

# Television documentaries as spearheads in public service television

## *Comparing scheduling practices on the linear channels and video-on-demand services of Danish TV 2 and DR*

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### **Abstract**

This article presents findings from a study of how the public service television (PSTV) companies DR and TV 2 in Denmark are changing their scheduling practices to address the competition from transnational streaming services. We focus on a comparative analysis of how television documentaries are scheduled and argue that the documentary genre is part of an editorial prioritisation of productions with high degrees of linguistic and national proximity targeting a mainstream audience. Furthermore, we argue that new scheduling practices support a merger of linear and non-linear modes of watching television indicative of a transformation in which the video-on-demand (VoD) services are the new entry points to PSTV. This transformation might be a vital part of how Nordic PSTV companies adapt to the changes in the television industry and to new viewing habits.

**Keywords:** scheduling practices, linear television, video-on-demand, public service television, television documentaries

### **Introduction**

Public service television companies are confronted with harsh competition from a growing number of “online natives”, as Johnson (2019) terms the transnational streaming service. As documented by Lobato (2019) in his analysis of Netflix, the American dominance of the transnational television industry prevails in the digital era. Findings from the European Audiovisual Observatory support these rather traditional patterns in the industry, showing that 54 per cent of the film and television content on subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) services available in Europe is of American origin (Grece & Pumares, 2019). Furthermore, content of British origin accounts for 55 per cent of the European content, dominating content of Danish (2%) and Swedish (3%) origin. Consequently, the degree of proximity in the content – in terms of geography and national contexts – is very low, and the political and cultural issues already in the circuit of the

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national and local media are not present in the content. Finally, the most popular online natives also tend to be rather monogeneric (i.e., fiction).

In this new marketplace for television content, public service television (PSTV) has a growing need to distinguish itself with an offer to the viewers that is not found on other services, or at least only found to a limited extent. To show how Danish PSTV tries to be distinctive, we compare how DR and Danish TV 2 schedule a genre traditionally associated with core public service (PS) programming – television documentaries – on their linear channels and their in-house video-on-demand (VoD) services. First, we argue that the two PS companies are trying to promote a kind of scheduling practice in which television documentaries (series as well as stand-alone documentaries) with high degrees of linguistic and national proximity are given editorial priority on linear channels as well as on the VoD services, even if the two companies have different profiles regarding the scale and scope of the genre. Included is a discussion of why this genre has been the focus of our study. Second, we argue that the new scheduling practices appropriated seem to support a merger of linear and non-linear modes of watching television, and not an either–or approach. This approach is shaping, as well as being supported by, viewer habits in the digital era, in which viewers tend to switch between linear and non-linear use of the television content.<sup>1</sup>

We begin this article by presenting results from the emerging body of research on the development of PSTV scheduling in the digital era. In the second part, we present the findings from our comparative study of TV 2 and DR's scheduling practices for television documentaries, and we point at the somewhat paradoxical influence of the business models in Danish PSTV. Finally, we discuss our findings in the light of the competitive strategies presented by the two PSTV companies themselves.

The in-house VoD services are part of what is termed a front-door strategy in which they are positioned as the main entry points to PSTV content in the future. Taking the scheduling practices for television documentaries as an indicator of how the Danish PS companies will develop, this strategy might broaden the ways in which television content can be accessed by viewers, as well as extending their choices. The front-door strategy might be regarded as a new phase in the continued adaptation of PSTV to a changing television industry and new viewing habits.

## **Scheduling in transition**

Recent research into the current competitive environment in the television industry by Johnson (2019) points to the developments within the television companies as they try to adapt their modes of publishing to the digital era. These changes include using their in-house VoD services in different ways, and this effort has a profound influence on the traditional scheduling practices learned in the competitive multichannel television environment (Lassen, 2018). This rescheduling process has invoked scholarly interest, and empirically grounded contributions have investigated how PSTV companies curate their in-house VoD services. The important questions of *if* and *how* PSTV companies use algorithmic personalisation to inform the new curation and publication practices is highlighted in contributions by Sørensen and Hutchinson (2017) and revisited by Sørensen (2020). Other contributions to this new phase of empirically grounded scheduling studies are trying to understand how the *interplay* of linear channels and in-house

VoD services pans out. In a study of the Norwegian public broadcasting company NRK and Norwegian TV2 by Spilker and colleagues (2020), the transition to scheduling is addressed by studying the way genres are made available on the linear channels and in-house VoD services. The findings show how the Norwegian PS companies NRK and TV2 each have implemented a kind of division-of-labour practice in which the VoD services publish fiction and the linear channels focus more on factual programming and entertainment. Even if NRK's strategy is rather unclear, this publishing strategy is, according to Spilker and colleagues (2020), addressing the competition from the transnational streaming companies in a problematic way: Since NRK is mainly targeting young segments of the audience and TV2 is trying to mirror the competitors, the core PS values of a mixed programme and universality will be at risk if this strategy is the future of PSTV (Spilker et al., 2020).

