time, and how this visibility relates to public service obligations (Lassen, 2020; Van den Bulck, 2009; van der Wurff, 2004; Youn, 1994). This chapter takes a first step in analysing the visibility of content in a BVoD interface, which is relevant for future discussions of policies and public service obligations. Categorising DRTV’s content is, however, a non-trivial task. Our research reveals strong tensions between two models for content categorisation: One is purposed for public service auditing of linear television; the other is aimed for helping

the user navigate the DRTV VoD interface. The first model – used for DR’s yearly public service audit reporting of their broadcast programming to the Ministry for Culture (e.g., DR, 2020) – has nine broad categories agreed upon among Danish broadcasters: Dansk dramatik og fiktion [Danish drama and fiction], Aktualitet og debat [Current affairs and debate], Oplysning og kultur [Information and culture], Nyheder [News], Udenlandsk dramatik og fiktion [Foreign drama and fiction], Musik [Music], Sport, Underholdning [Entertainment], and Undervisning [Education]. This is a simplified modification of EBU’s ESCORT (EBU, 2007), but extended to, for example, discern between Danish and foreign fiction.⁴ In the following, we refer to these categories as the public service audit genres (PS-Audit genres). These PS-Audit genres are not shown in the DRTV interface.⁵

The other model of categorisation is what DR calls display category labels, shown under each programme. The purpose of display labels, according to DR (Søren Gjelstrup Jessen, as cited in Sørensen, 2020), is intended to help the user better navigate the content; the user should, via these labels, find DRTV more valuable. Analysing the tiles in our dataset, we found 19 different display labels that indicated genres such as Dokumentar [Documentary], Livsstil [Lifestyle], Kultur [Culture], and Nyheder og aktualitet [News and current affairs]. Particularly the documentary label is often used at the DRTV front page: 30.2 per cent of all tiles in our dataset feature this label, confirming findings from Bruun and Bille (2022). In addition to the genre labels, we found labels indicating an episode, season or series, publication date or time, or “teaser” text. Finally, some display labels referred to a channel brand, such as DR3 or DR Ramasjang.

As a means for categorising DRTV’s content, display labels are not a stable source: Our processing shows that 104 programmes had two display labels, and four programmes had three. When calculating the number of appearances of display labels, this number may thus be higher than the total number of tile appearances. The coexistence of the two systems (i.e., PS-Audit genres and display labels) witnesses that the traditional public service categories are not assumed to be helpful for the users of the DRTV interface.

Value as an expression of public service objectives

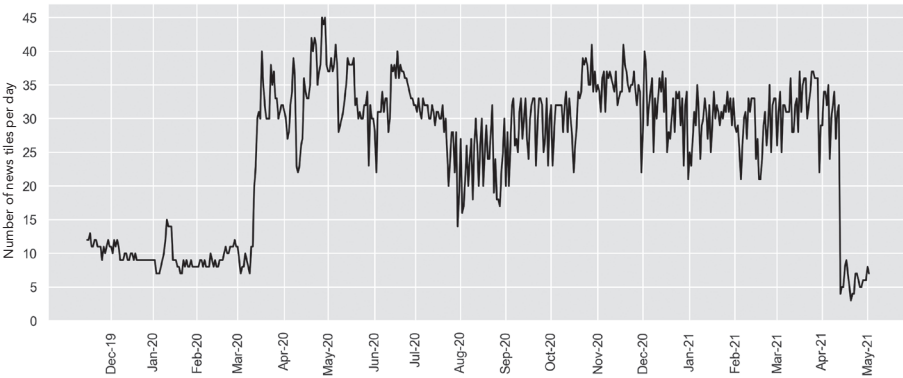
Categorising DRTV’s content to determine how public service objectives are reflected in the exposure of the programming on DRTV’s front page has been, as we see above, a non-trivial task: Should we have applied the PS-Audit genre categorisation from the linear channels on the VoD content, thus making the VoD and linear scheduling comparable? Or should we have applied the VoD display category labels? Confronted with the impossible choice, we show how the DRTV interface looks using both the PS-Audit genre and the VoD display label categorisation models. Having applied both

methods of categorisation, we analyse the presence of the three programme types of news, culture, and content for children and young people on DRTV to examine whether the pronounced focus results in prominent placement, thus reflecting DR’s curation strategy.

