The delay economy of "continuity" and the emerging impatience culture of the digital era

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Abstract

This article compares the "continuity" produced by private- and public service television companies and discusses whether it can survive in the digital era. In broadcast television, "continuity" carries the industry's dominating business model: the commercial break. The present disruption to this model, caused by digital technology, over-the-top companies like Netflix and social media like Youtube, has made the television industry eager to adapt to new television viewing habits. However, based on a comparative analysis of the communicative strategies of four television companies in Denmark, the article argues that a traditional *delay economy* still governs the temporal structures and constructions of continuity. This delay economy draws heavily on the patience of its implied viewers. The article discusses this conceptualization of the audience in the context of an emerging *impatience culture* in which instant access to personalized audio-visual content and gaming on different devices are part of the viewers' media experience.

Keywords: television industry, business model, delay economy, continuity, non-linear television

Introduction

I am watching an episode of *Masterchef* on Danish TV3, and after 14 minutes the programme is interrupted: trailers are shown for what will happen in the programme later, followed by trailers for upcoming programmes in the near future on this particular channel. Furthermore, a block of commercials and a stack of sponsorship announcements are shown, as well as channel logos. During this seven-minute break, I quickly zap to TV 2 Play to find out whether a preview of a specific documentary is available, and then back to TV3 while I check my mobile for messages. And I fetch myself a snack from the kitchen. Even so, the delay annoys me to some extent.

> In particular, my patience is stretched by the number of repetitions in the break: the commercials are almost the same as those transmitted in previous breaks, the sponsorship announcements and the trailers are repeated and the channel voice repeats the same information. I am tempted to open my Netflix app on my Apple TV to continue the serial I am currently watching, but tonight I stay tuned until the programme finally continues.

The experience described above is probably very familiar to television viewers. A mix of linear and non-linear use of television is increasingly part of the patterns of everyday life, and the traditional method of distributing television content is being disrupted both from outside the traditional television companies, by transnational over-the-top competitors (OTTs) and social media, and from within the organizations themselves. Christensen's definition of the concept disruptive innovations (Christensen et al., 2015) stresses that disruption is first of all a *process* taking place over a long period of time during which a company's innovative product(s) gains a foothold in low-end or new markets that incumbent companies overlook because they are focused on their most profitable customers. The product evolves and finally catches on with the mainstream consumers, because its quality now matches their standards. Second, the definition stresses that *the business model* has to be different from that of the incumbent companies (Christensen et al., 2015). The prototypical example is how Netflix's subscription model, originally developed to cater to a small niche of movie buffs, and the internet, as the new distribution channel, killed Blockbuster, which was once the giant of the movie rental service industry (Christensen et al., 2015). The question is what effect streaming and the new competitors will have on the traditional television industry in the long run. To take on the new competition and to address changing viewer habits, the television companies have all included different kinds of streaming services in their portfolios, and they are eager users of social media in the struggle to reach and attract viewers. This development is, however, a double challenge to the dominating business model in the industry: the commercial break. As an integrated part of the on-air schedule of linear television and what the industry calls "continuity", this business model is presently under threat owing to the tensions between a linear and a non-linear television paradigm. However, recent explanations of the way in which different television companies navigate the tensions between these two paradigms have pointed to the *resilience* of the traditional linear television paradigm in the reconfiguration of "continuity" and of the on-air schedule produced by the television companies (Barra & Scaglioni, 2017; Bruun, 2016, 2018; Enli & Van den Bulck, 2014; Ihlebæk et al., 2014; Johnson, 2013, 2017). This article adds to this body of television studies, contributing in particular to a discussion of the kind of implied viewer that is being produced by the broadcasters.

The article presents the results from a comparative analysis of the kind of continuity that is produced by the four biggest television broadcasters in Denmark, with a combined share of television viewing of 95 per cent of the digitally

advanced Danish media market (European Commission, 2018). The access to broadband internet in private households in Denmark is 99 per cent, and the access to high-speed broadband connections (100 Mbit/s), which are important for the use of audio-visual media of high quality, is 91 per cent (Slots- og kulturstyrelsen, 2018a). Potentially, this level of access makes the Danish market a good place to study the tensions between the two television paradigms, because it is increasingly the case that Danish viewers are no longer forced to watch time-structured television schedules – they have other options. The analysis will show how the communicative behaviour of the four channels, in different ways, is part of what I call a traditional *delay economy* associated with linear television, which relies heavily on the patience of the implied viewers. The article then discusses how the delay economy might be challenged by what I call an emerging *impatience culture*. The article suggests that the experience of gaining instant access to desired audio-visual content and the proliferation of digital games on different devices contribute in particular to a set of expectations among the viewers that is a possible challenge to the delay economy. However, research has shown that the television companies are powerful industrial and cultural–political agents that try to produce their own futures by catering to and co-shaping the habits of the viewers. They are not just the victims of disruptive new competitors and technological change but active agents in shaping the future of the industry in which the linear and the non-linear overlap or co-exist. In line with these contributions, the article finally suggests that the delay economy and continuity as a televisual phenomenon might also hold attractions that are important to the viewers and will shape the future of the medium in the digital era.