However, the Norwegian strategy is not mirrored in the Danish context. In Bruun's production study of how the interplay of linear channels and in-house VoD services impacts the scheduling practices at Danish PS company TV 2 (Bruun, 2021, 2020), the new practices are aimed at securing a mainstream audience for the VoD services, for economic as well as cultural-political reasons. According to Bruun's (2021) findings, at Danish TV 2, this transformation has an impact on what kind of content is being produced to secure the continued competitive role of the schedule for linear service *as well as* the VoD services. This new task supports the development of new scheduling practices and means that the schedulers are now focusing increasingly on demanding specific genres and new kinds of formats to support *synergies* of the linear channels and VoD services. This means that certain genres become more important than others for the purpose of attracting and keeping the audience. According to Bruun's findings, the kind of content that does well on both linear channels VoD services is fairly stable. The schedulers have learned that Danish-language fiction, Danish-language reality series, *and* Danish-language documentaries are of utmost importance for securing high ratings, and for the ability to retain the VoD subscribers at the same time, because the viewers tend to switch between linear and on-demand viewing of the same programmes (Bruun, 2021). This kind of knowledge about the synergy between the two modes of watching television is now informing scheduling practices. The lesson learned at TV 2 is that even if the professional tasks and skillsets acquired are changing, scheduling is still extremely important in the television industry (Bruun, 2021).

The content categories important to TV 2's publishing strategy and the focus on linguistic and national proximity to retain an audience of scale also seem to mark DR's practices. In their important and groundbreaking work, Kelly and Sørensen (2021) compare how content is made available over long periods of time at BBC iPlayer and DRTV. The results show that the curation of BBC iPlayer leads to a relatively small catalogue with an interface focused on already highly promoted programmes. In comparison, DRTV's catalogue is bigger, with a dynamic interface and scheduled in close coordination with the linear channels, and especially the mainstream channel DR1 (Kelly & Sørensen, 2021). DR's publishing strategies and the mainstream orientation of DRTV is also confirmed by the findings from an analysis of DRTV alone by Lassen and Sørensen (2021).

All in all, the differences between the publishing strategies among PS companies are remarkable, and even between PS companies on similar markets. The strategies of

DR and Danish TV 2 stand out, and the question is how the efforts to produce synergy between the two modes of watching television and the focus on securing an audience of scale affect the scheduling practices of specific genres in detail. Furthermore, the question is whether these practices add a specific competitive distinctiveness to the PSTV profile of DR and TV 2, respectively.

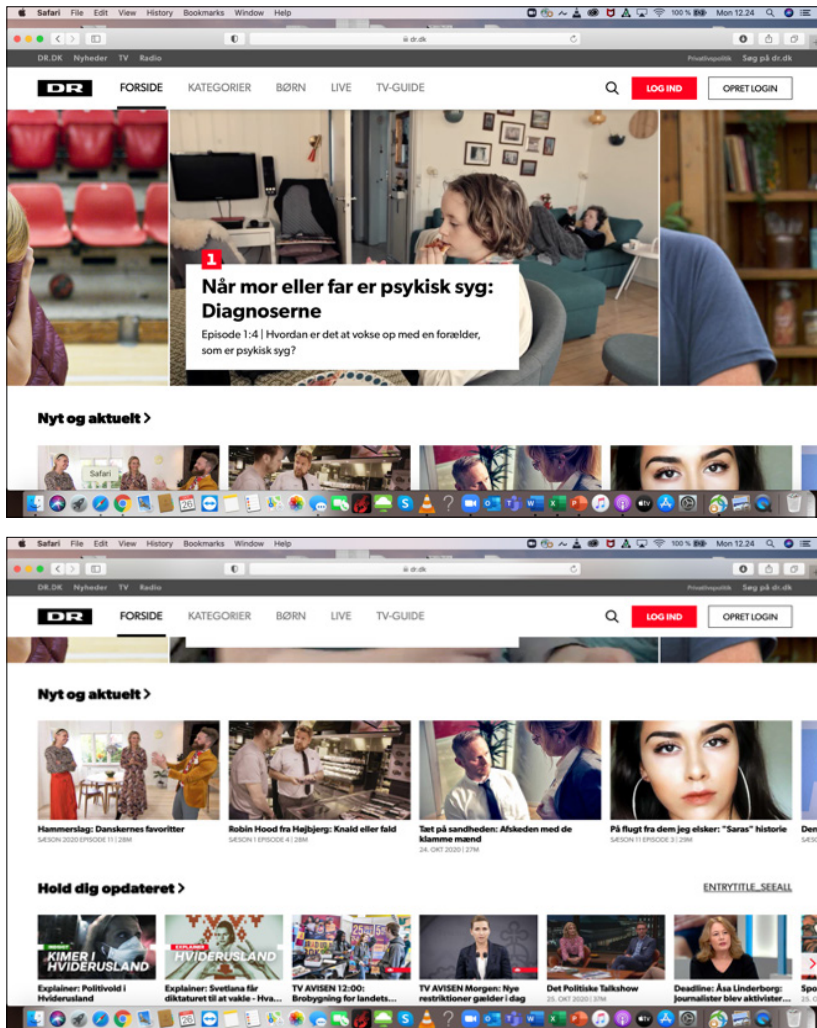
### **Television documentaries, design, and vocabulary**

