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Understanding, and Developing, Audience Engagement with DCTV

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Audience Engagement with DCTV: A Discussion Document

25 May 2011

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Introduction

This research explores community members' perceptions of Dublin Community Television (DCTV), its programming and its programme schedule. DCTV has operated in Dublin since July 2008 (see *The Irish Times* 7 July 2008). The station has broadcast 24 hours a day for 3 years now. Programme material is primarily scheduled in thematic 'blocks.' These programme blocks last between one and a half to two and a half hours in length. Blocks are repeated during the week. This schedule system was designed to deliver content efficiently and to support content producers by screening their work alongside similar programmes.

DCTV has a mission to 'enhance diversity, empowerment and participation in media and in community development more widely.' The station aims to 'serve, empower and promote Dublin communities, their activities and their right to be seen and heard.' The station does this by:

... providing affordable access to transmission, training, basic production equipment and facilities for a broad range of individuals, community groups and activists, and by broadcasting a wealth of innovative, creative, critical, educational, and entertaining programmes that focus on real people and communities in all their diversity from around the world (see www.dctv.ie).

To date DCTV's emphasis has, necessarily, been on creating engagement with local communities. Local programming has been developed both as an end in itself and as a means of fostering community development. Community involvement in production has also served as a catalyst for media literacy education. This report marks a preliminary research engagement with DCTV's audience. Moving beyond production and training, DCTV now seeks to discover how audience members engage with its programmes. This work focuses on the DCTV schedule. The block system and various means of promotion have been in place since 2008. The focus group research presented here explores how audience members perceive and engage with this scheduling system. This discussion document begins the process of building an understanding of how DCTV can best engage with, and serve, its audience by identifying scheduling and promotional strategies.

Traditional Schedules and DCTV

Scheduling is a vitally important and yet almost invisible aspect of television. Schedules are taken-for-granted. Nevertheless, they reflect a complex mix of influences (Hujanen 2002: 7). The schedule can structure a broadcasters' relationship with their audience (Hujanen 2002: 118). To that end the schedule 'tries to accommodate to the everyday life of the viewers, their time budget, needs and preferences' (Hujanen 2002: 119).

Broadcasters' attempts to reflect, and become part of, viewers' everyday lives have led to regular and predictable schedule 'grids', which divide the broadcast day into slots of 30 minutes duration. Programmes are positioned within such grids based on a number of criteria. Initially, the schedule will reflect assumptions about everyday life. As Ellis writes they are based on assumptions about 'school hours, working hours, mealtimes, family togetherness and apartness, bedtimes for children' and so on (2000: 27).

... the rhythm of the evening schedule mimics the rhythm of the evening in an imaginary average household. As the early evening is full of distractions and coming and goings, it provides magazine shows; as things settle down in the mid-evening, longer form programmes with more sustained storytelling are introduced; and the post-10:00 p.m. period 'fringe zones' are an area of more experimentation leading into the fragmentation of the late-night viewership (Ellis 2000: 27).

A schedule is also likely have fixed points that reflect changing seasons, special events and occasions. A schedule will reflect state events, public holidays, the move from summer to autumn and so on. Slots for programmes such as news and current affairs are often held in place through a combination of tradition and regulation. Finally, for broadcasters who rely on advertising revenue, these 'grids' are also shaped by the activities of competitors, what they are likely to show and when. The composition of a scheduling grid then is far from simple. It is the product of many constraints that are often in conflict with each other (Ellis 2000).

The way that scheduling is practiced today, by commercial and public service (PS) broadcasters, is in many ways incompatible with the mission of DCTV. Scheduling is used as a means of ordering programmes from producers. Programmes are commissioned to match certain slots to minimise production costs and maximise exposure with intended audiences. This tends to lead to an oversupply of predictable, low cost programmes that are made by established producers. Ellis described scheduling as the 'last creative act in television.' Contemporary scheduling militates against experimentation, diversity and inclusion, which are at the heart of DCTV's mission. Nevertheless, some important lessons can be gleaned from traditional scheduling.

Regularity, Habit and Identity

Until the late 1930s the BBC radio offered an irregular schedule, with programmes moving to different times each week. Listings were offered in the *Radio Times* to allow audiences to plan their listening. After audience research in the mid-1930s more regular programme planning was adopted (Scannell 1996: 10). This made broadcasting into a 'normal' and taken-for-granted part of everyday life. Programmes were broadcast in 'the same time slot on the same day each week.' This allowed listeners to 'know – in a taken for granted way – what was there for them to listen to.' In this way, 'listeners

would get a sense of the overall structure or flow of the programmes as a regular, patterned kind of thing through the hours of each day and from one day to the next, and the next and the next' (Scanell 1996: 10).

This regularised approach to programming led to more standardised production. Moreover, by making broadcasting part of everyday habit, it created easily recognisable identities for both programmes and broadcast channels. Since the 1930s, traditional commercial and PS broadcasters have created expectations about the type of programmes one can expect to find on a given channel at a given time. Thus, the schedule becomes part of a broadcaster's identity (Hujanen 2002: 118).

DCTV cannot follow the scheduling logic of institutionalised broadcasters to fulfill its mission. It must deliver innovative, diverse and inclusive community programming. Nevertheless, the relationship between regularity, habit and identity is likely to be an important principle underlying the development of audience engagement with the channel.

