

Television schedules in the transition to the 21st century

Jordi A. Jauset

- *Television scheduling consists of placing different types of programme at specific broadcasting times according to different patterns that depend on the business objectives of the different channels, among other factors. These programme types can be classified into genres that are constantly evolving in order to adapt themselves to audiences' preferences.*

This research presents an analysis of the programming genres of the main television channels in Catalonia during the years 1998-2003, based on the classification used by Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS). The article comments on the similarities and differences observed on these television channels, taking the channel's owner and coverage into account.

Keywords

Channels, Catalonia, genres, television schedules, television.

Jordi A. Jauset

Doctor in communication and lecturer at the Blanquerna Faculty of Communication Sciences at the Ramon Llull University

1. Introduction

1.1. TV scheduling

The study of TV scheduling is one of the fundamental components in the complex process of media production, as it must juggle the channel's own interests and the communication on offer with the audience's preferences. This is a very broad concept that deals with diverse aspects of the content of television broadcasts.

According to Gómez-Escalonilla (2002, 28), "[...] scheduling may be understood as the organised proposal of television products that are offered to the audience at a specific moment". In other words, scheduling consists of placing the different "products" or spaces into broadcasting bands following specific patterns that depend, among other factors, on the objectives each channel has defined in its respective strategic plan. These placements in terms of time and space constitute the so-called "programming grid". Although the grid is designed, in general, for yearly periods, it is planned in weekly periods and is subject to the daily retouches required to adapt to the latest events, both expected and unexpected.

The factors influencing scheduling, understood as the result that ultimately appears on the TV screen, are many. Apart from the historical context, for many years scheduling has been significantly influenced by chronological considerations (daily, weekly and seasonal variations) and is subject to the diverse social, economic, political and undoubtedly programming criteria of the different TV channels. However, nowadays the chronological factor is perhaps less important, as technology allows users themselves to control or adapt the programming grid at their own convenience. Personal video recorders (PVR) mean that the different programmes broadcast by channels throughout the

day can be programmed. In this way, users choose, in their leisure time, the events that interest them most, irrespective of their “temporal placement” on the day’s programming grid.

Programmers must take into account the habits and tastes of the public as important factors when taking decisions in their daily work. This has been explained by Fuenzalida (2002, 39-40): “[...] for TV scheduling, understanding audiences means understanding viewers in their relationship with a TV channel and with TV programmes: their likes or dislikes, their entertainment or boredom, their empathy or rejection, their motivation to watch or to change a programme, their sympathies or prejudices, their meanings and appropriations with regard to the screen. The aim is to understand the differences between TV viewer segments: the different preferences according to class, gender and age; the historical evolution of perceptions and expectations.”

This all seems to suggest that there is a wide range of factors affecting the scheduling offered by a channel that cannot be ignored. As noted by Gómez-Escalonilla (2002), the content supplied may be conditioned by factors such as the ownership of the channel, the TV model adopted by the channel, whether there is a monopoly or not, as well as the social and political conditions of the time. Scheduling practice requires knowing how to juggle a large number of factors and interests of the chain with those of the viewers (commercial, political and ideological interests), as well as the target’s likes and habits.

In fact, the same author (2002, 29) states that “[...] the factors that would therefore explain the reason behind a certain kind of scheduling are highly diverse in nature [...]” and, as pointed out by Palacio (Contreras and Palacio 2001, 26), “[...] in short, TV scheduling is a complex phenomenon, related to a culture, customs and habits in society”.

1.2. Conceptualising the term “genre” and its classification

Cebrián (1992, 17) defines genres as “[...] the different ways in which textual productions can be classified, either written or audiovisual and, within each of these productions, according to the different variables that go to make it up [...] They configure information by type of organisation or journalistic structure”.

So a genre is no more than a way of communicating, a

series of rules familiar to both the transmitter and receiver. Regarding this question, as pointed out by the same author (1992, 15), “[...] genre presents itself as a way or mode of textual configuration. It is a series of combined procedures, of game rules, that produce texts in accordance with certain conventional structures, established previously, recognised and developed repeatedly over time by various authors”. Genre is therefore not determined by particular content but by the written and audiovisual forms employed according to distinctive combinations.

Genres are not rigid, immovable structures but “[...] they evolve constantly to adapt themselves to audience preferences” (Blum and Lindheim 1989, 18). This is along the same lines as Cebrián (1992, 17-18) when he states that “genre is never a rigid corset but a flexible mould [...] genre refers to global structures common to the different ways of doing [...] genres enjoy huge vitality [...]”.

In the early days of television, scheduling was arranged around the base of a series of impervious spaces, each one contained within a corresponding genre. Later, spaces appeared that, although they might be called “programmes” in terms of form, include a range of content, such as modern-day magazine programmes. These are the so-called “containers”. As pointed out by Wolf (1984, 195), “container programmes reorganise the existing genre system, not modifying the form or content but the communicative relationship between them and the viewer. A diverse mode of receiver involvement is indicated or encouraged”.

Genre-based classification

Consulting different documentary sources, it has been observed that there is no single standardised classification but rather these different sources use different groupings, adapted or designed according to a specific situation. Designing an operational classification that predicts and adapts itself to the constant transformation of different genres is no easy task.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) offers a classification that includes the following categories: *news, educational, cultural, religious, children, entertainment programmes, advertising* and *others* (those not classified in any of the previous categories).

The Audiovisual Communication Studies Office (GECA in

Spanish), which publishes television year books, classifies genre principally into *game and quiz shows, sports, informative, docushow, fiction, humour, news, magazines, musicals, reality shows* and *talk shows*.