Television paradigms

It is safe to say that understanding television and the television industry in the digital era is a new aspect of television studies. One of the scholars involved in this field is Amanda Lotz, whose work, based on the development of the television industry in the US, has been very important and influential. Lotz argued that the television industry is presently in a historic phase of transition towards a so-called post-network era (Lotz, 2014). Furthermore, drawing on Miege's three models of media production logics, Lotz asserted that the flow model typical of the radio and television industries is giving way to a publishing model best known from the film, music and book publishing industries (Lotz, 2017). Even though there certainly is very hard evidence of fundamental changes taking place in the television industry in Lotz's work, these assumptions are based on a rather linear notion of how media development works; it is also worth mentioning that her work was conducted in the commercial context of the North American media system. As suggested by Grainge and Johnson (2018), based on their analysis of the managerial discourse on the BBC iPlayer, understanding the development of the television industry in the digital era requires further discussions based on

the findings from research on how the television industry is developing in media systems outside the US. Research needs to contextualize television development, as argued by Enli and Syvertsen (2016), to assess the balance between continuity and change in industrial development. In this connection, it is particularly important to consider the history and tradition of the elaborated cultural–political regulation, subsidies and well-funded public service television broadcasters in the North-Western European and Nordic countries.

As pointed out in my recent study of how the production of on-air schedules and continuity is changing within the Danish public service broadcaster TV 2 (Bruun, 2018), the television industry in Denmark is presently marked by tensions between a familiar linear television paradigm and an emerging non-linear television paradigm, with at least five key characteristics of the two paradigms colliding – as outlined below:

Table 1. Two television paradigms

Television paradigm	Linear	Non-linear
1: Place of Consumption and device	Central locality and the TV set	Multiple localities and digital devices
2: Viewer access	Time-structured access to content	On-demand access to content
3: Communication mode	One way	Interactivity
4: Textual characteristics: distribution	Schedules and content mirroring and structuring the temporal structures of the everyday life of an audience	Spatial structures and files
5: Textual characteristics: content	Temporal standardisation of content to fit distribution structures	No fixed temporal logics

Comment: No 5 in the table is inspired by Johnson (2017).

Continuity is very much a child of these key characteristics of the linear television paradigm outlined above. It performs a list of *communicative functions* in the provider–viewer relationship that might be very close to what television studies have regarded as the basic characteristics of television as a medium (Bruun, 2016). In this article, two of these communicative functions will be highlighted to discuss the clash between an evolving set of viewer expectations towards television in the digital era supported by the industry itself and the implied viewers of continuity. First, continuity aims to be a televisual text that informs the viewers of upcoming content, holds their attention during these intermissions and even attracts new viewers for the upcoming content. The text produced strives to tackle the tension between the schedule and the programmes on the one hand and the time view-

ers spend waiting for the next programme to begin on the other. Second, during these intermissions, which are regarded as *waiting time* by the viewers, providers *promote* themselves and their products (Bruun, 2016, 2018; Stigel, 2004, 2006) in accordance with the traditional *business model*: commercial breaks including sponsorship announcements.

Even if continuity is still fundamental to the way in which a television company distributes its content to the majority of its audience and makes a revenue, the viewing habits in the population are changing. There are huge differences between the European markets, and the viewing of traditional linear television in Denmark is well below the European rather steady average of 3:38 hours a day (EBU, 2018). In 2017, Danes spent 2:30 hours a day on average watching television, dwindling from an all-time high of 3:10 hours in 2010.[1] Furthermore, young audiences are spearheading this trend. In 2017, the average viewing time of 12-18-year-old Danes was 46 minutes, and among 19-34-year-olds the average viewing time was 1:21 hours a day (Slots- og Kulturstyrelsen, 2018b). There are no data available that include the use of transnational OTTs and social media, and the decline in the use of audio-visual content might well be less if these companies were participating. However, data on the use streaming services shows a weekly reach of 54 per cent in the population (+12 percentage points) in 2017 and 85 per cent of 19-34-year-olds (Slots- og Kulturstyrelsen, 2018b). Furthermore, OTTs like Netflix have a very strong position in the subscription video on demand market (SVOD) in Denmark. Netflix was introduced in 2012 and has a 30 per cent share of subscribers (DR, 2017), with 37 per cent of Danes using Netflix every week (DR, 2018). Compared with the use of the broadcasters' streaming services in 2017, 31 per cent of the population (+12 percentage points) use DR's streaming service DRTV, which is included in the tax-funded public service media in Denmark, every week. The Nordic Entertainment Group's ViaPlay is second, with a reach of 15 per cent, and TV 2's streaming service TV 2 Play is third, with 11 per cent.