Note on Methodology

This report is intended to be an initial research contribution to an ongoing effort to understand and develop audience engagement with DCTV. The research presented here consisted of four focus groups representing different stakeholders in DCTV and different audience age groups. All respondents' names used here are pseudonyms. The focus groups were conducted on a semi-structured basis using a topic guide (see Appendix Two). These groups were selected in part to conduct the research quickly and within budget. While it might have been preferable to segregate the groups along gender lines this did not prove possible. In the event, gender did not appear to adversely affect the conduct of the focus groups. More negatively, the research took place during an unusual and prolonged spell of adverse weather in December 2010. As a result representation at the four focus groups held in the city centre was low.

Group	Makeup of Group	Number of Respondents
Group 1	Members of DCTV and Voluntary or Community Groups	3
Group 2	Producers of Content for DCTV	5
Group 3	Older Viewers	3
Group 4	Younger Viewers	3

The findings presented here have been produced through basic qualitative thematic analysis. Given the small number of focus groups, and the low number of respondents, it was not possible to reach a satisfactory level of generalisation. The research was not able to identify any underlying trends linking respondents backgrounds to their media habits, for example. The report is based therefore on respondents direct accounts of their experience of, and attitudes towards, DCTV. Given these limitations, this report is not intended to be a definitive statement on how audience members engage with DCTV. It is, rather, intended as an initial engagement with audience research and as a resource for discussion.

Light Under a Bushel

The overriding message to emerge from the focus groups was that audience awareness of DCTV is limited. Many people in Dublin are unaware of the station's existence. Even among people who have produced material with the station their engagement as audience members is often limited to the programmes they have contributed to. More positively, respondents were enthusiastic when they saw the quality and diversity of programmes offered by DCTV. Before discussing more positive engagement, however, it is necessary to address this lack of awareness.

Well, I suppose the first thing that comes to my mind is the lack of visibility in the sense that I don't have all the channels you know so I am just not tuning in to it. Any time I'm in my Mum's or whatever, and I say, 'Oh, let's go find DCTV' they go, 'What?' You know, as in 'Where is it? Blah, blah, blah' so people don't really seem to be aware that there is something happening there. That is my initial feeling (Brian)

Respondents who had prior knowledge of DCTV and its activities had learned about it through their involvement in a community or voluntary organization. As Jane, one of the younger respondents, explained she had never heard of DCTV until recently starting a FÁS course. Another young respondent explained that she had only watched DCTV when her computer club featured on it. Beyond that she did not engage. Limited awareness and engagement was uniform across the four groups. Producers were clearly aware of the existence of DCTV but they lacked detailed knowledge of what it broadcast and when. Similarly, two older respondents had little knowledge of the existence of DCTV or its activities. One older respondent knew of DCTV through his work with socially isolated men. Five respondents had only heard of DCTV for the first time through the call for participation in the focus groups.

I kind of just heard about DCTV last week – we got a message about the focus group and I told my boss and he was like – 'Oh yeah, well just see what they want' – sort of thing. I was like – 'Yeah, I can come in, I know nothing about DCTV...' (Róisín, Group 1)

Respondents with prior knowledge of DCTV often had little idea of the diversity of programmes available through the channel. Karl, for example, had worked on a programme for DCTV. He had also spent some time watching the channel. Despite this he was unaware of children's programming and the presence of community-made programming imported from around the world.

I suppose I actually wasn't aware of the children's aspect of things and there is only so much. I wasn't really aware because I don't have it [DCTV] anymore – they buy it – they buy in stuff - they have stuff in the States. Very positive and very nice and diverse (Karl, Group 1)

Some of the programmes screened, like *The Storyteller* and *California Dreaming*, came as a surprise to viewers, even those who had prior knowledge of DCTV. None of the respondents were regular viewers. For respondents who had previous experience, viewing was linked to seeing programmes they had worked on, or to sporadic forays into seeing what DCTV were up to. The creation of regularity and habit is central to scheduling. Yet, DCTV was not part of a regular weekly media habit for any of the respondents.

Barriers to Viewing

In explaining this lack of regular engagement with DCTV respondents cited a number of barriers to viewing. Chief among these was the fact that DCTV broadcasts can only be accessed through a UPC cable subscription. Among the respondents from community organisations and the production group who were in their 20s and 30s most did not have a UPC subscription. As Mairéad, who worked in a number of community and voluntary organisations, described it.

I'd know a lot more about DCTV than I would have watched DCTV. Do you know what I mean? Because I never had NTL Digital and I'm still not really that sure how it works online with the website (Mairéad)

Indeed it became clear that these groups had diverse media diets that placed no emphasis on cable television. There were respondents who had no television set. There were others who only had terrestrial channels. Others subscribed to services like Sky+. The restriction of DCTV broadcasts to UPC was a considerable barrier to audience engagement.

Beyond this, the location of DCTV on the UPC Electronic Programme Guide (EPG) was also seen to impede engagement with the station. As Jane explained, she would search through channels speculatively. She would rarely, however, search beyond core entertainment and news channels. She would not go 'all the way down to DCTV to see what was on.'

...because DCTV is on the NTL box like you have loads of channels to look through.... and they are moving the station as I have heard – they are moving the station up kind of higher than kind of down at the end because when you kind of have the station like down at the end of the music and where the God channel and all that is – nobody goes down that far to look because you are not going to sit there and watch Mass like (Jane)

Some viewers, who had access to UPC, found that they faced further difficulties when they had tuned into DCTV. As Philip and Brian from the producers' group explained programmes broadcast often appeared to differ from those advertised.

Like, I will always flick through it sometimes and the one thing I do notice about it is, as far as I know it is only on NTL right... And then you know the way they have the lists of what's on, usually it is not accurate either so even if there was something you saw on it that you might want to watch... you turn it on and it could be just something completely different (Philip, Group 2).