On the other hand, TNS Audiencia de Medios, the company responsible for measuring audiences in Spain, used the following terms in 1993: *cinema, series, game and quiz shows, bullfighting, sports, musicals, religious, informative, miscellaneous, news, children-young people, drama* and *others*. As from 1995, these were modified and replaced by *fiction, game and quiz shows, bulls, sports, musical, religious, cultural, miscellaneous, information, infoshow, TV selling* and *others*. Each of these genres is subdivided into various specialities which might include several levels.

This last classification is the one used in this study to catalogue the different programmes broadcast during the period under analysis.

2. Objectives

The study's main objective is to analyse the genres offered by the major television channels in Catalonia based on programmes broadcast from 1998 to 2003.¹

The channels analysed, classified according to their ownership and scope of cover, were as follows:

- Public channels (free):
 - State cover with local slots: TVE-1 and La 2.
 - Autonomous community: TV3 and 33 (K3/33).
- Private channels (free):
 - State cover with local slots: Tele-5 (T5) and Antena 3 TV (A3).
- Private subscriber channels, with some programmes with open access:
 - State cover, analogue terrestrial channel: Canal + (C+).

1 The study takes into account the programmes broadcast via terrestrial analogue transmissions in a period from 7 am to 2 am the following morning).

2 The work is based on the author's doctoral thesis (Jauset 2006), tutored by Dr. Amparo Huertas (UAB).

The study has been carried out based on the information consulted in the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.²

3. Methodology

The procedure was based on a series of consultations of the broadcast database and has been conveniently grouped into the fields of information and the appropriate filters have been used according to the information considered of interest and suitable for analysis. The results have been presented in several Excel tables, used to make the calculations and produce different graphs in line with the study's objectives.

For each year and each period of interest, channel by channel, the number of programmes broadcast has been quantified for the different genres according to the above-mentioned classification and only the specialities have been taken into account, not other levels.

4. Results

The results for each of the channels are provided in the enclosed tables and graphs, with information on the number of broadcasts and their annual distribution, based on the aforementioned genre classification.

The graphs allow us to visually evaluate those genres that have been more important or have had more weight in the different programming grids during the period analysed.

The results are commented individually by channel below.

4.1. TVE-1

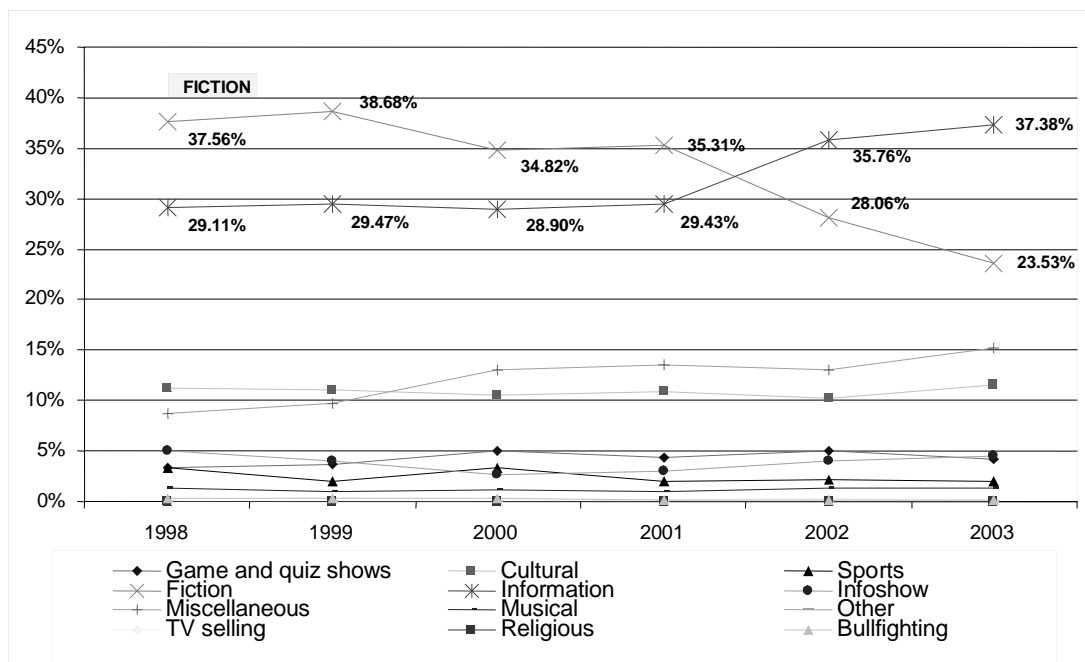
The results indicate a high concentration of two genres, *fiction* and *information*, which in all cases account for more than half the number of annual broadcasts. *Fiction* predominates in the first four years and *information* in the

Table 1. Number of broadcasts on TVE-1 classified by genre. Period 1998-2003

Genres	TVE-1						Totals
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	
<i>Game and quiz shows</i>	272	298	397	323	330	271	1.891
<i>Cultural</i>	922	893	836	804	668	748	4.871
<i>Sports</i>	273	163	266	145	141	129	1.117
<i>Fiction</i>	3.069	3.113	2.746	2.600	1.850	1.525	14.903
<i>Information</i>	2.378	2.372	2.279	2.167	2.358	2.423	13.977
<i>Infoshow</i>	415	321	217	220	268	292	1.733
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	705	777	1.026	1.003	860	983	5.354
<i>Musical</i>	111	81	94	79	84	91	540
<i>Others</i>	1	1			1	2	5
<i>TV selling</i>				10	20		30
<i>Religious</i>		1				2	3
<i>Bullfighting</i>	24	28	26	13	14	16	121
Totals	8.170	8.048	7.887	7.364	6.594	6.482	44.545

Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

Graph 1. Annual distribution of broadcasts on TVE-1 by genre. Period 1998 – 2003



Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

rest. Approximately one third of the scheduling is based on each of these genres. Then, by order of importance, we can see *miscellaneous* and *cultural* programmes, accounting for 12.02% and 10.94%, respectively, of all broadcasts for the period analysed. TVE-1 is the channel that dedicates most space to information and the only one that offers broadcasts in each of the 12 genres defined. It is the most varied channel from the genre point of view.