The changing patterns in television viewing in the digitally advanced Danish market (particularly among young audiences) are, as mentioned, a challenge to the traditional business model in the television industry. From the perspective of the broadcasters, continuity was and still is about how television broadcasters struggle to make the audience stay tuned as long as possible through strategic and tactical textual efforts (Eastman & Ferguson, 2009). Continuity in traditional linear television schedules needs to create *delay* in such a way that the commercial and/or editorial breaks between the programmes do not result in a loss of viewers but ideally build expectations and attract more viewers instead. As a consequence, and seen from the viewers' point of view, continuity is packed with many different ways to make the viewers *wait* for access to attractive *new* content: for example, the fixed time structures of the schedule (prime time, day, week, month, etc.); the way in which content is serialized and narrated in instalments; the systematic use of reruns to fill 24/7 schedules and maximize audience ratings; and the holding back of new content due to appear any time within the next few months. In short,

continuity in traditional linear television draws on the *patience* of the implied viewers, and the temporal structuring of the channel is governed by what I term a *delay economy*. The characteristics of the kind of continuity produced by the four television companies navigating between the two television paradigms at work within their portfolios will be highlighted in the following section of the article.

Continuity – and a little change

As mentioned in the introduction, several contributions have already underlined the resilience of the linear television paradigm in the television industry, and "flow" is a potent concept that is still very much in use in the industry. Constructing a channel "flow" that holds onto the viewers who are already watching, as well as attracting new viewers, is still the fundamental communicative function of the on-air schedule and of continuity in a competitive cross-platform media landscape. As the findings from my comparative study of continuity in Danish public service television based on data from 2015 suggest, the driving force is the business model of linear television: commercial breaks (Bruun, 2016). Only television companies funded 100 per cent by licence fees, taxes or subscription fees are financially independent of the linear use of television at the moment. This means that the Danish television company DR, funded by a media tax, eagerly promotes the non-linear options and niche channels in its portfolio. What I term "roundabouts" and "crossroads", with trailers for content on other platforms, are used very frequently, whereas the commercially funded public service television company TV 2/Danmark limits these strategies to a minimum. The result is that DR stands out as far more non-linear and much more oriented towards the idea of the users' choice. This communicative strategy is supported by the public service obligation to provide access to content regardless of the platform used. In this way, the need to make money has a conservative effect on the construction of continuity, with the significant differences between TV 2 and DR being connected to their funding models and not to the technology that they use.

The way in which on-air schedules and continuity are produced is changing within television companies. The producers are trying to appropriate the non-linear paradigm and integrate it into their strategies and tactics in a way that fits the multiplatform "ecosystems" or "digital estates" of the television companies (Bruun, 2018; Evans et al., 2017). However, as Johnson's (2012) findings suggest, it has become increasingly difficult to predict linear viewing patterns. Efforts to attract and retain the attention of the viewers are therefore paramount and have become more important than ever. The findings from my own production study of TV 2 in Denmark in 2016 (Bruun, 2018) also support the idea that a rather conservative and cautious development is taking place in commercially funded public service television. The television industry's dominant business model (the commercial break) and the very different pricing models connected to commercials on broadcast television and online television are the important conservative

forces in the industry. As a result, TV 2, which is a commercially funded public service broadcaster, is trying to incorporate non-linear television and discover how it can be used to secure the survival of the linear "cash cow" (Bruun, 2018). As a consequence, the producers of the on-air schedule and "continuity" try to turn the tensions between the linear and the non-linear television paradigm into a third and hopefully profitable new model (Bruun, 2018). This trend towards what might be termed the *third television paradigm* is also supported by Johnson's analysis (2017) of how the interface of the ITV Hub is structured in interplay with the linear channels and in particular by the logics of broadcasting. These findings from research into the production practices and contemporary developments in the television industry question any simple distinctions between the linear and the non-linear television paradigm, making a clear-cut move towards a non-linear television paradigm seem less probable. Instead, the findings indicate that broadcasters are navigating the tensions to secure profitable and/or cultural–political important user flows.