Brian did not have a UPC subscription but would occasionally access DCTV when visiting his parents' house. He found that when he had 'checked DCTV to see what was going on' he 'usually just got a blue screen with nothing happening.' Each time he had looked it up 'there was nothing going on at the time' leaving him with no 'experience of its programming at all' (Brian, Group 2).

These technical barriers to viewing were compounded by a lack of publicity and information. Many respondents were unaware that DCTV was on channel 802 on UPC. Other respondents were unaware that DCTV programmes could be viewed on the internet. A small number of respondents were also confused by the DCTV website. They found it difficult to locate specific videos. Many respondents advocated more prominent publicity for DCTV and a far greater level of schedule

information. Indeed, the need for a simpler and more visibly accessible schedule is a key recommendation arising from this research.

The Week in Media

To identify scheduling strategies that will allow DCTV to better engage with audiences, the focus groups explored how respondents used media over the course of an average week. This raised interesting ideas about how media usage related to work, living arrangements, age and available technology. These ideas may inform future schedule strategies.

Predictable and repetitive media usage initially appeared to be related to age. Regularity, however, is more likely to be related to work patterns and social life. The teenagers who discussed their media usage had stable and repetitive patterns of viewing with favourite programmes on weekdays and weekends. Similarly, older respondents, who were retired, reported having a more stable and repetitive pattern of weekly media use. People from the community and producers' groups, with busy working and social lives, appeared to be far more erratic in their media consumption. The habits of more regular viewers will be considered first.

Youth Media Usage

Youth respondents described having favourite weekday television programmes such as *Nikita* and *Misfits*. They watched these in regular weekday slots. *Misfits* seemed to strike a chord between the teenage respondents.

It's about these young teenagers over in England and they get hit by a storm and they all have powers but it's not like one of them cheesy things like... they are young English teenagers like us and they just have powers and it is funny like and it's good like – a bit of action and all that in it as well like (Jane).

This show, among others, appeared to offer a high level of entertainment and identification for youth viewers. Most DCTV programmes were seen to be of little interest to a youth audience. *The Pedal Project* was mentioned as an example of general DCTV programming.

I wouldn't really watch it (DCTV) that much now myself but I think what they are doing is very good but they could kind of modernise it a bit. I suppose they could. Like the kind of Pedal Projects – you wouldn't really see anybody our age group watching that – they wouldn't watch it really – it's not interesting... It's just when you are flicking through the channels and you see *Pedal Project* or you see like *Misfits* you are going to watch *Misfits*. You are not going to watch the *Pedal Projects* (Jane, Group 4)

Nevertheless, when asked which DCTV programmes stood out as being 'really good' they referred to the channel's youth programmes. Projects from the Fatima group were mentioned for example. Engagement with youth programmes seemed to depend on 'what it is about' and whether respondents knew the people who appeared in the show. As later discussions revealed, being able to recognise the people who appeared in programmes was one of the significant audience pleasures attached to DCTV.

The other important programme area mentioned by youth respondents was sport. Brendan, the only male respondent in this group said that sport took up a large part of his media time. Punctuated by the occasional television drama, Brendan's media consumption consisted of sport related content. This covered television viewing, radio listening and internet usage. Sport, however, is generally absent from the DCTV schedule.

Youth respondents made heavy use of the internet during the week. This appeared to consist mainly of using social media sites, particularly Facebook.

Like Facebook and like you get all sorts of different stuff off that. There's all advertisements and all different stuff about media and stuff on it and then also I would look at like say probably news clips on the internet as well. Then, more celebrity kind of stuff as well on the internet. You get loads of different types of celebrity stuff. Most of the programmes now have a web page so you kind of go onto the web pages of the programmes that you watch on telly and you look at them (Jane).

Anne said that she was 'on the internet every day' as well 'just on Facebook.' Facebook also appeared to be the most favoured application when using the internet through mobile phones. Again Anne said it was 'the thing I mostly use my phone for.' While Facebook may have been an important phone application it sat alongside more regular uses of the mobile phone like texting. Brendan, used his phone regularly to get sporting results. Despite, their familiarity with 'new media' platforms the youth respondents generally did not use the internet to access DCTV content. Anne offered one exception to this. She had worked on *Dole TV* and since then she kept track of the show 'to see what's kind of going on and what other people's views are on it' (Anne, Group 4).

Older Viewers

Like teenagers, older viewers appeared to have regular and stable patterns to their media usage over the course of a typical week. Indeed, given that they may spend more time at home, older viewers appeared to have a greater level of repetition in their media habits. The older respondents who discussed their media usage appeared to make heavier use of radio than the other groups. An older couple, who discussed this, Tom and Joan, described how the radio went on 'first thing in the morning' (Tom). 'Radio', in this case, referred predominantly to RTÉ Radio 1. Presenters like Joe Duffy and Derek Mooney were mentioned as daily favourites. For Tom and Joan the television would generally stay off until they had had their tea. Then, RTÉ television again came to the fore as their main choice of channel. Shows like *The Late Late Show* were regular viewing appointments.

Beyond RTÉ, this couple also enjoyed programmes from National Geographic and The Discovery Channel. However, within 'primetime' they mainly watched news, current affairs and soap opera on RTÉ. Most of their television viewing time, Joan noted, was spent with RTÉ. They would make an exception, however, if 'someone told us something was on.... we'd kind of think of switching to another station.' While their media habits were quite stable they were willing to change if a trustworthy source referred them to alternative outlets or programmes.