4.2. La 2

This channel gives priority to cultural programmes, which account for almost one third of its scheduling, without forgetting space for *fiction* and *information*. It is the channel that openly broadcasts most sport, to which it dedicates between 7.40% and 11.90% of its scheduling throughout the period being analysed. It does not have any programmes related to *TV selling*.

4.3. TV3

Table 3 clearly shows the annual predominance of *fiction*, with a proportion greater than 37% in any year. Then comes

information, to which around a quarter of the scheduling is dedicated. In total, almost three quarters of the broadcasts are made up of these two genres. It does not have any programmes related to *TV selling* or *bullfighting*.

4.4. K3/33

Similar to the second channel from the state broadcaster, the autonomous channel K3/33 stands out for its cultural programming, in which it invests a third of all broadcasts for the period. *Fiction* is also important, which achieves almost a quarter of the schedule. In the last two years, an increase has been observed in *miscellaneous*, which was greater than *fiction* in 2003. *Musical* programmes have also acquired a certain relevance, as they account for 14% of the broadcasts in the period analysed.

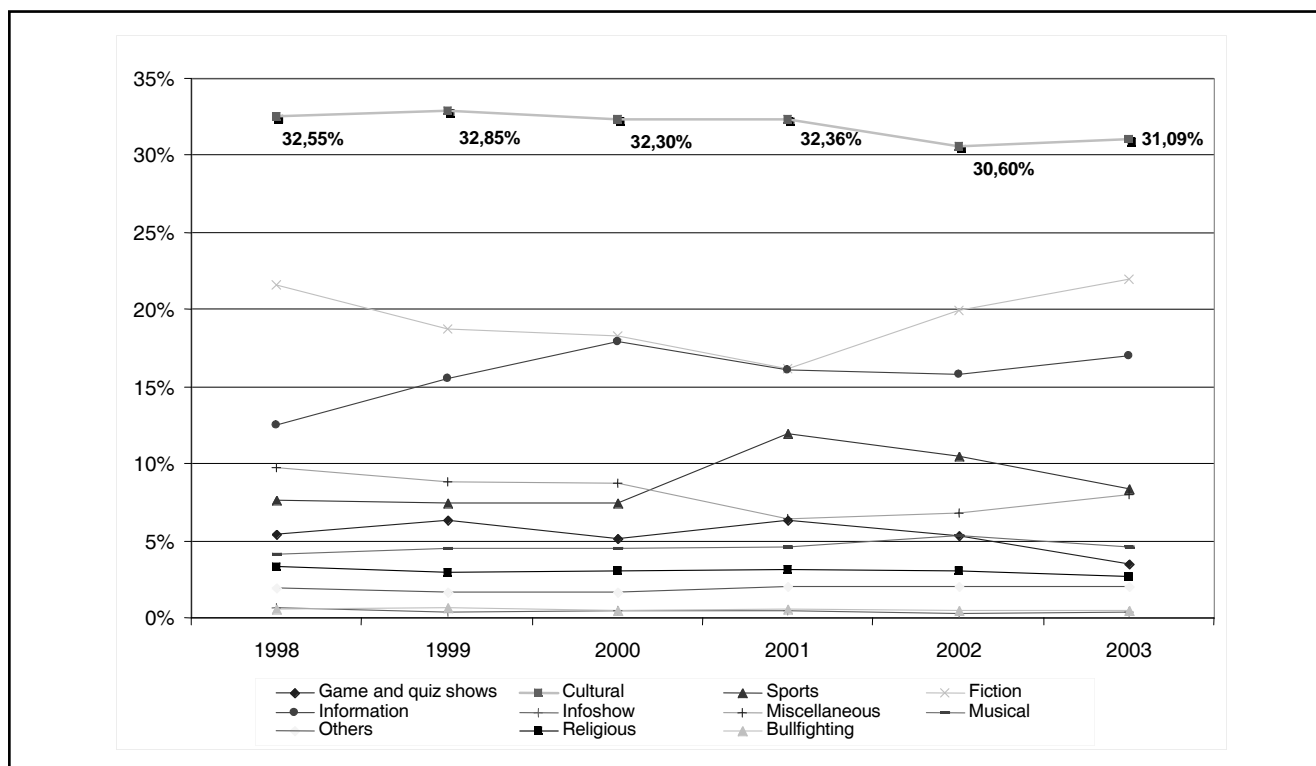
In short, half the scheduling is shared among *cultural* and *fiction*, and a quarter among *miscellaneous* and *musical*. *Information* is as important as *sports*. Like TV3, it doesn't have any programmes related to *TV selling* or *bullfighting* and there has been a notable fall in *religious* programmes as from 2001.