In the following section of the article, I will add to the results of this body of research by presenting the findings from a comparative analysis of how continuity in the on-air schedules of the four biggest television companies on the Danish market is employed to address the viewers. The sample used is the continuity broadcast by the main channels of these companies (DR1, TV 2, TV3 and Kanal 5) from 7 p.m. to midnight during the period 8-14 February 2016. The analysis focuses on how *delay* is presupposed in very different ways. The article will then discuss the question of the conceptualization of the audience behind these communicative strategies and their viability in view of the radical changes in the way in which television content is accessed on the Danish market. The section will start with a brief introduction to the Danish television market.

The Danish television market

There are four important television companies in the Danish market: DR, TV 2/Danmark, Nordic Entertainment Group (NENT) and Discovery Networks Denmark. DR and TV 2 are digital over-the-air broadcasters or distributed by cable and the DTT network, while NENT and Discovery are distributed by satellite or by cable and the DTT network. The four companies have large portfolios of five to thirteen television channels each. They also offer one or more streaming services each to provide on-demand and live access to the content that they produce. All these companies have extensive websites, and they are all eager users of social network media. This focus on producing cross-media television content is driven by the fact that Danes are frequent users of social network media – especially Facebook, which supports 3.9 million Danish profiles, and Youtube, used by 50 per cent of the population every week. There are, however, important differences between the four major television providers. In terms of ownership, DR is an independent, publicly owned institution, while TV 2/Danmark is a publicly owned

limited company. NENT and Discovery are the Danish branches of multinational corporations operating in many other countries, too. Both broadcast to Denmark from the UK to avoid Danish television advertising laws, which are stricter than those formulated by British (or European Union) regulations. TV 2/Danmark, NENT and Discovery are all funded by advertising and subscriptions. However, under Danish law, TV 2/Danmark is only allowed to place commercials *between* programmes. This limitation stems from the public service obligation of TV 2/Danmark's main channel and eight regional news affiliates, and advertising made up 47 per cent of the company's revenue in 2017. TV 2/Danmark and DR have a combined share of viewing of 75 per cent (DR 37 and TV 2/Danmark 38 per cent). The two commercial corporations have a share of viewing of 10 per cent each (2017).

The delay economy of "the big four"

Given these important differences between the four television companies in terms of ownership, cultural–political frameworks and obligations, and in terms of business models and market position, the forms of continuity produced for the four main channels display both similarities and differences. There are differences first in *how* the implied audience is asked to wait for content and second in for *what* they are asked to wait.

Waiting time

Across the four main channels, the intermissions between the programmes or parts of the programmes make the implied viewers wait for the next programme to start or for the current one to continue. The table below shows the differences between the four during the period 8-14 February 2016 and between 7 p.m. and midnight:

Table 2.   Waiting time

Main channel *Public Service (PS) – Commercial (COM)*	DR1 PS	TV 2 PS/COM	TV3 COM	Kanal 5 COM
Number of intermissions 7-12 pm, 8-14 February 2016	37	61	231	242
Total broadcast time for intermissions in minutes	82 min.	370 min.	579 min.	582 min.
Per cent of broadcast time	3%	15%	23%	23%
Average broadcast time of intermissions in minutes	2.2 min.	6.1 min.	2.5 min.	2.4 min.
Length of intermissions in minutes	1-4 min.	1-9 min.	1-7 min.	1-8 min.

The time spent on intermissions includes commercial breaks and sponsorship announcements for all the channels apart from DR1. TV3 and Kanal 5 make their implied viewers wait for a programme to continue many times during each broadcast, but each break is shorter than the breaks employed by TV 2, because TV3 and Kanal 5 are allowed to interrupt their programmes. The high frequency of these intermissions means that the shortest sections of programmes are not much longer than the longest intermissions. Here is an example of this situation: during one hour of prime time on TV3, the programme was interrupted by three intermissions lasting between three and seven minutes:

Figure 1.   Broadcast hour TV3, 8-9 pm
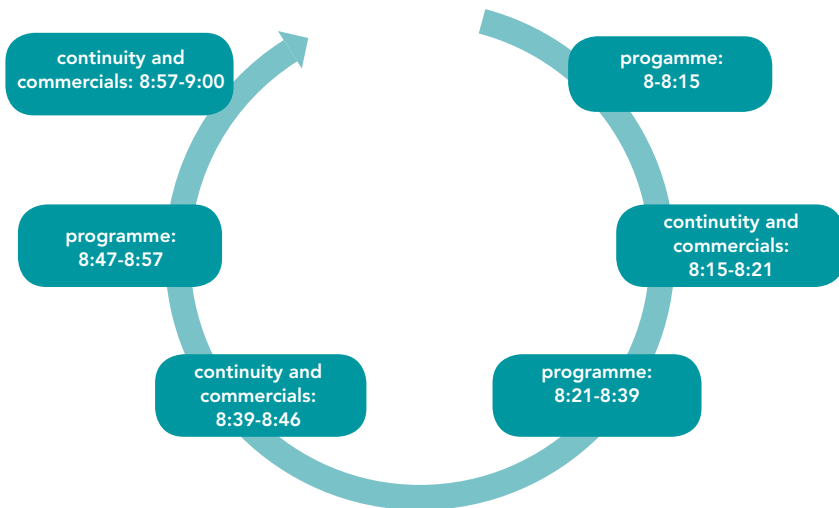
Of this hour of prime time, 16 minutes was spent on non-programmes, and the commercial channels expected the viewers to stay tuned during these often rather long and frequent intermissions. This has been the situation for commercial television for decades, and the digital era has not brought any changes. Furthermore, and as illustrated in Table 2, not only TV3 but all the main channels do not seem to have any problem in making the viewers wait for a long time before continuing the programmes. The differences between the commercially funded channels, the channel with tax funding and the two channels with public service obligations are, however, huge. Tax-funded DR1 is the channel with the fewest and shortest intermissions, even though it still makes the viewers wait for a relatively long time between the programmes. DR uses the intermissions for the cross-promotion of programmes and channels. TV 2 is second to DR in terms of the number and length of the intermissions. As mentioned above, this is because TV 2 is only allowed under Danish law to have breaks between programmes – not breaks during programmes.

The temporalities of promotional interstitials

Across the commercially funded channels, intermissions are used mainly to broadcast commercials and sponsorship announcements. This means that there are huge differences between the ways in which the four channels use self-promotional communication during intermissions. Table 3 shows the differences and is followed by an explanation.

Table 3.   Promotional interstitials

Promotional interstitial, 7-12 pm, 8-14 February 2016:	DR1 PS	TV 2 PS/COM	TV3 COM	Kanal 5 COM
Number of *'Crossroads' to one **immediate** content alternative on a linear channel	9	5	4	4
Number of *'Roundabouts' to two or more **immediate** content alternatives on linear channels	13	0	0	0
Number of interstitials promoting **future** content on the **main linear channel**	129	223	238	336
Number of interstitials promoting **future** content on **other** linear channels in the portfolio	54	18	41	87
Number of interstitials promoting the streaming services (label on-screen and/or channel voice directing the viewer towards the streaming service's content)	1 (part of the tax: DRTV)	15 (**SVOD: TV 2Play)	121 (**AVOD: ViaFree) 9 (SVOD: TV3Play/Via Play)	126 (AVOD/SVOD: DPlay)
Number of interstitials promoting the website	1	6	0	0
Number of interstitials promoting an App.	8	6	0	0
Number of interstitials promoting content on social media (label on screen)	0	1 (Facebook)	0	61 (Twitter # for the same programme)

Comment: *'Crossroad': interstitials promoting one immediate alternative programme on another linear channel in the company's portfolio. 'Roundabouts': interstitials promoting two or more immediate alternative programmes.

**SVOD: Subscription video on demand; AVOD: advertisement-funded video on demand.

The tax-funded public service television channel DR1 uses self-promotional tools that set this channel very much apart from the other three. All the intermissions feature trailers and on-screen schedules for programmes on different channels in DR's portfolio as alternatives to what will be shown on DR1 "now". In Bruun (2016), I call this self-promotional technique a "crossroads" or "roundabout", encouraging the viewer to continue viewing on another linear channel. A "roundabout" includes trailers for up to four immediate alternatives to the programme that will be shown on DR1 "now". These interstitials add a spatial dimension to

the channel flow, making the implied viewers for the upcoming programme on the channel wait, and is a kind of service for viewers who want to zap.