The discussion among older viewers only involved three people so it is not possible to generalise about older people's media habits. Even within this small group, however, there were clear

differences in media usage. There was a divide between Tom and Joan, and, the other respondent, Malachy. Tom and Joan were traditional and repetitive in their media usage. Malachy had a more countercultural view of media due to his background in media production and media literacy training. Despite their life experiences and their attitudes towards mainstream media all respondents shared an affinity with radio as a medium. No other group emphasised radio as part of their media habits. Older respondents agreed that they would regularly allot a portion of their weekend to RTÉ Radio 1.

Sunday then of course, *Sunday Miscellany* you couldn't miss that. Sunday is a very good morning on the radio as well because of Marion Finucane. Marion's a great way of sort of humanising of all of them. You know they've some superb interviewers, like what do you call her Áine Lawlor is excellent (Malachy).

As Malachy put it 'it's sort of old fashioned – listening to the radio – there was no TV when we were kids.' While they regularly watched news, sport and entertainment on television, radio stood out as a distinctive medium for older respondents. Regardless of an attachment to this long-established medium, older respondents also made regular use of the internet.

The Practical Internet

Tom regularly used the internet. Unlike youth respondents and people in their 20s and 30s, he used it primarily for communications with family overseas rather than for contacting peers or sourcing entertainment. Himself and his wife found Skype and Instant Messaging to be very useful and cost effective.

Not that much but we use it [the internet] yes. For the emails and, the daughter and the husband are living in Spain so Joan uses it more for the webcam [Skype and Instant Messenger]. Thankfully it's free – it would cost a mint other than that - it would be cheaper to fly over than some of the phone calls... You can walk around the house and it's still on. You can, showing off what they bought and what's new and move the camera round (Tom, Group 3).

Older respondents also used the internet for news via newspaper websites and online radio. Malachy also used the internet to catch up in broadcasts if he had been away from the television. Tom had used the internet when overseas to read news websites and to listen to Irish radio. These older viewers were not phased by internet technology. They did, however, appear to adopt a practical orientation to the web. They used it when they needed to. They did not appear to turn to it as a way to pass time, or find entertainment like younger respondents.

Older viewers and youth respondents appeared have more regularity in their media habits than respondents in their 20s and 30s. Work and lifestyle appeared to play a role here. Working respondents generally did not have regular television viewing patterns mid-week because of demands on their time through work, sport, volunteering and socializing. This, it would appear, profoundly altered the ways in which they engaged with media.

Groups 1 & 2: Irregular Media Habits

Respondents from the community sector and producers' groups reported that they lacked fixed habits in their weekly media usage. Mairéad gave a sense of how numerous work and social commitments disrupted the possibility of a regular pattern of media consumption.

I'm out anyway at the [Name of Organisation] meeting on Tuesday night and I've another meeting on Wednesday night. I've a bit of a loser life; I go to too many meetings. [Laughter] So I would tend to be out although I might get the radio in the car if I'm driving to a meeting or something like that. And... I might get *Morning Ireland* in the morning depending on where I am as well (Mairéad, Group 1)

Róisín pointed out that she missed evening television entirely from Tuesday to Thursday because of sporting commitments (Group 1). As Brian went on to describe, media consumption patterns were disrupted not only by conflicting time commitments but also the fact that these respondents were habitual users of online and time-shifted media for news, communications and entertainment.

I would say most of it for me is online. I don't know about set patterns anymore, it is kind of, my schedule changes week to week that I wouldn't have any set night for sitting in or anything like that, it all depends. I would say that 90 per cent of what I watch now comes from online whether it is streaming or downloading and watching it later on or like (Brian)

With changing schedules and a sea of online media options these respondents appeared to follow personalised viewing schedules. These schedules were shaped, in large part, by recommendations through word of mouth and through social media. Karl pointed out that he had occasionally watched programmes on DCTV but that this was generally on foot of a recommendation from someone he knew. Since recommendations could only come after a programme had been broadcast this meant that Karl generally caught up with DCTV material using the internet.

Mairéad expanded on this noting that, with time being scarce, people might be more likely to view referred links if the videos are short.

I'm more likely to actually... watch something if it's short. Like anything from DCTV I've seen I'd be more likely to see it if someone Facebooks [publishes a link through Facebook] it in work and it's short I'll watch it. Like... some of the *Dole TV* stuff and I know I definitely would have watched that in work. I'd be much more likely to watch shorter pieces that are put up on the internet and spread around that way than actually sit down and decide to go and watch something (Mairéad, Group 1).

There appears to be one possible disadvantage attached to this use of online video. A number of respondents reported that they were often distracted while viewing short online clips. As Mairéad said she would often sample media in short segments between work meetings for example (Group 1). Róisín reported that she found she was more likely to be distracted. She was likely to click between programmes and leave media playing in the background. Often she was 'not actually listening to whatever's going in the background then. It's just noise' (Róisín Group 1). Distraction aside, time scarcity and the level of choice introduced by digital media meant that, for these respondents trusted recommendations were the most likely route to watching new programmes. Referral by peers or other trusted sources is likely to be central to creating audience engagement with DCTV across all age groups.

Although aspects of their media usage appeared chaotic there were identifiable structuring influences. One respondent, for example, Bruce reported that he would regularly watch downloaded programmes on a Monday or Tuesday night. This was simply because they had been aired in the United States that weekend and so would be available to download by Monday. In this respect, a personal schedule using time-shifted media was structured by the production and release dates of these US programmes. More prominent patterning of media behaviour emerged when respondents were freed from time constraints over the weekend.