Table 2. Number of broadcasts on La 2 classified by genre. Period 1998-2003

Genres	La 2						Totals
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	
<i>Game and quiz shows</i>	451	563	456	544	456	317	2.787
<i>Cultural</i>	2.715	2.902	2.849	2.765	2.638	2.809	16.678
<i>Sports</i>	637	656	653	1.017	900	758	4.621
<i>Fiction</i>	1.797	1.656	1.615	1.384	1.722	1.982	10.156
<i>Information</i>	1.044	1.373	1.581	1.372	1.359	1.539	8.268
<i>Infoshow</i>	50	36	38	38	23	31	216
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	814	782	770	553	586	719	4.224
<i>Musical</i>	348	396	401	389	458	415	2.407
<i>Others</i>	164	148	147	172	175	185	991
<i>TV selling</i>							0
<i>Religious</i>	273	262	266	266	264	238	1.569
<i>Bullfighting</i>	47	60	44	44	40	41	276
Totals	8.340	8.834	8.820	8.544	8.621	9.034	52.193

Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

Graph 2. Annual distribution of broadcasts on La 2 by genre. Period 1998 – 2003



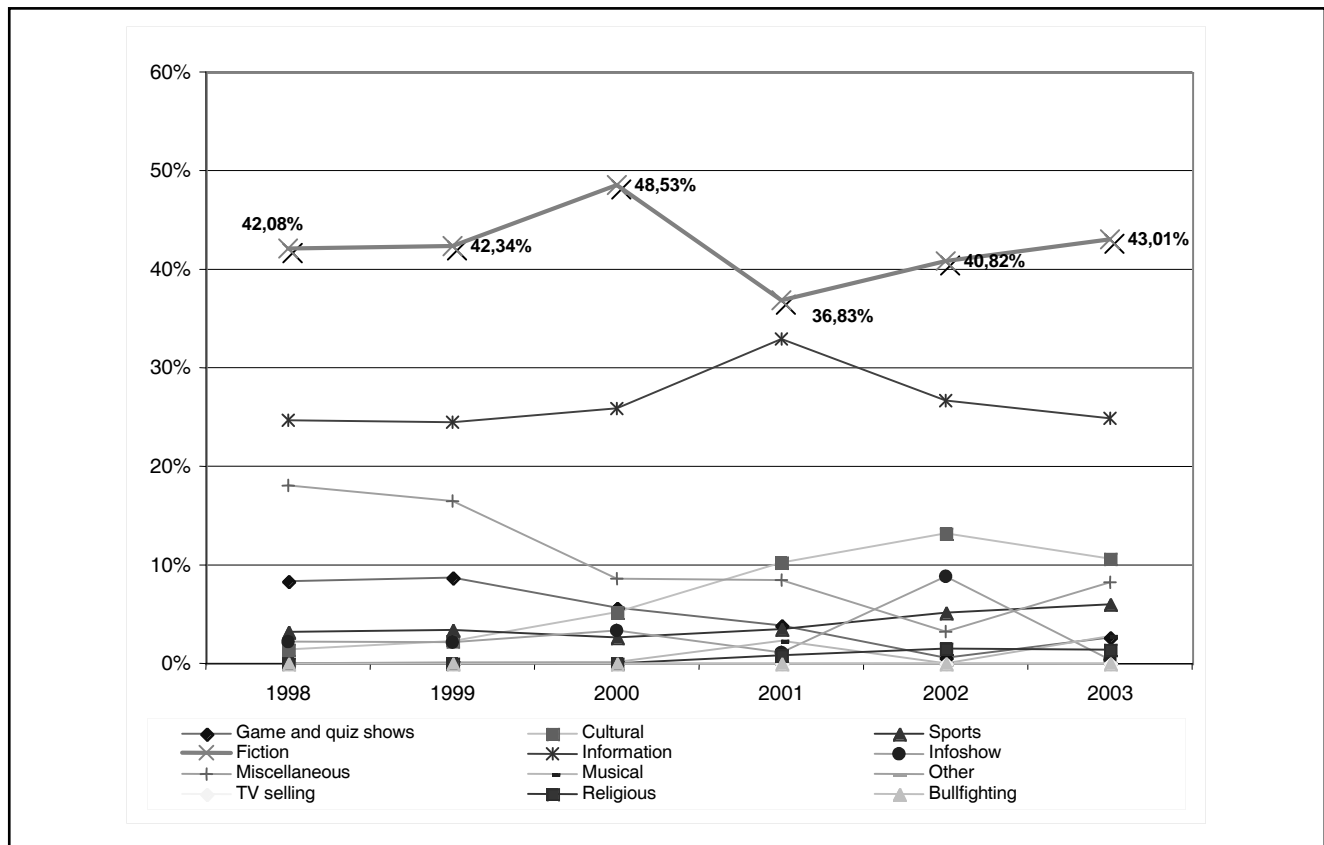
Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

Table 3. Number of broadcasts on TV3 classified by genre. Period 1998-2003

Genres	TV3						Totals
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	
<i>Game and quiz shows</i>	511	516	408	335	51	215	2.036
<i>Cultural</i>	87	133	375	891	1.136	870	3.492
<i>Sports</i>	195	201	190	302	442	491	1.821
<i>Fiction</i>	2.574	2.502	3.504	3.202	3.514	3.514	18.810
<i>Information</i>	1.510	1.447	1.869	2.862	2.296	2.033	12.017
<i>Infoshow</i>	134	127	240	95	760	29	1.385
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	1.105	974	623	736	276	675	4.389
<i>Musical</i>		7	10	198		227	442
<i>Others</i>	1	3	2	3	5	3	17
<i>TV selling</i>							0
<i>Religious</i>				71	128	113	312
<i>Bullfighting</i>							0
Totals	6.117	5.910	7.221	8.695	8.608	8.170	44.721

Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

Graph 3. Annual distribution of broadcasts on TV3 by genre. Period 1998 – 2003



Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

4.5. Telecinco

Tele-5 is the second of the channels analysed that has a higher percentage of *fiction* (40.99% throughout the period), in 1998 this exceeding 50% of all scheduling. However, this proportion has fallen over the years. There are other important genres, such as *information* and *miscellaneous*. The latter has been increasing as *fiction* has fallen. On this private channel, *TV selling* programmes are significant (9.60% of all broadcasts) compared with the public channels (state and autonomous) mentioned in the points above. No *religious* programmes are broadcast and, exceptionally, one *bullfighting* programme was broadcast in 1998.