Based on an analysis of the linear schedules and VoD front pages, we will conduct an in-depth examination of one of the genres traditionally regarded as important to the PS identity of a television company: television documentaries. Reaching an audience of some scale in the way the genre is produced and scheduled is therefore also politically important for DR and TV 2. As mentioned above, Bruun's (2021) analysis of the transformation of scheduling at TV 2 shows that Danish-language documentaries are helpful in the production of synergy between the two modes of watching television. Popularity and institutional branding needs seem to merge in this particular case.

In the analysis, we choose to use the labels the companies themselves have applied to their programmes in the paratexts on the VoD services, as well as in the television programme guides available to the public and in the audience ratings system *Seerundersøgelsen* [the viewer database] produced by Kantar Gallup.<sup>2</sup> Using this industrial categorisation of the content can serve as an analytical platform for research. First, it tells us how the television companies understand their own programmes and how a genre category like documentaries is used by the companies in the publishing process. Second, the industrial categorisation of the programmes is not just for the sake of creating a kind of order; the categorisation is part of the measuring system performed by Kantar Gallup (from 2022, Nielsen) on behalf of all major television companies on the Danish market, and the categorisation of the programmes is part of the audit on how their PS obligations are met. In practice, the PS companies report to the Danish audit authorities about how they meet the obligations based on calculations on the categories they use in the promotion of the programmes. There are, of course, several possible ways to “improve” the quantitative results in the politically important categories, and the empirical material in our study presents some inconsistencies in categorisation. However, these inconsistencies do not represent a bias in a specific direction; rather, they stand out as errors which we must accept in order to benefit from the advantages mentioned above.<sup>3</sup>

The sample for the analysis consists of two weeks of programming, 25–31 October 2020 (referred to as week 44) and 31 January–6 February 2021 (referred to as week 5), on all the linear channels of DR and TV 2. In the analysis, we focus on prime time programming (19:00–22:00), and the KantarGallup television viewer database is used to analyse the ratings and share of viewing for the programmes labelled as documentaries. Our inspiration for analysing the VoD services includes the contributions to this emerging kind of work in scheduling studies by Kelly (2021), Bruun (2020), and Johnson (2019). In week 44 of 2020 and week 5 of 2021, screenshots were taken once a day of the front pages of DRTV and TV 2 Play. Figure 1 shows the layout of DRTV's front page.

Figure 1 Front page of DRTV



Comments: The top image depicts the top deck, or “carousel” (also referred to as hero-board), which displays the most current or important content. The lower image shows how additional decks are utilised to display additional content. The screenshots were taken 27 October 2020.

The “prime space” (Bideau, 2020) of the VoD services’ front pages are the top rows, called decks in the professional vocabulary. The overall design logic is that the top decks are the most important, and it follows the direction of reading from left to right (in terms of centre to periphery of the front page). Furthermore, the size of the thumbnails, called tiles in the professional vocabulary, is an indicator of the editorial importance of the content presented. At the top deck – called the carousel (or the hero-board) – five to eight very large tiles are rotated. At TV 2 Play, *all* users are shown the first tile in the carousel when the SVoD service is started, and DRTV uses live trailers in the carousel. Both practices can be viewed as an indicator of the editorial importance ascribed to the content. We collected screenshots of all the decks on the front page of DRTV and TV 2 Play, scrolling from the top to the bottom and from left to right. Screenshots were also

taken of all the content of the decks with the headline “Dokumentar” [Documentary] on both VoD services. We accessed the VoD services via Chrome and Safari browsers on our computers, and we used a subscription to the premium version of TV 2 Play that enables the subscriber to access all the linear channels and previews on the VoD service. We accessed DRTV anonymously, choosing not to use the login option. As this comparative analysis is focused on what can be regarded as the editorial prioritisation of television documentaries on linear channels and VoD services, we did not test the level of personalisation on the two services. Previous contributions to scheduling studies, however, have documented that the level is (still) quite low on both services (see Bruun, 2020; Lassen & Sørensen, 2021).