TV 2 and the two commercial channels make very limited use of crossroads and do not use roundabouts. Instead, they prefer to point the implied viewers in the direction of their *streaming service* to catch up on episodes from the series that they have just watched on the linear channel. In my sample, TV 2 offers access to a *new* episode of a series that has just been shown, a sneak preview to reduce the waiting time. In the sample, this happens twenty times and promotes the next episode of three different series: one fiction, one reality game show and one documentary. Kanal 5 uses this tool only once during the week. Apart from this tool, the streaming services only make content available that has already been shown (or is due to be shown) on linear television at the same time. If the viewer pays for the SVOD services on offer, the huge number of intermissions on the linear channels can be avoided and viewers are given the chance to access content via other devices, for example Apple TV. TV3 also offers a free streaming service, ViaFree, but the commercial breaks are then included and there is only a limited range of genres and no new content is available. DR's streaming service, DRTV, is also funded by taxation, but, even though there are no financial or legal problems in doing so, DR1 seldom cross-promotes its streaming service in the "continuity" sequences. DR1 does not promote previews either, although this is a tool used on the streaming service. This behaviour might be due to the attempt to avoid political discussions in Denmark during the winter of 2016 about the balance between the private and the public service sector.

As shown in Table 3, all four channels have a very large amount of promotion of *future content* on their main linear channels, which will also be available as live streaming on their VOD and SVOD services. However, once again, there are huge differences in the ways in which this promotional activity is carried out: DR1 is the only channel that fills the waiting time by promoting programmes that will be shown *more* than one week in the future. DR1 and Kanal 5 cross-promote other channels, whereas TV 2 and TV3 are less eager to use intermissions for this kind of cross-promotional activity. These differences between the four companies might be caused by the specific kind of portfolio that they offer and the target group in question. The whole of DR1's portfolio is funded by taxation, so, in one sense, it does not matter which DR channel the viewers watch, whereas Kanal5 is the mainstream and more family-oriented channel in a portfolio characterized in other respects by gender segmentation. This means that Kanal 5 may choose to cross-promote Kanal4, which has 15-40-year-old women as its target group. TV3 is the main channel, but the sister channels are very much alike and target the same 21-50-year-old audience. For NENT, using "crossroads" would in fact be an option, but it is not used, perhaps because of this similarity among the channels. Finally, at TV 2, the important point is to use the promotion time to secure a large viewership in terms of the ratings, shares and reach of the main channel, which is the cash cow and has public service obligations to meet. High ratings are therefore

also politically important, while reach is becoming increasingly important owing to the decline in linear television viewing. All three commercially funded channels try to strike a balance between commercial needs and promotional needs during their intermissions. In fact, very little time is spent on promotional interstitials on the three commercial channels. As mentioned above, the time is already almost completely taken up with commercials and sponsorship announcements; the fear of losing the audience if the intermissions grow any longer seems to limit the use of cross-promotion. Furthermore, none of the companies can compete with companies like Netflix in terms of new content for their streaming services, so they probably need to keep their viewers using the linear channels.

Let us now summarize the points made above about the time structures of promotional interstitials across the four channels. The implied viewers are asked to wait even though the programmes have been produced and are – in principle – available. In addition to this deliberate delay, the self-promotional material for the same programmes is repeated. Examples of this general trend are the promotion of *Champions league* on TV3+, which is promoted by 15 trailers, and a new entertainment show coming soon on Kanal 5, *Lille Fredag* [Little Friday], which is promoted by 60 schedule outlines. Even though the actual time spent is relatively short, the phenomenological experience of this might be very different. The initial informative function (the building of expectations) as well as the possible entertainment value of the promotional material might fade rapidly owing to the number of times these promotions are repeated. In short, the delay economy is still in operation, dominating the way in which continuity is used for promotional purposes.

The temporalities of commercial interstitials

On the three commercially funded channels, the intermissions mainly consist of a block of commercials and a number of sponsorship announcements surrounding the programmes or programme instalments. TV3 and Kanal 5 are the channels with the highest number of commercial breaks and announcements of sponsorship. Table 4 shows the differences between the three channels from 7 p.m. to midnight on 8-14 February 2016:

Table 4.   Number of commercial breaks and sponsorship announcements

Number of commercial breaks and sponsorship announcements, 7-12 pm, 8-14 February 2016	TV 2 PS/COM	TV3 COM	Kanal 5 COM
Commercial breaks	54	69	69
Sponsorship announcements	69	555	501