4.6. Antena 3 TV

The two basic pillars of this channel are *fiction* and *infor-*

mation, overall contributing 36% and 20.87%, respectively, for the whole of the period analysed. A notable fall in *fiction* can be seen, in particular during the first two years, and an increase, among others, in *information*, *cultural*, *game and quiz shows* and *infoshows*. *TV selling* programmes account for a higher percentage than even *miscellaneous* programmes, particularly in 2000, 2001 and 2002. Neither does this channel have any *religious* or *bullfighting* programmes in its scheduling.

4.7. Canal +

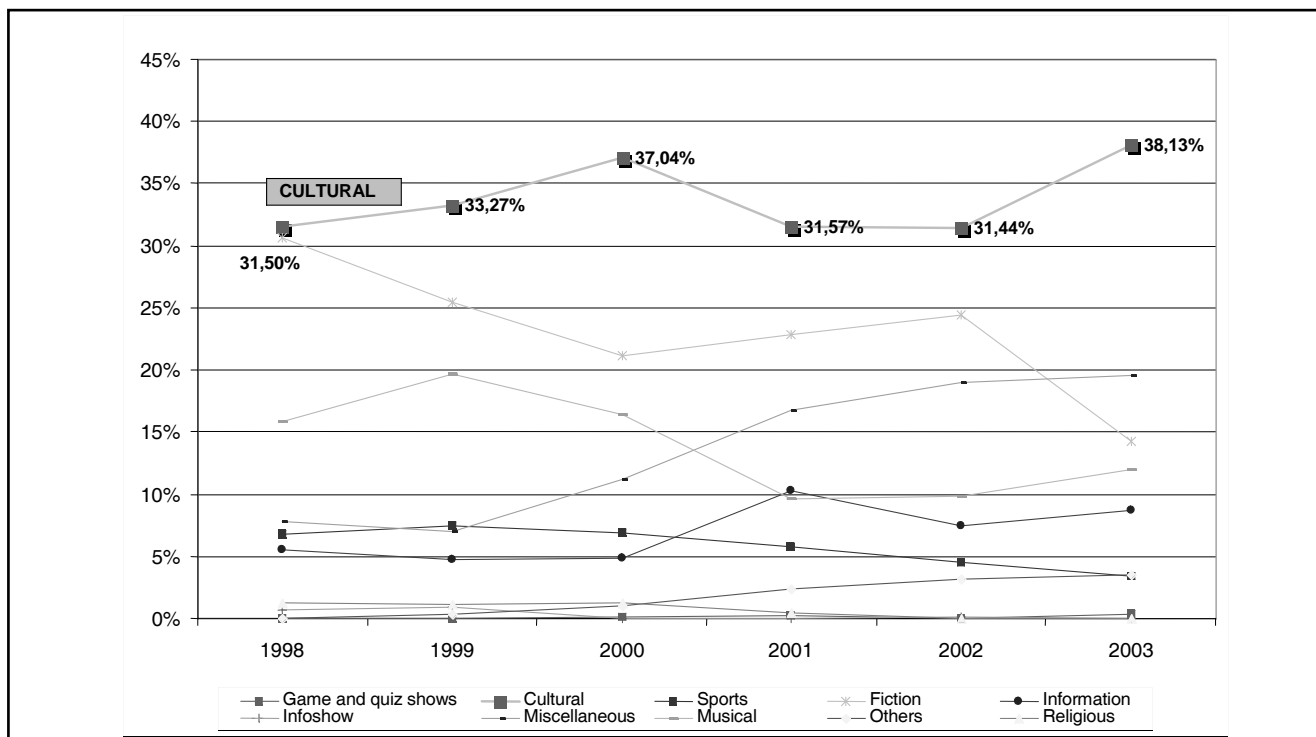
Canal + stands out due to its relatively high amount of *fiction*, which accounts for more than 40% of the scheduling for all the years in question. As a second priority genre, although at a notable distance, comes *sports*, with

Table 4. Number of broadcasts on K3/33 classified by genre. Period 1998-2003

Genres	K3/33						Totals
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	
<i>Game and quiz shows</i>	3	3	10	16	3	26	61
<i>Cultural</i>	2.478	2.810	2.852	2.361	2.472	2.902	15.875
<i>Sports</i>	532	633	527	434	356	260	2.742
<i>Fiction</i>	2.410	2.152	1.632	1.706	1.916	1.083	10.899
<i>Information</i>	433	400	378	772	587	662	3.232
<i>Infoshow</i>	51	77	1		11	3	143
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	611	590	862	1.255	1.495	1.491	6.304
<i>Musical</i>	1.248	1.657	1.265	718	775	913	6.576
<i>Others</i>	1	28	77	181	246	270	803
<i>TV selling</i>							0
<i>Religious</i>	100	95	96	36	1	1	329
<i>Bullfighting</i>							0
Totals	7.867	8.445	7.700	7.479	7.862	7.611	46.964

Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

Graph 4. Annual distribution of broadcasts on K3/33 by genre. Period 1998 – 2003



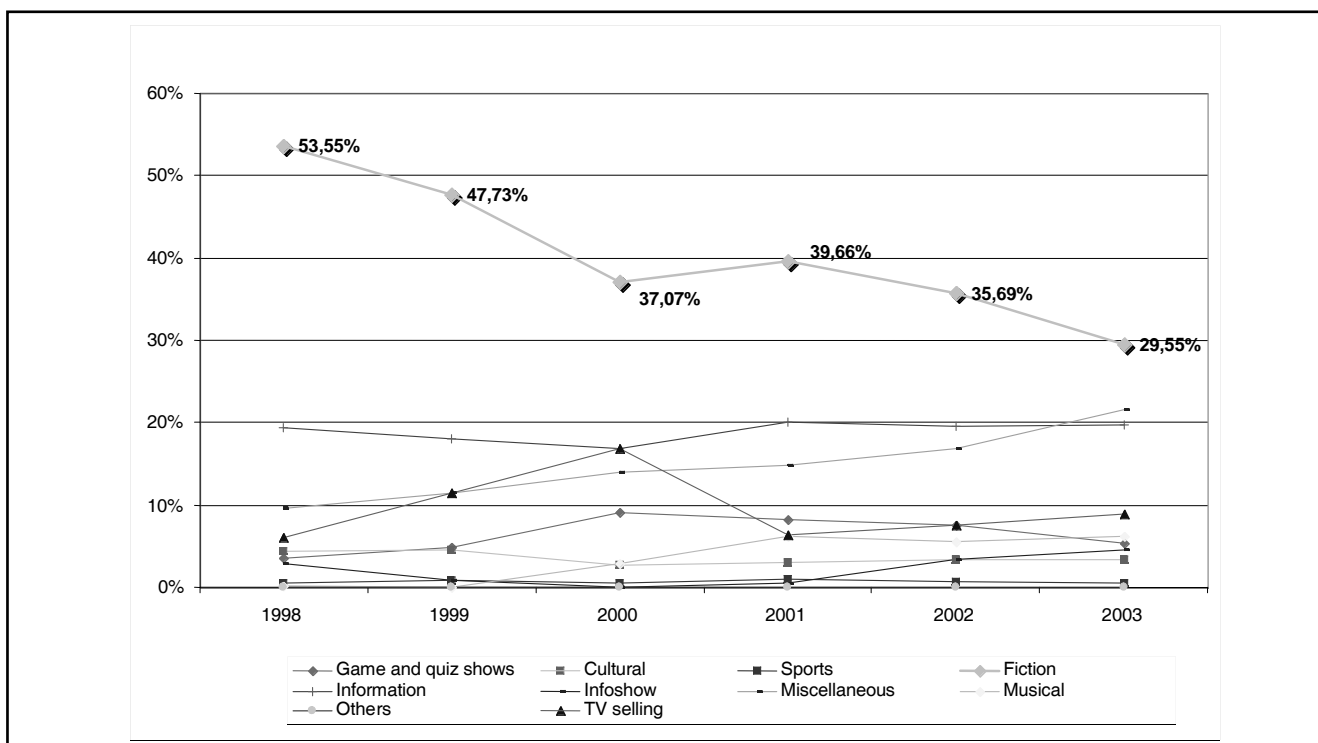
Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

Table 5. Number of broadcasts on Telecinco classified by genre. Period 1998-2003

Genres	Telecinco						Totales
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	
<i>Game and quiz shows</i>	303	419	781	677	573	383	3.136
<i>Cultural</i>	377	386	233	241	250	238	1.725
<i>Sports</i>	46	78	48	81	52	35	340
<i>Fiction</i>	4.628	4.044	3.181	3.233	2.696	2.100	19.882
<i>Information</i>	1.673	1.532	1.443	1.629	1.473	1.403	9.153
<i>Infoshow</i>	246	65	6	41	250	326	934
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	831	975	1.197	1.214	1.272	1.537	7.026
<i>Musical</i>	16	6	245	514	420	447	1.648
<i>Others</i>	1		1	1	1	2	6
<i>TV selling</i>	520	967	1.446	521	567	635	4.656
<i>Religious</i>							0
<i>Bullfighting</i>	1						1
Totals	8.642	8.472	8.581	8.152	7.554	7.106	48.507

Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

Graph 5. Annual distribution of broadcasts on Telecinco by genre. Period 1998 – 2003



Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

percentages close to 20% in 2001 and 2002. *Cultural* and *miscellaneous* programmes have similar percentages (13.39% and 11.64%, respectively), with *miscellaneous* tending to increase as from 2002.

Curiously, there are only broadcasts catalogued as *game and quiz shows* in 1999. Neither does it broadcast any programmes related to *TV selling* or *religious* programmes.

This channel broadcasts both openly (free of charge) and scrambled, for subscribers only. The openly available programmes include news, magazines and sports news, and cinema, sports and documentaries are reserved for subscribers.

5. Conclusions

To summarise the analysis individualised above, and taking into account the ownership and scope of the channels, we can draw the following conclusions:

State public channels

- The channel TVE-1 broadcasts all kinds of genres and has two basic pillars in its scheduling: *fiction* (33.46%) and *information* (31.38%). At the same time, the second channel (La 2) has specialised in *cultural* programmes (31.95%), without forgetting *fiction* (19.46%) and *information* (15.84%).

Autonomous public channels

- The autonomous channels follow a similar pattern to the state channels. On TV3 there is a predominance of *fiction* (42.06%) which exceeds *information* (26.87%) and, via the second channel (K3/33), *cultural* programmes (33.80%) have priority. Unlike their state peers, autonomous channels do not broadcast programmes related to *bullfighting* or *TV selling*.

State private channels, openly available

- The free private channels of Tele-5 and Antena 3 TV also have *fiction* (40.99% and 36%, respectively) and *information* (18.87% and 20.87%, respectively) as their main genres. In addition, there are also *TV selling* programmes, which do not appear on the public channels (apart from some exceptions on TVE-1 in 2001 and

2002). There is no case of any *religious* or *bullfighting* programmes, apart from the one case mentioned previously (T5).