Weekend Media

Respondents from Groups 1 and 2 reported that they had very little structure in their media use. Despite this regular patterns did emerge at certain times. Similar to older and youth respondents, a degree of repetitive media usage emerged on weekends. Karl mentioned that he generally did not follow regular television series. He did, however, make a habit of watching *Peep Show* (BBC) on a Friday night. He also realised when discussing the question that he had a habit of watching shows on a Sunday evening. This he said was probably a ‘throwback’ to his youth when he would watch programmes like ‘*Where in the World, Glenroe* and so on.’ This he said was a habit. Similarly, when at home, Róisín had developed a habit of watching cartoons with her father on Sunday evenings. This, as she said, ‘was the only time that we would really spend a whole lot of time together because I’d be away at college so I’d come home on the weekend.’ Despite moving from home the habit of watching animation remained and was now something she looked forward to each week. It would seem then that even among relatively younger viewers some media use can be the product of longstanding habits. Also, media habits are not developed as individuals but as members of families or households. Programmes, particularly at the weekend, may be an occasion when families or housemates can spend time together. Finally, these regular viewing patterns, which may be products of personal history, are likely to be a source of comfort and relaxation at weekends.

Weekends were also mentioned as an opportunity to catch up on news or entertainment. Jane mentioned the weekends as an opportunity to catch up on soap operas like *Coronation Street* and *EastEnders*. Karl, like many other respondents, used the weekends to catch up on news and entertainment. He also noted, however, that he also used the weekends to explore new media sources. He would defer listening to material he had been referred to and catch up on it at the weekends.

Yeah, just reflecting on it again things I might do at the weekend would be I might catch up on things, if someone said there’s something good on some station, I don’t know, I’m just thinking of National Public Radio in the States or something like that. I might listen to that at the weekend. And then someone might email me something or I might see something on Facebook during the week or some little documentary or something I might catch up on it then, yeah. That tends to happen (Karl).

Jane, a youth respondent, suggested that DCTV should use the weekends to allow people to catch up on community programmes.

But they should kind of do that on DCTV, what a lot of programmes do at the weekend like. Re-show their shows on the weekends because some people are coming in after the weekend and just sitting down watching telly all day. Then they would also be able to catch up on it... (Jane)

Catching up at the weekends appeared to be common among all respondents. Again, however, some respondents from Groups 1 and 2 stood out here. They did catch up on programming at the weekends but did so in occasional binges rather than on a set weekly basis. Mairéad, for example, had a hectic week with several time commitments in, and beyond, work. Her, somewhat sporadic, media diet consisted mainly of news and current affairs. Friday night was the night when she was most likely to break from this pace to catch up on entertainment. She would then catch up on four or five episodes of a weekly series in a single night.

I watch *Grey's Anatomy*, *Brothers and Sisters*, *Gossip Girl* and what else do I watch... Is this *Fade Street*? I'm going to watch *Fade Street*, I heard it's brutal, I'll love it, I'll love it. [Laughter]. Any of those crappy dramas I'll watch them. But not every week. I'd more likely sit down once a month on a Friday night after work or something and sit down and watch 3 hours of *Grey's Anatomy*. That kind of a thing. But, yeah, I wouldn't really mix it with news watching and stuff like that which is kind of like what I do during the week. But, yeah, to chill out I'll sit down and watch crap American TV in, like, chunks. I can watch 4 or 5 hours straight, no problem (Mairéad).

Domestic Media Environments

Given the limitations of the focus groups, it is very difficult to generalise here about audience attributes based on social background, age and so on. One thing that did become clear, however, was the variety of media environments that people experience in their homes. In the past programme makers often imagined the audience to consist of a nuclear family sitting in front of a television set. This is now far from being a universal experience. Across the four groups, respondents' media use was shaped by work and other commitments outside the home. At home their media use was influenced by their living arrangements, i.e. whether they were married, single, sharing with flatmates and so on. Their media use was also strongly influenced by the media technologies in their homes. While in the past media devices like a radio and television were seen to be standard, this appears to no longer be the case.

Shared living arrangements, as part of a couple or a shared household, affect viewing patterns. People may not always pursue personal viewing choices but must, instead, find compromise viewing options or accede to the programme choices of another individual or group. Tom and Joan provided one example of this when they discussed their weekly viewing.

Tom: In my case I don't have an option from 7 o'clock until near enough 9 we'd have *Eastenders* to *Coronation Street*, whatever runs. And I'm reading the paper and half watching these things. And then I get the 9 o'clock news, and probably *Prime Time*, that would be the two main ones. Then there's the National Geographic programmes.

Joan: So, like the two of us would watch those.

Tom: Discovery that type of one definitely, how it's made and how it works, that type of thing. But then of course as soon as the soaps start everything else stops then. I might get a

transfer slip for an odd game of football, you can see what's the score in between the ads (Group 3).

Mairéad provided another example from a shared house. Importantly, the household did not contain a television set. Instead a projector was set up to watch television, films or to play video games. Mairéad gave the impression that she would often give in to her male flatmates, who were in the majority, rather than pursue her own viewing options.

If I had a telly I'd definitely do that. I'd do the whole flicking around. On Sunday nights I'd definitely be watching stuff but because we don't have one I just would be less likely to go and turn it on and hook up a projector and watch something. And half the time there's a PlayStation going or there's a football match on. The guys I live with are both big Liverpool supporters. And, you know, so there's quite a lot of sport being watched and stuff in the house and people coming over to watch sport and stuff like that (Mairéad).

Philip described a similar situation in a shared house. Rather than contest group viewing decisions he would pursue his own interests using a laptop.