News on DRTV’s front page

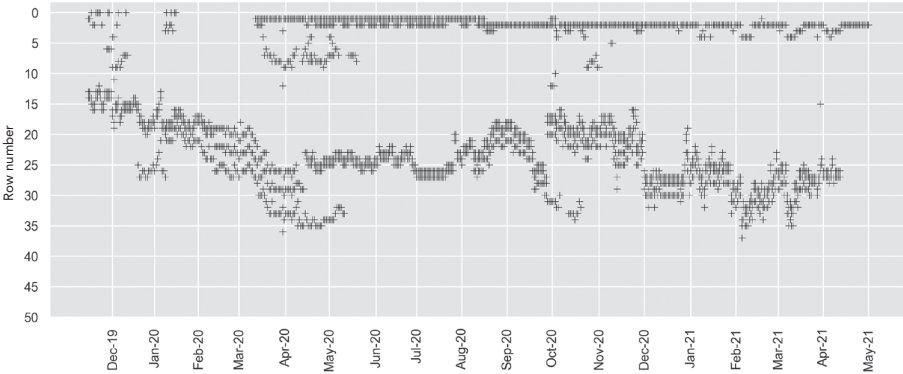
The News genre is an absolute key genre for DR – on television, radio, and DR’s website. For the auditing of DR’s public service obligations, we found two genres: News and Current affairs and debate. DR’s use of the two genre categories was sometimes inconsistent: For nine programme titles, both genre categories were in the 2020 audit. Following the PS-Audit-based definition of news, we found 6,722 tile appearances of news over 520 days, excluding multiple appearances of the same tile the same day. Counting tiles with the display label News and current affairs, we found 5,141 tile appearances. News tiles were, however, for good reasons, labelled with publishing time and date; we found 13,161 such tile appearances. In total, we found 17,611 unique news tiles. This means that the method of using DR’s PS-Audit genres did not reflect the actual number of news tiles on DRTV’s front page. Many news tiles were produced specifically for DRTV and would thus not be found if we had only applied the PS-Audit category News on the VoD dataset. In terms of specific news shows (we selected 17 titles), we found 9,209 tile appearances over 520 days, equal to 6.15 per cent of all tile appearances. The news programmes, except the DR2-programme *Deadline*, were typically displayed at the top of the page, or near to it.

Figure 5.5 *The amount of news programmes on DRTV, including multiple appearances of the same tile*



The number of tiles with news grew dramatically around March 2020 and declined again, suddenly, in mid-April 2021, as it can be seen in Figure 5.5. This pattern is a direct consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic also caused news tiles to appear higher on DRTV’s front page to a greater extent, as is evident in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6 Positions of 13,351 tile appearances of 17 different news programmes

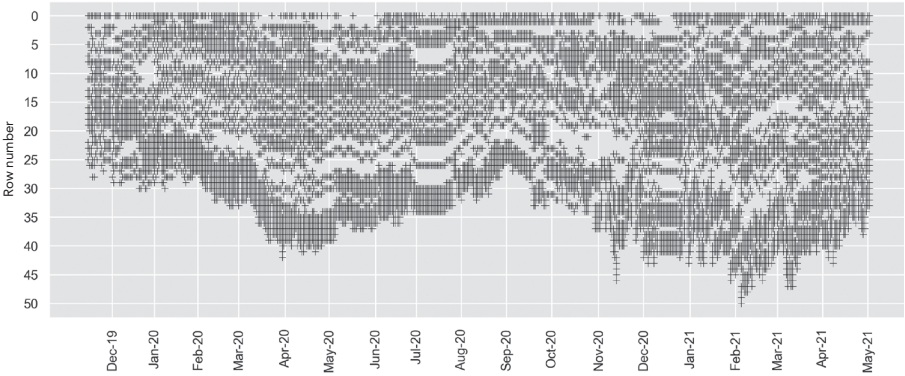


Thus, news tiles gained – triggered by external events – a prominent position on DRTV’s front page as long as Covid-19 was considered a societal crisis in Denmark. Likewise, in March 2022, DR decided to hasten the launch of a more “clear and continuous” news offer, with frequent live updates and a prominent position on DRTV’s front page as a direct consequence of the tragic invasion of Ukraine (Christiansen & Hansen, 2022).