State private channels, subscriber only

- The private subscriber channel Canal + is the leader in *fiction* (42.71%) and is the channel that broadcasts most *sports* programmes (17.92%), genres on which it bases 60% of its scheduling. *Religious* or *TV selling* programmes are not included on its programming grid.

In general, a tendency towards multi-genre scheduling can be observed aimed at majority audiences. Apart from two or three basic pillars, characteristic of a particular strategy, each channel colours what it offers based on the remaining genres, although the boundary between public and private channels is quite blurred.

The possible differences between the different scheduling on offer are determined by the desire to lead (TVE-1, TV3, Tele-5, Antena 3 TV) or to be complementary (La 2, K3/33, Canal +) and aim at specific segments or targets.

Of note are the *fiction* programmes offered, especially by TV3, Tele-5 and Canal +, as well as *information* (TVE-1, TV3, Antena 3 TV), and *cultural* scheduling (La 2, K3/33). *Miscellaneous* programmes remain stable throughout the channels, with a percentage ranging from 8.09% to 14.48%. There is also a notable contribution from *musical* programmes on K3/33, with a percentage of 14% and *TV selling* programmes on Antena 3, with 16.29%. Finally, we should also mention the contribution made by sports, led by Canal +, followed by La 2 and K3/33.

There can be no doubt that television is a reflection of the changes and evolution of society. What scheduling strategies will predominate in the future? The strong segmentation of the market, the fragmentation of audiences and the consolidation of new technologies (IP television, television on mobile devices) are key elements that will affect the programming grid and its genres, as well as future television formats.

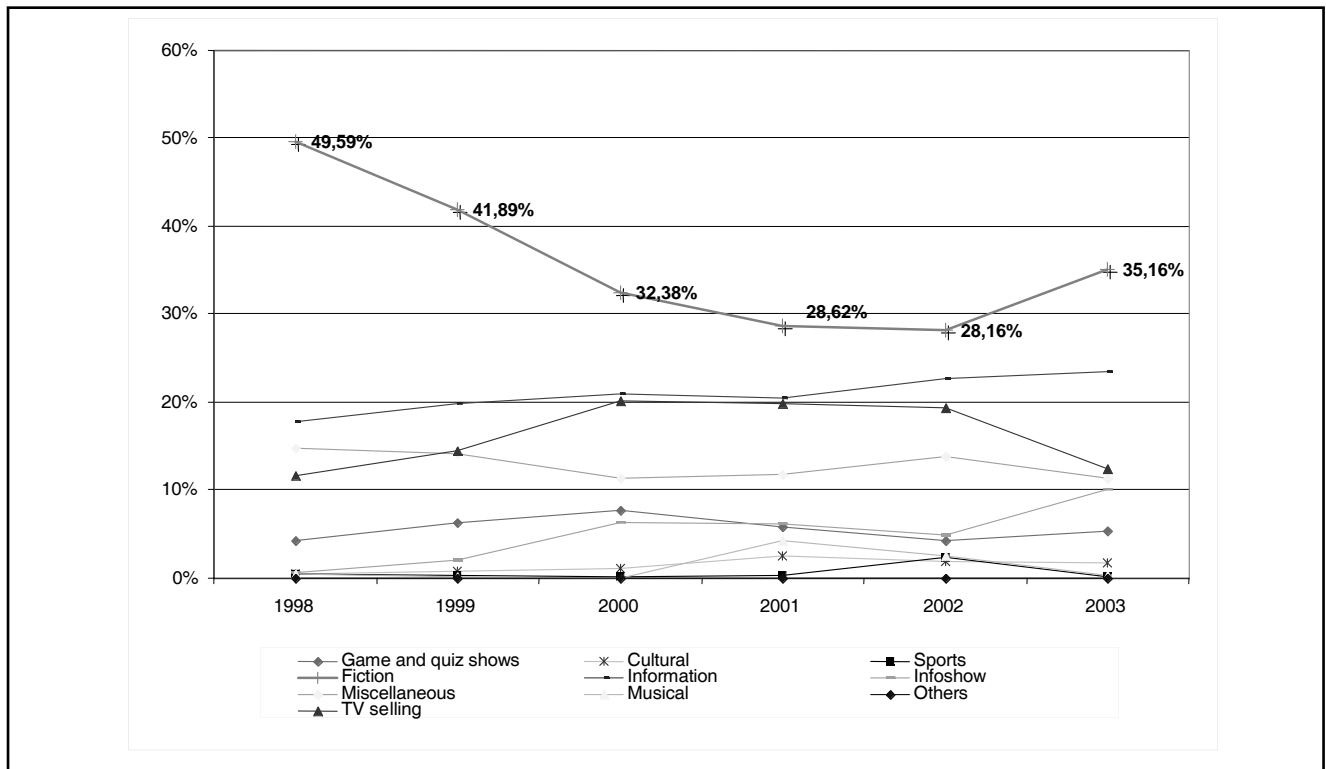
At the end of the decade, it will be interesting to carry out a new comparative study to show the changes that have occurred and analyse how television has evolved and adapted to the new media environment influenced by the habits and customs of citizens of the 21st century.