Personally though I don't read like, I would sit there, I'd go in and sit down in front of the telly but like most of the time I would have my laptop there... other people I live with would be more into the telly and be watching absolute shite and ... because of this I have picked up, like I know what's going on in the *X-Factor* and stuff for the first time. Most of the time I am sitting there with my laptop (Philip, Group 2)

Most respondents had access to personal media devices. Andrew said, for example, 'I have a laptop beside my bed now and I just collect them [programmes] and then before I go to bed I just watch a new show. The new *Simpsons* or *American Dad* or something' (Group 2). Respondents from Groups 1 and 2 appeared to be more likely to use these technologies to get around the constraints of time scarcity and the viewing compromises that come with shared accommodation. However, any easy fit between types of individuals and viewing behaviour is further complicated by the variety of domestic media technology in use.

Appointment Viewing

Despite the somewhat erratic viewing patterns of groups 1 and 2, it appeared that most respondents would make an 'appointment to view' a programme if it was recommended by a trusted source. As Mairéad explained she would only watch programmes very selectively, if she had been alerted to them and attracted to their content.

So anything I choose to watch I kind of choose to watch it specifically. Do you know what I mean? We'd go and find it and put it on rather than by chance if it happens to be on RTÉ or anything like that. Again it would be mainly current affairs; I might throw on the *9 O'clock News* or catch up on events if it was a night where I hadn't been out 'til maybe Thursday evening or something like that I might get the *9 O'clock News*. I'd occasionally put on Vincent Browne if I'd heard something about it but generally there'd be something that would trigger me to look something up. I wouldn't watch that much stuff by chance (Mairéad)

Similarly, Karl said that he 'wouldn't watch a whole lot of television' and 'certainly very little by chance' (Group 1). With time at a premium and many media options available to them, respondents in

groups 1 and 2 were not given to television 'grazing.' They did not spend time speculatively flicking between channels. They would instead purposely set out to watch a certain programme.

When it came to DCTV, however, many of the respondents found that they had never been alerted to the presence of a programme that prompted them to tune into DCTV. Bruce (Group 2) did not own a television but he would occasionally tune into DCTV if he was visiting a house with a UPC subscription. He said that he'd 'seen some interesting stuff on it but, aside even from the lack of visibility, there has never really been a reason to tune into it.' He had 'never been aware of there being something on that has made me actually actively go out and try and hunt it down to watch it' (Bruce, Group 2). Andrew from Group 2 expressed a similar view. Compounding a lack of awareness, a lack of publicity around particular programmes meant respondents never made an 'appointment to view' DCTV.

Programme Clips

The respondents from the four focus groups watched five clips from DCTV's broadcast output. Four of these clips were from programmes while fifth one was a collection of DCTV continuity, publicity and identification material. Each clip lasted approximately 5 minutes. Respondents responses are organised here according to the clips they referred to.

Rialto Rights in Action

There was a broadly positive response to *Rialto Rights in Action*. This clip presented testimonials from residents of Dolphin House flats who had had persistent problems with sewage. The second part of the clip featured a number of academic, legal and political experts who responded to the human rights campaign mounted by the residents.

There was some division among respondents on the technical aspects of *Rialto Rights in Action*. Respondents from all groups approved of the residents' testimonials in the clip. It was seen to be very positive that the residents were describing their problems in their own words and with their own voices. Anne captured the sense that issues like this needed to be explained by the people who had experienced them and who understood them.

Yeah, well if you have something like that on television you need to like – you can't have TD's standing there talking about something and they haven't got a clue about what's going on. They don't live in the flats. They don't know what's happening night and day and especially with young kids so you kind of need local people like that are going through that to actually kind of talk about it because they are the ones that are going through it – not a TD that is just trying to get into Government (Anne, Group 4)

The residents' testimonials were seen to be the main strength of the clip. The role of the 'expert' commentators at the end of the clip was questioned by Karl and Mairéad in Group 1. Karl got the sense that there was a 'hierarchy of opinion' operating in the clip. Respondents from all groups agreed that the testimonials from residents of Dolphin House were powerful and engaging. Karl got a sense, however, that the more 'expert' or 'official' voices at the end of the clip were quite unnecessary. Moreover, he saw that they were being given more importance than the experience of residents and were needlessly being used to lend credence to the residents' testimonials.

Differences over Production Values

There were some criticisms of production values from respondents. This discussion proved to be revealing. Respondents did not share expectations of, and readings of, production values. Importantly, this also opened a discussion among Group 2 about a tension between mainstream expectations of production values and the mission of Dublin Community Television.

A number of the respondents from Groups 1 and 2 were critical of the voiceover which they found to be dull. Mairéad commented that the 'the narrator wasn't brilliant, now. I think if I just switched on to it I mightn't have stuck it if I hadn't known what it was about' (Mairéad, Group 1). As

she said this she acknowledged that 'there's limited resources and stuff like that and people get training and get better with time.' Róisín also took a dim view of the narrator.

I agree that the testimonials were really good. Like that's kind of what got my attention. But if I were to have watched, like if I saw this on TV and I'd have watched from the start the narrator was so dry in her conversation that... it wouldn't have attracted me to watch it. Like I'd have said – this sounds really boring and then I would have found football or something (Róisín, Group 1)

Unsurprisingly many of the respondents from the producers' group offered comments on how the programme could have made better use of visual storytelling techniques.