Culture on DRTV’s front page

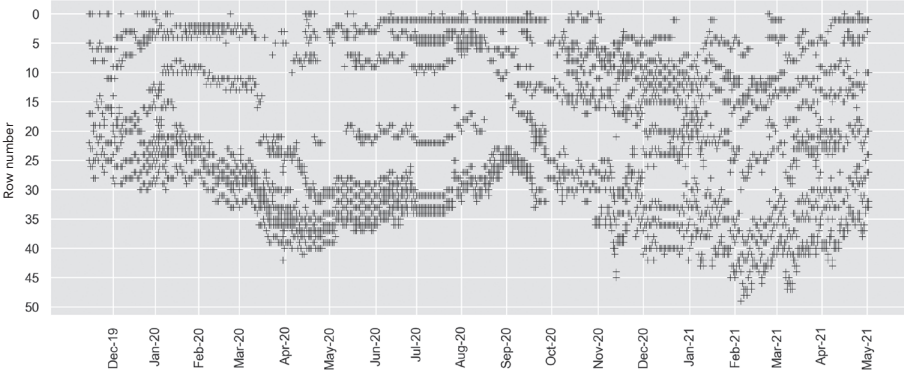
There were different ways to assess the presence of culture programming on DRTV’s front page. Applying the broad PS-Audit genre Information and culture (purposed for auditing DR’s linear programming) on DRTV, we found 74,789 tile appearances of 2,265 unique programmes, equal to 49.9 per cent of all tile appearances (see Figure 5.7). The double category begs the question, however, of how much is information, and how much is culture.

Figure 5.7 Positions of 74,789 tile appearances of programmes in “Information and culture” PS-Audit genre



If we instead applied the user-oriented display label Culture shown in the interface, the density of tiles declined dramatically (see Figure 5.8). We found 8,239 tile appearances of 114 unique programmes with the display label Culture, equal to 5.5 per cent of all tile appearances. As such, we noted that the Culture label is not used much by DR in the interface.

Figure 5.8 Positions of 8,239 tile appearances labelled Culture on DRTV’s front page



The low number of tiles labelled Culture could have, however, been caused by a technical constraint. As mentioned earlier, a programme can have more than one display label; however, the design of the DRTV interface allows only one label to be shown. The display label shown is selected alphabetically; if a tile is marked with both the display category labels Documentary and Culture, only the Documentary [Dokumentar] label is shown, not the Culture [Kultur] label. We observed the effect of this by comparing DRTV’s

culture page (www.dr.dk/drtv/kultur) with the front page: Only 92 of 283 programmes from the culture page were on the front page labelled as Culture, with 146 programmes labelled as Documentary and 25 programmes labelled as Lifestyle. However, if we used the appearance at the dedicated culture page as definition of culture, we found 22,621 tile appearances of 283 unique culture programmes, equal to 15.1 per cent of all tile appearances (see Figure 5.9). The culture genre may thus be more prominent on the DRTV interface than a simple categorisation based on the display label Culture reveals.

Figure 5.9 *Positions of 22,621 tile appearances, where the programme title has been featured on the culture subpage of DRTV*



The culture tiles remained longer on DRTV’s front page than tiles in general. A few culture programmes were present for almost the entire sampling period, and 62 programmes were present for more than 100 days. On average, the culture programmes were shown almost 69 days on DRTV’s front page (the average value for all tiles was 26 days). A possible explanation for this is that culture programmes are not as influenced by topicality as other genres.