Table 6. Number of broadcasts on Antena 3 TV classified by genre. Period 1998-2003

Genres	Antena 3 TV						Totales
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	
Game and quiz shows	353	480	620	475	343	444	2.715
Cultural	35	61	92	203	151	147	689
Sports	37	25	10	25	197	12	306
Fiction	4.135	3.231	2.588	2.307	2.281	2.899	17.431
Information	1.480	1.534	1.675	1.675	1.841	1.925	10.107
Infoshow	51	160	499	501	392	822	2.425
Miscellaneous	1.233	1.095	901	957	1.121	930	6.237
Musical	37	14	2	339	200	26	618
Others	1	1	1	1	2	2	8
TV selling	977	1.112	1.605	1.602	1.567	1.019	7.887
Religious							0
Bullfighting							0
Totals	8.339	7.713	7.993	8.062	8.100	8.216	48.507

Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

Graph 6. Annual distribution of broadcasts on Antena 3 TV by genre. Period 1998 – 2003



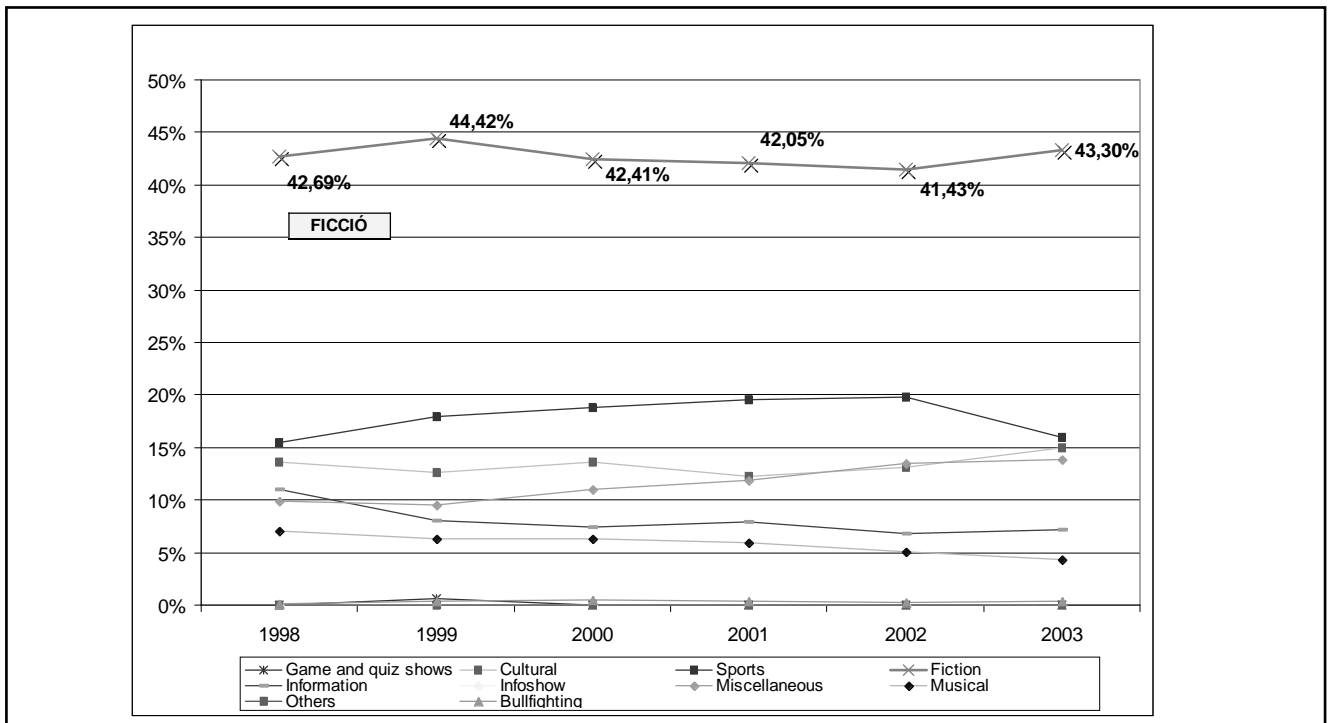
Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

Table 7. Number of broadcasts on Canal + classified by genre. Period 1998-2003

Genres	Canal +						Totals
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	
Game and quiz shows		50					50
Cultural	1.093	965	1.062	967	1.056	1.230	6.373
Sports	1.244	1.367	1.463	1.547	1.594	1.316	8.531
Fiction	3.421	3.385	3.306	3.325	3.336	3.559	20.332
Information	887	614	577	625	550	588	3.841
Infoshow							0
Miscellaneous	792	729	857	941	1.083	1.140	5.542
Musical	563	481	495	474	413	352	2.778
Others	1	1			1	1	4
TV selling							0
Religious							0
Bullfighting	12	29	36	28	20	34	159
Totals	8.013	7.621	7.796	7.907	8.053	8.220	47.610

Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

Graph 7. Annual distribution of broadcasts on Canal + by genre. Period 1998 – 2003



Source: in-house based on the broadcasting database of TNS Audiencia de Medios.

Bibliography

BLUE, R.; LINDHEIM, R. *Programación de las cadenas de televisión en horarios de máxima audiencia*. Translation by E. Hernández. Madrid: Instituto Oficial de Radio y Televisión, 1989.

CEBRIÁN, M. *Géneros informativos audiovisuales*. Madrid: Ciencia 3, 1992.

CONTRERAS, J. M.; PALACIO, M. *La programación de televisión*. Madrid: Síntesis, 2001

FUENZALIDA, V. *Televisión abierta y audiencia en América latina*. Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2002.

GÓMEZ-ESCALONILLA, G. "Historia de la programación televisiva en España". In: *Telos*, no. 52. Madrid: Fundación Telefónica, 2002, p. 27-35.

JAUSET, J. À. "La audiencia de televisión en Cataluña (1998-2003). Estudio estadístico de los niveles, la variabilidad y la relación con la oferta genérica. Tesis doctoral. Barcelona: Communication Department of the Blanquerna Faculty of Communication, Universitat Ramon Llull (URL), 2006.

WOLF, M. "Géneros y televisión". In: *Anàlisi*, no. 9. Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), 1984, p. 189-198.