This means that TV3 and Kanal 5 also have the highest number of *repetitions* of commercials as well as sponsorship announcements. The possible entertainment

value of the commercials will probably fade as they are repeated more frequently. The sponsorship announcements consist of small clips from known television commercials or audio-visual presentations of the sponsor's products, and they are accompanied by a voice-over announcing the name of the company and the programme that it sponsors. These announcements probably have no entertainment value at all, not even the first time they are heard. Kanal 5 has up to seven of these announcements during the intermissions. In addition, the commercial interstitials face the fundamental problem that all commercials (regardless of medium) have in common: they are often an unwanted kind of information seen from the point of view of the audience. On television, commercials risk annoying the viewers and trying their patience, as documented by Ofcom's longitudinal study of adults' media lives (Ofcom, 2016, 2017). This is especially the case on TV3 and Kanal 5. As mentioned above, TV 2 is not allowed to interrupt its programmes and does not transmit the same number of intermissions during which sponsorship announcements can be repeated. Finally, TV 2 does not seem to need many repetitions of commercials and sponsorship announcements, a fact that is related to its very strong market position.

The delay economy meets an emerging impatience culture

The temporal configurations of continuity show that the traditional delay economy of the linear television paradigm dominates on the four channels, particularly on the three commercially funded channels. The business model used, rather than the technology employed, seems to have a conservative effect on the way in which these three companies construct their interfaces with the audience between programmes. This means that the differences between commercial and non-commercial television are obvious. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the 100 per cent tax-funded public service channel DR1 takes the lead in guiding the implied viewers to break away from the flow of content on the main channel. However, even though this is the case, the implied viewers waiting for the content to continue on DR1 are asked to wait for a relatively long time, because priority is given to self-promotional interstitials. Furthermore, the promotion of streaming services by DR as well as TV 2 is limited.

The next section of the article discusses whether sticking to the delay economy is a viable strategy for the television industry. Viewing habits are changing, and, if the industry wishes to retain its viewership in the future, it may have to abandon all these delays. First, the audience that the television companies are trying to attract and hold on to by using the tools of the traditional delay economy have gained enhanced control over what they watch and when and where they watch it. This probably means that many viewers are rapidly becoming used to *not* waiting for the content that they want or just waiting for a few seconds, for instance until the advertisements can be skipped on a Youtube video or the countdown to the next episode of a Netflix serial is over. Increasingly, they might also expect to gain

access to the available content for as long as they like without unwanted interruptions or repetitions of unwanted information. As suggested by Jason Mittell after watching his own children using TiVo, future viewers will probably also expect to be able to control the flow, to speed up or stop consumption and to move on to other kinds of content somewhere else with a single click, if they so desire (Mittell, 2011). The algorithm-based personalization used by OTTs, and to some extent by commercial as well as public service television companies, might add to this development (Moe & Van den Bulck, 2017). It supports the *feeling* of gaining an instant as well as a personally relevant offer from the television companies – just like social media providing audio-visual content and the web in general. These different kinds of experiences of time control and instant access might undermine or just clash with the delay economy's implied viewers. The value chain policies of Netflix may accelerate this trend, given that the company does not support the traditional hold-back agreements in the television industry, because the company does not have a portfolio of 24/7 schedules to fill and does not sell advertiser space either. Finally, OTTs in general do not need the temporal standardizations of content to fit their schedules and commercial breaks.

All in all, the audience expectations that might gradually be shaped by the elaborated use of on-demand streaming and social media do not match the implied viewers of the delay economy. A second set of cultural experiences should also be taken into consideration because it might challenge the delay economy: the proliferation of digital games on a variety of devices. We know very little about how this kind of entertainment might influence the experience of watching linear and non-linear television. However, as Evans (2015) pointed out in her analysis of games designed for mobile phones and tablets, the gaming industry tries to monetize the impatience of the players in a different way from traditional television. The player decides when to play the game, not the producers of the game, but, in many app-based freemium games, the player is given the opportunity to gain access and cut the waiting periods by paying. This simulates a "get-it-now" attitude, as Evans termed it (2015: 578). Nevertheless, compared with linear television, it is possible for each player to control the temporal flow, because the play structure is asynchronous, which allows their attention to be intermittent (ibid.: 576). Moreover, the games are designed to fit into the schedule of the day and perhaps fill brief moments of time at the player's pleasure. As Vorderer and colleagues (2006) argued, this kind of everyday digital entertainment gives the user the ability to engage in an activity that gives the impression of being available on request and at the player's convenience – without waiting for others to make content available. As further suggested by Vorderer and colleagues the feeling of autonomy is combined with the fact that the gameplay of these products can produce an instant feeling of personal competence, because the level of difficulty in the game is always a product of the abilities of the user (Vorderer et al., 2006). The *feeling* of being in charge of your own time and producing your own (customized) media entertainment is probably an experience with which most contemporary

television viewers are familiar and an important clue to the kind of entertaining qualities that viewers of television might expect.