In terms of the quality, or the concept was good but it was very much like what they would show as a thirty second news piece. Like the fact that that's such a long piece I'd imagine the programme itself is somewhat longer that, like, they didn't really utilise any kind of basic story telling tools that you'd normally find with a documentary. As in some of that voice over work, a couple of clever shots of the flats in the areas, a little bit of mood music and maybe a rhythm, like something that you had to read and stuff like that to break up how the viewers engaged. It was missing that. It was just too straight (, Group 2)

However, aspects of the clip that were seen as failings by some were seen as positive attributes by others. Karl saw that the 'gritty' nature of the production was important to the message being conveyed. Older respondents from Group 3 also felt that the unpolished look of the programme gave it a sense of depth and realism. They saw that it brought the viewer into the community. It succeeded in giving a sense that community members were taking their problems in hand and presenting their own perspective on them.

I was actually waiting at a bus stop in Dolphin's Barn. And I actually heard two people talking about the living conditions in Dolphin House. And one woman, she would have been into her seventies and she was saying to the other woman that she was, her mother and father like they were raised there and she raised her family [there]. And she said the community were great at helping each other. And she said she'd never leave them but she'd like this situation to be fixed up. So that's what I say, the people themselves I thought were getting their point across and they felt more relaxed talking about it and getting their point across (Joan).

Apart from the technical audiovisual aspects Malachy also felt that the programme was better in the absence of standard 'professional' practices. He noted that the clip allowed the local residents to present their own story without the restrictions of 'balance' which might be found in mainstream media (Group 3).

One of the things that is striking is that if you were to look at this on say Pat Kenny or somewhere you'd find that they'd have somebody from the council to balance out the argument. And they'd say "OK, well look let's hear the other side." When in fact there is no other side. This is outrageous conditions these people are living in. Those women are working with a 1 year old child on the floor which is floating with sewage for 19 years and nothing's being done about it (Malachy, Group 3)

Audiences for Rialto Rights in Action

As mentioned there was a generally good response to this clip across the four groups. Most respondents thought that the programme would be of interest to community groups who experienced

difficulties similar to those of the residents of Dolphin House. Karl felt that it was something that community groups could use and 'swap' among themselves (Karl, Group 1). George in Group 2 pointed out that the programme could be used to educate and motivate other community groups.

It's the kind of thing you might use again in probably shorter bites. But say you were going around to other communities that had similar problems, say a public meeting, say – your problem with your housing, this is what other people have done. Sort of an outreach educational thing (George, Group 2)

Among the youth respondents, Anne thought that the programme was a potential source of confidence and inspiration for others.

It's good as well that they have the people there, like the likes of Joe Duffy and that, because it kind of gives the confidence to other places around to say "Oh we want to get something done and like they have pushed it and they have got like a group to talk and they got people to actually talk about it" so people watching it would say "we should start up our own committee and do that and then get up there like." So it kind of shows that if you put it through and you really want to change and you keep going, keep going and get enough people to help you and you will get it done (Anne, Group 4)

George, again, in Group 2 felt the programme had successfully 'set down a marker' with the local authorities. It said, 'we're here, we know our rights are being violated now and we're not going away.' Here George acknowledged that the goals of community television were very different to conventional, commercial television. DCTV was more about giving 'people a voice' in a way that audience numbers did not matter. It was a situation 'where you're not trying to reach the people who are watching the telly, you're just putting a mark down to say – listen we're on the telly here, there's a show, you can't ignore us anymore' (George, Group 2). Jane from Group 4 took a similar view.

It's very good for the Dolphins Barn community. Like it's very good for them like to kind of get it out there – their problems because it kind of shows people around all different areas as well what's kind of going on - what's going on in their flats as well because a lot of flats around Dublin have been told that they will be knocked down and it still hasn't been done (Jane).

The reception for this clip was very positive overall. Respondents recognised that the programme was most likely to interest people who had problems similar to those faced by the residents of Dolphin House. Brendan from Group 4 added that it 'would be more interesting for the people in the community of Dolphin's Barn ... and if other communities are watching it and seeing that they are getting their problems fixed that they can do the same thing' (Group 4).

A Slot for *Rialto Rights in Action*

Respondents were asked if they would recommend *Rialto Rights in Action* to someone they know. The response to this was unanimously positive. Respondents did note, however, that the programme was more likely to interest people from Dublin and particularly people who dealt with problems like those in Dolphin House. The respondents were also asked to discuss when they thought the programme should be scheduled during the week. Many respondents thought that the programme would fit into what they called a 'primetime' slot. Tom and Malachy suggested that it could be screened on a Monday night.

I'd say probably a Monday evening. I would imagine people are more in on a Monday. There's no point on a Saturday evening when everyone's looking at the football ... But I'd say Monday or Tuesday, that part of the week I'd imagine (Tom, Group 4)

I think it's very much a prime time programme. They show those on Monday nights - *The Front Line* type thing. It tends to be I suppose after the weekend as I say. Then particularly older people who are interested in those issues. We'd certainly be prepared to look at that. I don't know anybody that wouldn't be interested in it (Malachy, Group 4)

Brendan suggested that it be broadcast on a Friday night 'because there is nothing really on Friday night at all. There is no sport on a Friday night.' Jane suggested that it could be shown during the day but also repeated at about 8:00 or 9:00 because 'people that are in work won't catch it.' She also suggested that the programme be broadcast again at weekends to allow people to 'catch up' on it. Mindful of the discussion above about weekly media consumption, *Rialto Rights in Action* appeared to be best suited to being scheduled in a regular recognisable themed slot. Monday appears to be suitable as a potentially 'alternative' current affairs slot. However, this would place it in the same slot as popular RTÉ current affairs programmes. Tuesday night might provide a better alternative slot. A regular weekend repeat would also facilitate viewers who had missed a mid-week broadcast. Given the nature of this programme, however, it is also very well suited to internet distribution. Thus it might referred to interested individuals and community groups who may use it for training and development.