### **Promoting documentaries and a public service identity**

As a point of departure for the analysis of how television documentaries are used in the efforts to add a competitive distinctiveness to their content profiles, a brief presentation of DR and TV 2 is needed to contextualise the similarities and differences in the appropriation of the genre. The two PS companies in the small Danish market have very different funding models and organisational structures. DR is a public provider of radio and television that is 100 per cent funded by taxes. Currently, DR offers three linear television channels: DR1, DR2, and Ramasjang, which is a children’s channel. DR also has the popular streaming service DRTV, which includes the online-only channels DR3, DR Ultra for older children, Minisjang for 0–3-year-olds, as well as DR2+. All of DR’s activities are part of its PS obligation, and access to the content regardless of the platform is given priority because of the Danish PS regulations.

A mixture of subscriptions and advertisements funds TV 2, which only provides television. TV 2 Danmark is a limited company owned by the Danish state and has two divisions: PS and commercial. The PS division includes the main channel TV 2 and has scheduled windows for the eight regional news providers, which are supported by a tax. The large commercial division, TV 2 Networks, has no PS obligations. This division includes the website *tv2.dk*, six linear niche channels, and the VoD service TV 2 Play. On TV 2 Play, TV 2 offers the additional online-only sports channel TV 2 Sport+ and a portal for young children called Oiii.

In terms of viewership, TV 2 has a 48 per cent share of viewing, and the main channel has a 27 per cent share. DR’s three linear channels have a combined 33 per cent share of viewing (Agency for Palaces and Culture, 2021). The VoD services provided by the two companies are popular. Among the streaming services (not including YouTube) that are important on the Danish market on a weekly basis, DRTV is number two (free VoD), just behind Netflix, and TV 2 Play (subscription VoD) is number four (DR, 2021).

In the following section, we present the findings from the comparative analysis of the editorial prioritisation of television documentaries. The findings show the promotion of two rather different content profiles by the two PS companies in which linguistic and national proximity nevertheless seem to play an important role. We begin by showing the scale, scope, and origin of the programmes labelled as documentaries by DR and TV 2 across linear channels and the VoD services. This is followed by an analysis of the kind of scheduling practices used on the linear channels and how these familiar tactics are appropriated on the front page of the VoD services.

*Scale, scope, and origin*

First, it is important to emphasise that the number of programmes labelled as documentaries is not high, and it differs between the two companies. Table 1 shows that there are far more documentaries on DR than on TV 2.

**Table 1** Documentaries on linear channels

Linear channel	Week 44 (2020)		Week 5 (2021)	
	Number of titles	Share of programming time (%)	Number of titles	Share of programming time (%)
DR1	21	8	12	5
DR2	94	60	93	45
TV 2 (main channel)	42	15	38	12

*Comments:* Programming time excluding promotion and commercials. The genre category “Documentary” is based on how the companies have labelled their programmes.

On DR1, documentaries made up 8 per cent of the programming time in week 44 and 5 per cent in week 5, whereas the genre made up as much as 45–60 per cent of the programming time on the niche channel DR2. Hence, on DR there is a clear division of labour concerning documentaries, which is the reverse on TV 2. On TV 2’s main channel (with PS obligations), the genre made up 12–15 per cent of programming time, whereas no titles were found for the six linear niche channels.

When comparing the number of documentaries made available on VoD services, there is also a big difference between the two companies. On DRTV, the catalogue contained 1,032 documentaries at the end of week 5, whereas TV 2 Play offered less than a quarter of that number (252 documentaries). However, TV 2 Play promoted the genre far more than the small catalogue of titles might indicate. To illustrate this relatively high editorial priority given to the genre at TV 2 Play, Table 2 shows the percentage of front page tiles occupied by documentaries.

**Table 2** Share of front page tiles promoting documentaries (per cent)

Streaming service	Week 44 (2020)	Week 5 (2021)
DRTV	20	28
TV 2 Play	16	15

*Comments:* The genre category “Documentary” is based on how the companies have labelled their programmes.

The *kind* of documentaries that the two companies make available are also different. The generic profile of DR features a broad and international selection of documentaries, including a variety of subject matter ranging from nature programmes to the history of the British royal family and Danish furniture design, with a mixture of in-house production and a large number of acquisitions. There is a preference for documentaries involving history, nature, and biographies of famous people and families (e.g., The Kennedys and The Windsor family), which has to do with the fact that these programmes are broadcast on the linear niche channel DR2 with a content profile of current affairs, art house films, and documentaries on history and culture. As shown in Table 1, on DR’s niche channel

DR2, documentaries accounted for 45–60 per cent of the programming time during the two weeks sampled; however, DR2's viewing share is typically around 5 per cent, meaning that most of DR's documentaries are not viewed by a mainstream audience of scale. The online-only channel DR3 and the mainstream channel DR1 add to the generic scope by offering documentaries with a human-interest approach to identity issues, families, mental health, and biographies.