Content for children and young people on DRTV

Content for children did not appear on the DRTV front page. Instead, the streaming service has three pages dedicated children’s programming: DR Ramasjang for children aged 4–8; DR Ultra for children aged 9–14; and, since March 2021, DR Minisjang for children aged 1–3. DR Ramasjang and DR Ultra were launched as linear channels, and while DR Ramasjang continues to be available as both a linear channel and a VoD service, DR Ultra ceased to transmit in linear mode at the end of 2019. DR Minisjang was launched as a VoD offer and has never been a linear channel. At the DR Ramasjang page (dr.dk/drtv/ramasjang), we found about 1,800 unique programme titles; for DR Ultra (dr.dk/drtv/ultra), we found about 3,800 titles; while the DR Minisjang page (dr.dk/drtv/minisjang) offered 193 unique programme titles.

While children are targeted with separate web pages, the situation is different for young people. Until January 2020, this group was targeted via the linear channel DR3, but the channel was closed as an outcome of the before-mentioned media political agreement. The intended target group for DR3 – (young adults aged 15–39) has been reported as difficult for DR to reach (DR, 2014; Lassen, 2020). It is thus interesting to analyse which ways the channel brand was continued on DRTV's front page; for instance, was it promoted more intensively after the shutdown of the linear channel? One source to highlight this question is the mentioning of DR3 in titles of the rows of content shown at DRTV. Typically, these row titles indicate a thematic collection of content or another form of familiarity of the content in the specific row.

During the 520 days observing DRTV's front pages, we found 189 different row titles, but most were only shown for a short period. 170 of the 189 rows were shown less than half of the 520 days, indicating a high degree of curation at the row level. Considering row titles referring to the DR3 brand, we found six titles. While some row titles – like “De stærkeste DR3 dokumentarer” [“The strongest DR3 documentaries”] – were only present for a short while, the row title “Nyt fra DR3” [“New from DR3”] was shown 515 out of 520 days – a privilege only shared with the news show *Deadline* (495 days), *Løvens hule* [Lion's Den] (417 days), the generic rows containing most-seen programmes (492 days), and a row with “feel-good” programmes (519 days).

There were thus many references to the DR3 brand on DRTV's front page, confirming findings from Lassen and Sørensen (2021), who observed DR3's strong presence at DRTV during an earlier period (March–June 2019). Thus, we can conclude that the DR3 brand remains prominently visible on DRTV's front page, also after the closure of the linear DR3 channel. Furthermore, the “New from DR3” row was particularly prominently displayed on the DRTV page: For 13 August–11 November 2019, “New from DR3” appeared 87 times between row 3 and 13 – on average between rows 4 and 5.

Summing up, we can state that with three universes dedicated to children, and the prominent placement of DR3 on DRTV's front page, DR does have a noticeable focus on content for children and young people in the VoD service, as announced in the 2019 strategy paper.

From flow to abundance: How are we to understand value?

Evaluating the value and volume of DRTV's content has been, as we have seen above, methodologically a challenging task, making detailed and firm conclusions difficult. Different approaches can be applied when categorising the VoD programming, and the legacy of public service auditing partly inhibits the categorisation of VoD content, as some of this has never been broadcast,

and thus not reported in linear public service auditing. On the other hand, the display labels used to guide viewers are multiple and often overlapping, but they help us understand how DR wants to present its content. Finally, the subpages dedicated to a specific type of content, for example, culture or children's programmes, indicate a more explicit form of curation, although these pages are partly generated automatically based on display labels. Thus, the presence of news, culture, and programmes for children and young people changes depending on what we count.