Conclusion: On the edge of extinction?

As suggested above, the changing horizon of expectations among television viewers could easily produce growing impatience with regard to the delay economy. The commercial television channels are challenged in particular, given the fact that they are extremely dependent on the business model represented by continuity and therefore on the attention of young audience segments. These segments are also leading the tendency to cut back on watching linear television. Furthermore, the relatively weak position of the two commercial companies on the Danish television market adds to their problems. DR, on the other hand, has the technological, cultural–political and financial muscle to recalibrate the relationship between the two television paradigms and reconceptualize the notion of the viewer in a more radical fashion.

However, despite the differences between the communicative strategies of the four companies, the resilience of the linear television paradigm is evident and supports the findings of previous research (Bruun, 2016, 2018; Grainge & Johnson, 2018; Johnson, 2017). Even though there is profound insecurity about the future of the linear television paradigm in the industry, the broadcasters are powerful agents of transformation themselves, producing their own futures by co-shaping the habits of their viewers. The contours of a *third television paradigm* might now be appearing across commercial and public service television companies and might not just be a strategy to protect the status quo. It may be a way to disrupt the distinction drawn in the industry between broadcasting and online and between linear and non-linear television. In their analysis of the managerial discourse of the BBC iPlayer mentioned above, Grainge and Johnson showed how the conceptualization of its role in the organization has changed from a catch-up service to the "front door" to an "entertainment destination" (2018: 35). According to the managerial discourse, the linear and the non-linear overlap.

Finally, we might also wonder why Danish audiences do not use the streaming services provided by broadcasters to a much higher degree, given the proliferation of broadband internet access in Danish households. The use of linear television had a weekly reach in the population (+12 percentage points) of 80 per cent in 2017 (*Mediernes udvikling i Danmark: TV*, 2018). In other words, why do audiences in Denmark – myself included – still choose to watch linear television? This might be a matter of time and a generational issue, but other reasons need to be considered too. One of these reasons might be that the streaming services are still very expensive compared with traditional cable or DTT distribution. The second is probably the dominant position of public service television on the Danish market, providing the audience with a large amount of linear television containing relatively few intermissions. The difference from a streaming service like DRTV

or TV 2 Play is therefore comparatively small. The third reason might be that the delay economy and continuity in general are in fact valued by the audience. The results of an EBU survey of twelve European markets show that 92 per cent of all viewing in 2017 was in fact on linear television (*Audience Trends*, 2018: 2). As argued by Bruun (2016), continuity represents the communicative interface between the broadcaster and the viewers, and here we find the quintessence of the *immediacy and "live-ness" of the television experience* as a time-structured mass medium. A perpetual "here and now" is presented, in which the different parts of the day (daytime, prime time, late fringe) and the week are mirrored and to which the different temporal and spatial settings of the individual programmes (e.g. the here and now of the talk show; the there and now of the television transmission of an event; and the there and then of the television drama) return (Stigel, 2001). Furthermore, in the communicative interface built by continuity, *the viewers' presence* is persistently recognized, for example by the channel voice. Continuity is probably an important component of the "anyone as someone" structure of the television experience, interlinking the private sphere of the viewer(s) and the public sphere of television in everyday life (Scannell, 1996: 14). In this way, continuity is probably a fundamental component of the qualities of the "taken-for-granted-ness" and "dailiness" of television, as Scannell argued (1996: 9, 144). All in all, "continuity" might still be an important aspect of the attraction of watching television, so it may survive as a televisual phenomenon.

All of these points call for continued research not only into how continuity as a televisual phenomenon and its production are changing in the digital era but also into its possible importance to the audience. This endeavour may help to flesh out in whose interest producing a third television paradigm in which the linear and the non-linear co-exist and are intertwined might be. Is it a possible future trajectory for the television industry to maintain its economic interests? Is it a fruitful way to ensure the cultural–political importance of the medium in society in the digital era? Is it yet another testimony to the adaptability and agility of the industry that has been seen before in television history? Or will streaming kill the television industry from outside and from within because the industry is not able to survive the effects of the disruption in the long run?

Note

1. The method behind these figures changed in January 2017. The present data include live/linear as well as time-shifted use of television content from all devices, not just from a connected television set, up until seven days after the initial broadcast. The streaming of content from the broadcasters' different streaming services after that period is not included in the consolidated ratings. This change in method also makes a comparison with previous years and periods very complicated.

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