Compared to DR's variety in scope, the generic profile of documentaries shown on TV 2 is dominated by Danish-language productions about Danish people and with a human-interest approach. In week 5, for example, 23 titles out of a total of 38 were of that character.<sup>4</sup> The second major theme on TV 2 is Danish true crime, and only a few programmes feature more political themes.

### *Prime time and prime space appropriation of scheduling tactics*

As discussed above, Danish productions are given high priority by both companies, especially on TV 2 Play. On the linear channels, these programmes are scheduled in prime time (19:00–23:00) and generate high shares of viewing. An example of this pattern is illustrated in Table 3, which shows three DR1 programmes aired on Monday, 1 February 2021 during prime time: a true crime documentary, *Et langsomt Mord* [*A slow murder*] and a biographical documentary, *Christian Kjær – farvel og tak* [*Christian Kjær – goodbye and thanks*], about an elderly, rich and famous Dane, Christian Kjær, who decided to leave Denmark with his family, with a news programme airing between the two.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 3** Documentaries in prime time, DR1

Time aired	Title	Genre	Rating (%)	Share (%)
20:00–20:59	Et langsomt mord [A slow murder]	Documentary	5	11
21:00–21:26	TV Avisen [TV News]	News	12	34
21:28–22:25	Christian Kjær – farvel og tak [Christian Kjær – goodbye and thanks]	Documentary	14	47

Source: Authors' analysis in the database Seerundersøgelsen [the viewer database], Kantar Gallup. The programming occurred 1 February 2021.

As Table 3 shows, Danish-language documentaries can increase ratings and the channel's share of viewers, performing better than the newscast *TV Avisen*. This pattern can also be seen on TV 2's main channel (see Table 4).

**Table 4** Documentaries in prime time, TV 2

Time aired	Title	Genre	Rating (%)	Share (%)
20:02–20:43	Årgang 20 [Generation 20]	Documentary	9	25
20:53–21:22	Når arven splitter os [When the inheritance tears us apart]	Documentary	11	30
21:30–21:51	Nyhederne [The News]	News	6	20

Source: Authors' analysis in the database Seerundersøgelsen [the viewer database], Kantar Gallup. The programming occurred 2 February 2021.

As shown in Table 4, TV 2's main channel broadcast two Danish human interest documentaries, *Årgang 20* [*Generation 20*] and *Når arven splitter os* [*When the inheritance*



*tears us apart*] during prime time, which kept the ratings and share of viewing relatively steady and high for the following news programme.

The high editorial priority given to documentaries also applies when it comes to the curation of the VoD services. Using Tuesday, 27 October in week 44 as an example, we demonstrate how TV 2 and DR put the genre in the carousels of TV 2 Play and DRTV (see also Bideau, 2020), as well as on the decks dedicated to the genre on the front page.

On TV 2 Play, the carousel promoted 1–2 documentaries on its 6 tiles during the sample weeks, and on 27 October, the Danish series *Station 2* was promoted on the first tile. The series is a true crime documentary which is also broadcast on the main linear channel once per week. Decks 10 and 11 had 100 per cent documentaries, and only in deck 11 could the user find non-Danish acquisitions. On 27 October, the documentary genre occupied 30 out of 185 tiles on the front page, and documentaries could be found in a mix with other genres in 10 out of 23 decks on the front page; for example, the “TV 2 Play only” deck consisted of 50 per cent documentaries. All in all, the editorial priority of the genre – and Danish-language productions in particular – is relatively high.

The documentary genre is also given high editorial priority on DRTV’s carousel, where 1–2 out of 5–6 tiles featured documentaries during the sample weeks. On 27 October, the Danish series *Når mor og far er psykisk syge: diagnoserne* [*When mum and dad are mentally ill: the diagnoses*] was promoted and also broadcast on the main channel DR1. Another documentary – the British series *Det store Trump-show* [*The big Trump show*] – was broadcast on the niche channel DR2. Decks 4 and 6 on the front page were 100 per cent documentaries, and the genre occupied 33 of 167 tiles.