Revisiting DR's strategy of value over volume, we are not in the position to judge whether users find DR's offer more valuable now than earlier – or more valuable than other offerings. We notice, however, that the value-over-volume strategy was born out of a shift from linear to VoD as DR's preferred way to provide content to users. Linear programming requires a constant flow of programmes, which obviously cannot be of the same high quality; linear programming – particularly in a multichannel set-up – inherently produces a demand for volume. One could understand the value-over-volume strategy as a departure from this craving for programmes: In a VoD service, a few quality programmes can be promoted. The shift to VoD as the primary platform for DRTV could thus have been a way out of the craving for volume. However, we did not see this. A few programmes, series, or collections are exposed intensively at DR, a phenomenon also noticed by DR's head of publishing, Peter Rosberg, at the annual Copenhagen TV Festival in August 2021. Users have plenty of programmes to choose from, but according to Rosberg, around 75 per cent of the time consumption on DRTV is spent on “the top content [translated]” (as cited in Olsen, 2021). In Rosberg's account, top content is not in the sense of high quality or a certain value – it is simply the most watched. Two such programmes are the Danish versions of *The Great Bake Off* and *Dragons' Den*. From a public service perspective, it is relevant that the population has experiences and knowledge in common – *The Great Bake Off* and *Dragons' Den* offer such experiences. But when consumption is concentrated around a minority of the content, “the specialised content drowns [translated]”, as Rosberg expressed it (as cited in Olsen, 2021).

Since the very beginning of public service broadcasting, the balancing of content that is popular and content that conveys public service values has been a subject for intense political and scholarly debates. DR's value-over-volume strategy joins this old debate by rendering DRTV as a service for a new type of curation, a new start: The idealised on-demand usage inscribes an active (and critical) user who browses and searches for valuable experiences. This ideal, however, ignores the role of the interface presentation: Some content is immediately visible whereas other content requires an explicit search by the user to be found. DRTV's front page thus represents a curated collection of content prioritised by DR editors. However, our analysis has shown that curation primarily focuses on the top of the page, and that the large volume

on the lower parts of the page remain untouched for long periods of time. Of the three types of content – news, culture, and children’s programming – only news found its way to the top of the page, concurrent with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Children are arguably well served with dedicated web pages, but for the culture programmes, our findings are mixed: They depend on how culture is defined. If the broad PS-Audit genre of Information and culture is applied, this programme type is well exposed, but looking at only the Culture display label, exposure is modest. This leads to a discussion of the value of categories: How useful are programme categories for the characterisation of a VoD offer, beyond public service auditing? DR’s use of several genre labels for the same programme shows us the dynamic nature of VoD curation.

The rapid pace with which “old” content is presented under new row titles in the DRTV interface, as well as intense curation of the top rows, indicate that DRTV attempts to appear more dynamic to its users than the actual addition of new content enables. Thus, we witness a high degree of repurposing (Bruun & Bille, 2022), at level of the thematic bundling of content under row titles, in the positioning of rows on the page, and the appearance of the same content several places on the page (the double and triple exposure). This, as well as the long exposure of content, produces long pages (on average, 35–36 rows). We are thus left with the impression that DRTV wants to communicate “abundance” to its users – an apparent contradiction of the value-over-volume strategy.

Obviously, one could ask who defines value: the politicians who regulate the activities of PSM, the employees who curate the content according to the companies’ strategies, or the users who decide which services and which programmes to watch? As the viewing numbers presented by Rosberg at the TV Festival suggest, DR does face some challenges in getting users to discover and choose more of the narrow content at DRTV. It is this content that makes DR stand apart from other broadcasters and VoD services. As pointed out by Raats (see Chapter 6 in this volume), distinctiveness has become an important argument in the debate on the societal value of PSM. In this light, DR’s role as a curator must be taken seriously; by the politicians, by DR itself, and by the users who could try (just sometimes) to scroll down the page.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have analysed the Danish public service BVoD DRTV in the light of DR’s proclaimed strategy of value over volume. Our point of departure in this context has been the politically initiated prioritisation of programme types, which has affected DR since 2018. This led us to a study of the presence of the three programme types of news, culture, and content for children and young people in the VoD service. These particular programme types have been highlighted, politically and by DR, as of special value to

the Danish society, culture, and community. As such, we can state that, at least within the context of DR, there continues to exist the idea that some programme types are of more value than others.