Mixing Danish and non-Danish documentaries is the general tactic on all decks on the front page. This kind of curation features an editorial strategy that seems to underscore a different scheduling practice compared with the one applied at the linear channels. On the prime space of the VoD, the division of labour between DR1 and DR2 is merged, providing an expanded choice among all of DR’s television documentaries regardless of the channel brand. In this way, the scheduling practices appropriated on DRTV’s prime space seem to support a diverse use of the documentaries. Furthermore, DRTV’s front page features a lot of thematically labelled decks, and documentaries were, on 27 October 2020, included in 13 out of 24 decks. In this way, documentaries are mixed with other genres, using the traditional scheduling tool of anthology, which combines programmes with a thematic coherence together in a strip (Eastman & Ferguson, 2009).

The adaptation of these well-known scheduling tools to promote documentaries (especially productions in Danish) is part of both PS companies’ tactics. One of the traditional scheduling tools used frequently on TV 2 Play – to give high priority and an impression of abundance of documentaries – is shuffling. In linear scheduling, shuffling (also called repurposing) is used to reposition popular content on the channel schedules with the purpose of filling up the twenty-four/seven schedules and to build ratings for a programme over a period (Eastman & Ferguson, 2009). In Table 5, we use deck 11 – “De stærkeste dokumentarer” [“The strongest documentaries”] – in week 44 to illustrate the shuffling of the *same* Danish documentaries across the 8 tiles in this deck throughout the week.

As illustrated in Table 5, examples of shuffling are the programmes *Jeg er stammer* [*I stutter*], which was moved from tile 1 on Sunday to tile 4 on Wednesday, and *Mit liv som luder* [*My life as a hooker*], which was moved from tile 3 on Sunday to tile 8 on Wednesday. In addition to being shuffled amongst tiles within one deck, individual

**Table 5** Shuffling Danish documentaries to new titles, TV 2 Play

Day	Title 1	Title 2	Title 3	Title 4	Title 5	Title 6	Title 7	Title 8
Sunday	Jeg er stammer [I stutter]	Anbragt i helvede [Placement in Hell]	Mit liv som luder [My life as a hooker]	Rosas grøn-landske familie [Rosa's family from Greenland]	Misbrug [Abuse]	Afhængig af fortiden [Addicted on the past]	Opgøret med stoffer [A break with drugs]	Niams død [Niarn's death]
Monday	TT-verdens farligste Motorcykelklub [The most dangerous motorbike race of the TT-world]	The Cave	Mor laver porno UK [Mum is doing porn UK]	Dr. Miami	Madeleine Cann	#Trump	Politichef og sexforbryder [Chief of police and sex offender]	Lance
Tuesday	TT-verdens farligste Motorcykelklub [The most dangerous motorbike race of the TT-world]	The Cave	Mor laver porno UK [Mum is doing porn UK]	Dr. Miami	Madeleine Cann	#Trump	Politichef og sexforbryder [Chief of police and sex offender]	Lance
Wednesday	Far var kvinde [Dad was a woman]	Lever, elsker, savner [Living, loving, missing]	Dagen der forandrede alt [The day that changed everything]	Jeg er stammer [I stutter]	Daginstitutioner bag facaden [Behind the scenes of daycare institutions]	Christians kamp [Christian's battle]	De sjældne danskere [Rare Danes]	Mit liv som luder [My life as a hooker]
Thursday	Far var kvinde [Dad was a woman]	Lever, elsker, savner [Living, loving, missing]	Dagen der forandrede alt [The day that changed everything]	Jeg er stammer [I stutter]	Daginstitutioner bag facaden [Behind the scenes of daycare institutions]	Christians kamp [Christian's battle]	De sjældne danskere [Rare Danes]	Mit liv som luder [My life as a hooker]
Friday	Robin's wish	Valentinsdag i swingerklub [Valentine's Day in the swinger club]	TT-verdens farligste Motorcykelklub [The most dangerous motorbike race of the TT-world]	The Cave	Mor laver porno UK [Mum is doing porn UK]	Dr. Miami	-	-
Saturday	Robin's wish	Valentinsdag i swingerklub [Valentine's Day in the swinger club]	TT-verdens farligste Motorcykelklub [The most dangerous motorbike race of the TT-world]	The Cave	Hvor kommer dyremaden fra [The origin of animal food]	Mor laver porno UK [Mum is doing porn UK]	Dr. Miami	Madeleine Cann

Comments: The coloured tiles highlight some examples of how the same Danish documentaries are shuffled to a new title in order to repurpose the programmes. Deck 1.1 during week 44 (2020).

titles are frequently shuffled *across decks* on TV 2 Play. One example is a series on sexual harassment in the youth section of political parties, *Partiernes skjulte overgreb* [*The hidden sexual abuses in the political parties*], which was moved from the carousel in week 5 to deck 10, where the series stayed on tile 1 throughout the week as well as appearing in “Populært lige nu” [“Popular right now”] on deck 2.

Shuffling tactics can also be extended to the platform level; for example, TV 2 presents previews of all Danish documentaries three days before a premiere on the linear channels and the following episode of a series one week ahead of broadcast. This kind of shuffling across platforms is done with the aim to attract and retain subscribers to the VoD service. Furthermore, the traditional scheduling tools “hammocking” and “tent-poling” are also used frequently to boost the viewing of documentaries on the linear as well as on the VoD service.<sup>6</sup>

Compared with TV 2, DR has a limited use of shuffling the same programmes to new positions in the catalogue, since DRTV’s catalogue is four times as big as that of TV 2 Play. The editorial priority of the documentary genre is, however, obvious in the carousel, where documentaries accounted for 33–40 per cent of the titles in the two sample weeks (compared with only 17 per cent on TV 2 Play). Furthermore, DR used tentpoling and hammocking of Danish-language documentaries produced for the online-only channel brands DR3 and DR2+ as well as for the linear channel brand DR2. In addition to this, in week 44, DR used deck 13 to showcase new documentaries *every day*, following a kind of broadcast logic. On DR, the sheer number of available titles and the variety of content seem to be what DR wants to promote as the company’s value profile.

## Discussion and conclusion

The comparative analysis of the scheduling of television documentaries for the linear channels and VoD services at DR and TV 2 reveals both similarities and differences between the two companies’ practices. On the one hand, DR and TV 2 both seem to pursue the same goal: to secure a PS identity by editorially promoting programmes labelled as documentaries across linear channels and on the VoD services. The documentary genre is given high editorial priority on the main channels, where it is scheduled in prime time by using similar practices when it comes to Danish documentaries. The spatial and temporal promotion of these programmes on the front pages of the VoD services also shows common patterns between the two companies: Danish documentaries are used as flagship programmes, promoted in the carousel and supported by well-known scheduling tools. Furthermore, specially labelled decks and additional scheduling tools are used to promote Danish documentaries on both services. This speaks to a common publishing strategy appropriated by both companies in which the VoD services are directed at a mainstream national audience (see also Lassen & Sørensen, 2021).

On the other hand, the differences between the scheduling practices of the two PSTV companies are also obvious, and the somewhat paradoxical influence of the business models in PSTV deserves further discussion. Danish TV 2’s commercial business model seems to promote a value profile in its programming that underpins the PS obligations of the main channel. This means that the kind of documentaries on offer (across the linear

channels and the VoD service) is part of a proximity strategy. As shown in the analysis, TV 2 gives high priority to documentaries dominated by a national and linguistic proximity with a strong focus on human interest approaches and the everyday life of ordinary (and sometimes extraordinary) Danes. The focus on how crime is solved, criminals are captured, and normality restored in the true crime series speaks to similar egalitarian values of ordinariness, sociability, and the homogeneity of societal norms. This value profile is part of TV 2's general brand identity across its portfolio, as argued by Bruun (2020). Its emphasis on egalitarian values and cultural homogeneity is flagged online too, and it seems to be an important part of showcasing TV 2 Play as the main entry point to TV 2's content. This attempted "voice of the nation" value profile is appropriating a so-called universal-appeal model (Moe & Van den Bulck, 2018), which is associated with the PSTV monopoly era. This universal-appeal model is now applied to fight the competition from the transnational SVoD services in a kind of 2.0 version.

Based on the findings from the analysis, DR forms its PS identity by sheer weight of numbers and the variety of international and national productions offered within the documentary genre. In this way, the expanded choice provided and made possible by the VoD service seems to be an important part of DR's brand identity, and the universal-appeal model seems dominant, but with less emphasis on linguistic and national proximity than at TV 2. Instead, more weight is put on the core values of PS: universality in terms of access and diversity in terms of content. However, as documented in the analysis, the scheduling practices at the linear channels features a clear division of labour between the mainstream channel DR1 (scheduling a very small amount of Danish television documentaries in prime time) and DR2 (scheduling a huge amount of international television documentaries). In this way, DR seems to follow what Moe and Van den Bulck (2018: 877–878) have termed a "something for all tastes" model.

To sum up, even if both companies are mainstreaming the VoD services and giving high priority to a genre strongly associated with PS obligations, two different scheduling practices can be detected. Both the differences and similarities call for more research with a focus on how the different types of PSTV companies might employ traditional and new scheduling practices and professional knowledge of the different television genres alongside their national and cultural embeddedness. The differences between the scheduling practices of public service media in Norway – as described by Spilker and colleagues (2020) – and Denmark are also indicative of the need to employ a comparative approach. Although the Danish and Norwegian television markets are similar in terms of region, market size, and the position of public service television in the respective media systems, different strategies are followed by the PS companies.