Our approach has been to highlight DR's role as a curator and the users' opportunities to discover different kinds of content within the VoD service. Why is curation and discoverability interesting? We argue that it is necessary for PSM (at least in a digital media market such as the Danish one) to offer on-demand services to stay relevant in the competition amongst domestic as well as global players. But this opportunity does come with a challenge: In a VoD service, users can pick and choose content from a catalogue without being forced to wait for a fixed schedule and thus being exposed to a variety of genres and programme types. Our findings suggest that DR can improve its curation of content: While we can establish that all of the three highlighted programme types are present in the VoD service, narrower content – which culture programmes tend to be – are typically not positioned in the discoverable prime space.

As such, our empirical findings suggest that the (political) ambition of highlighting specific programme types continuously coexists with an awareness of the necessity to compete. This echoes the ongoing discussion of reach versus distinctiveness. The VoD services must, like other services offered by PSM, strike the balance between, on the one hand, reaching the (many different) users, thus being able to legitimise its continued existence, and on the other, standing out in a crowded marketplace as a distinct alternative to the many private players. We recover this balancing act in DR's placement of the different programme types and in the mere transition to prioritising value over volume: Our findings indicate that moving away from being a voluminous archive requires a tighter curation of the VoD interface than DR has provided in the analysed period. But it is, in our opinion, not a new challenge or discussion, but a variation of what we have seen earlier with the transition from a few mixed channels to portfolios of several segmented channels. We do wish to emphasise, from our discussion in this chapter, that the meaning of value is equivocal, and it is arguable who is to define DRTV's value to the single user and to society. However, we find it indisputable that offering a VoD service is crucial if PSM are to contribute to the society with shared experiences, knowledge, and debates in the future.

Summing up, this chapter contributes to the ongoing discussion of PSM's role in society by shedding light on how DR has actively positioned itself in the debate of the value of programme types, and by arguing that the study of PSM must include VoD services. However, in continuation hereof, it is important to stress that our conclusion is not as clear and simple as one could hope for from a public service auditing perspective. Instead, our findings illustrate the complexity of evaluating PSM's output in terms of content types. Our intention with this chapter has thus also been to contribute to the technical discussions of how to study these kinds of services. It demonstrates

the problems related to a pure quantitative approach to the evaluation of the fulfilment of public service values. The data-mining approach may be a good source for discussions and interpretations, but it cannot stand alone as a statement on public service values in the publishing strategy.

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Endnotes

¹ In total, 520 days. A few days are not included due to technical problems in collecting data. To avoid Geo-blocking of content, we visited dr.dk/drtv from a Danish IP address. We did not use a login when visiting the page, but kept cookies for all web sessions. We avoided playback of content which could produce (hidden) personalised recommendations.

² Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome for MAC OS, full window size, between 1,800 and 3,400 pixels. The DRTV web page scales to the width of the screen, showing three–six thumbnail photos, except for the top picture carousel, where only one full picture is shown at a time.

³ Programme titles appearing on all of the 520 days: *Den Store Bagedyst*, *Hammerslag*, *Gintberg på Kanten*, *I Hus til Halsen*, *Kender Du Typen?*, and *Nak & Æd*.

⁴ The Danish categorisation uses only five of ESCORTS’s more than 520 categories, but it extends ESCORTS’s fiction categories with a distinction between Danish and Foreign drama and fiction. It merges EBU’s categories Current affairs (key 3.1.1.2), and the format category Discussion/Talkshow/Interview/Debate (key 2.1.6) into Current affairs and debate. Finally, it introduces the category Information and Culture [Oplysning og kultur].

⁵ For identifying EBU genres in the DRTV interface, we used DR’s list of linear programmes and EBU genres for 2020 (DR, 2021b), containing 27,000+ titles. Assisted by scripting software, we conducted a manual EBU genre identification of the 5,878 titles on DRTV. For titles published in 2021 or before 2020, we manually identified the EBU genre. When we review the genre labels for the 27,000+ linear programme titles and series, we see that DR’s categorisation is in 246 cases ambiguous (equal to 0.42 per cent). For DRTV’s front page, the double categorisation implies that 69 of the 5,878 unique programmes have more than one “EBU genre” (1.17%). We chose to count every appearance of each genre to assess the presence of the different EBU genres on DRTV’s front page.