This suggestion for a focus on scheduling studies within television studies is supported by the basic role of the PS VoD services that is outlined in Danish managerial strategy publications. In the TV 2 newsletter, the CEO Anne Engdal Stig Christensen described the aim as follows: "we are [trying to make] TV 2 Play the Danes' 'front door' to our content" (Jöhncke, 2019). In the company strategy, *Strategy 2025 – TV 2 Play for all* (February 2021), the streaming service was described by the CEO as key to the PSTV identity: "TV 2 needs to maintain its position as the biggest provider of Danish content and public service. The tool is TV 2 Play" (Hansen, 2021: para. 4).

This way of promoting PS is echoed by DR. The intention to use the VoD service DRTV as the main entrance to DR runs throughout a strategic DR policy paper, and it is

spelled out that “Six out of ten Danes use DRTV weekly” (DR, 2019: 13). Furthermore, in connection with a reorganisation of DR in the autumn of 2021, the CEO of DR, Maria Rørbye Røn, launched six initiatives to make DR “a beacon in the digital changeover. DRTV will be at the absolute centre and the front door to DR’s TV-content” (Reseke, 2021: 3). This is part of a development that has taken place during the last five years, in which the streaming service is no longer conceived of as the online supplement – or “back door” – to the traditional “front door”, the portfolio of broadcast channels. As a trend, this is shifting the dramaturgy between the frontstage and the backstage, even though both are maintained as important platforms to secure the two modes of television viewing. According to the head of planning at TV 2, Mette Rysø Johansen, 47 per cent of the time spent by users on TV 2 Play consists of linear channel viewing (Olsen, 2021), and the decline in penetration and audience reach using traditional distribution makes VoD, as an online entry point, even more important.<sup>7</sup>

However, the strategies of both companies not only broaden the ways television documentaries can be used by the viewers, but also expands their choices of what to view. It can be argued that using genres associated with the PS identity, like television documentaries, as part of the front-door strategy might turn into a survival tool for PSTV. This perspective on the publishing strategies is a contrast to current research in PSTV in the digital era, which tends to picture PSTV as an “endangered species” or in decline (e.g., Bennet, 2018; Freedman & Gabolt, 2018; Sørensen & Huchthinson, 2017; Sørensen, 2020; Spilker et al., 2020). It is undoubtedly possible to cultivate a strategy of producing exclusive content and an editorial profile that contains linguistic and national proximity as well as being multigeneric. This might therefore be regarded as a new phase in the continued ability shown by PSTV, especially in the Nordic countries, to adapt to fundamental change in the media system, and in the television industry in particular (Syvertsen et al., 2014).

## Notes

1. In Denmark, 68 per cent of the population aged 12+ use streaming services on a weekly basis to access television content either for livestreaming or on demand (Agency for Culture and Palaces, 2021). The data from the PS companies on the use of their VoD and SVoD services is, however, not available to researchers. The time spent watching television content on demand is not counted for in the daily ratings measured by Kantar Gallup if this is done seven days after the linear broadcast or prior to the linear broadcast (e.g., as a preview). The data on the use of VoD and SVoD services is therefore extremely limited and is produced by the television companies themselves. Furthermore, the level of secrecy surrounding this data is high, regardless of the business model used by the companies.
2. As a consequence of this approach, this article does not present a definition of “documentary” based on the scholarly discussion of the genre and addressing the difficult distinctions between documentaries and other types of factual television, like reality television and lifestyle programming.
3. Inconsistencies are found in labelling, for example, labelling a quiz show “documentary”, changing the label from one day to the next from “news and current affairs” to “documentary”, or not labelling programmes that we know are documentaries. These errors happen on the linear channels and between linear channels and the streaming services, and on the streaming services. As argued above, these are regarded as errors because they do not represent a detectable bias seeking to warp the PS programme statistics.
4. An example of how TV 2 prioritises Danish productions is that five out of six documentaries promoted in the carousel at TV 2 Play were Danish. For DRTV, the corresponding figures were five out of nine.
5. All titles of programmes, headlines, and quotes from the trade press are translations from Danish by the authors.
6. Hammocking is to place a new or perhaps weak programme between two already strong ones in terms of ratings (Eastman & Ferguson, 2009). In the temporal logic of linear scheduling, the aim is to make viewers stay tuned after and before watching already popular programmes. In linear scheduling, tent-

poling means to place signature programmes and popular programmes, for example, in prime time to “hold up a canvas” in terms of ratings for weaker programmes (Eastman & Ferguson, 2009).

7. As an example, TV 2’s main channel has dropped to 72 per cent in household penetration, which is a problem in terms of meeting its “universality in access” obligation (TV 2, 2021: 11).

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