California Dreaming

This programme was also well received by all respondents. *California Dreaming* was shot in California by a German documentary maker. It was one of many imported programmes scheduled by DCTV. Rather than being seen as an aberration, or a departure from the mission of DCTV, this programme was seen to be an important contribution to community television. The five minute clip screened in the focus group looked at the lives of a couple, with two young children, who had become unemployed and had to resort to living in a camper van. The respondents warmed to the programme because they thought it dealt with themes that were universal rather than being confined to California.

As Bruce from Group 2 put it 'there's a community aspect to it as well because watching that little clip it made me, as I was watching it I was thinking about what's happening here. Is that happening here?' (unknown, Group 2).

... it tells you that we are not the only people – just Ireland that is suffering like. Homeless people and recession and all that basically – everyone in the world has the same problem as we have, which is what I see – how they are getting on and how they are getting through it. Because we are just sitting there, saying, it will be over now in a few years, while they are out there trying to solve this themselves, instead of making the government and all trying to do it for you (Brendan, Group 4)

As Mairéad pointed out *California Dreaming* had universal appeal because it told individual's stories. It told 'stories from smaller people.' It also told the story of a family. The programme had a 'closeness to it' because it was 'about a family.' It didn't really matter whether it was an Irish family or not (Mairéad, Group 1). Respondents also linked the fate of Californians portrayed in the clip with Ireland's economic woes. As Róisín said 'part of its interest is that it is like – these are people who – they

obviously never saw this happening to them. And it is like you said “God, is that going to be Ireland in a few years?”” (Róisín).

This clip was well received by the producers’ group (Group 2). They praised the very high production values of the documentary acknowledging that it probably had a very large budget. It was praised for being ‘beautifully shot.’ The sourcing of material from abroad was also praised. It was seen as something to be encouraged. George added that it broke ‘down some of the mental structures that you have about where community starts and finishes’ (Group 2). Like the others, respondents in Group 2 agreed that the programme worked because it created a sense of connection between the viewer and the family on screen.

I mean it’s human interest, it’s straight into someone’s reality rather than ... you know, you could make something like that and intersperse it with people discussing the structural reasons for what’s happening for this human situation people are in. And that’s a really important part of understanding why these people are in these situations but it doesn’t do that as far as we can see in that clip it’s very ... it allows people to connect. It allowed me to connect with those people, Jesus, you know. I wasn’t aware that people ... so obvious people are driving around [in camper vans](Brian, Group 2)

George remarked that *California Dreaming* probably took a lot of time and money to make. Nevertheless, it had a strong ‘impact on a kind of emotional level. It lingers with you and it can open up a debate much more than maybe 10 talking heads kind of analysis’ (Group 2).

A Slot for *California Dreaming*

Again, all respondents were unanimous in saying that they would recommend *California Dreaming* to somebody they knew. There was also general agreement among respondents that the programme should be put in a late ‘prime time’ slot. They felt that it should be on late enough for parents to give time to the programme after children had gone to bed but not so late that they needed to go to bed themselves.

As I say like at prime time, like when most people would sort of, say well if they’d young children they’ve gone to bed and they’d have time to sit and look at the television, and older people as well (Joan, Group 4).

There was broad agreement that *California Dreaming* should be scheduled at 9:00PM or 10:00PM on a week night. Given the warm reception for this programme it also clearly lends itself to referral and distribution via the internet. Indeed, this programme was so well-liked by respondents that high quality imported community or Creative Commons programmes might be considered as a ‘flagship’ strategy for DCTV to alert viewers to its existence and attract them to the channel.

University Cribs

In contrast with *Rialto Rights in Action* and *California Dreaming* this programme was roundly criticised by respondents. Pointedly, Philip from Group 2 enquired ‘that is not actually on DCTV is it’?

Running around someone’s house with a camera showing how the house is, like that is just stupid. Instead of them telling you that – there is my picture, there is my bathroom like ... just running around the house with a camera like a 2-year old (Brendan, Group 4)

The programme was slated for its technical production. Philip commented that there was ‘laughing behind the camera. The thing is in the wrong aspect ratio ... so, everyone looked really skinny. It was just crap.’ Bruce added ‘it shouldn’t make the listings, it should barely be allowed on YouTube’ (Group 2).

Apart from its technical failings, respondents felt that this programme had nothing to say. Mairéad (Group 1) found it very hard to watch and found that she had no interest in the programme; ‘It was just rich kids living the student dream and I have no more interest in that.’ Andrew commented that ‘everybody at one stage of life made a “Cribs” reference video in their home like, when you were in college, everyone did that sort of pricking around or whatever it is if you were studying media but I don’t know. That says nothing to me about anything’ (Andrew, Group 2). Róisín made the damning comment that she ‘wouldn’t even watch it if’ she ‘had a friend on it’ (Róisín, Group 1).

A Slot for University Cribs

There was a broad view among all respondents that *University Cribs* should not have been scheduled on DCTV at all. It was generally seen to be a liability to audience engagement. As Jane from the youth respondents’ group said it was ‘thrown together.’ She acknowledged, as other respondents did, that community television needed to accept material from members from the community. Nevertheless, she remarked that ‘when you watch stuff that’s kind of thrown together, you just kind of change channel straight away’ (Group 4).

University Cribs also brought to a head a discussion in Group 2 about technical standards on DCTV. They acknowledged the need to accept programmes from all community contributors. Nevertheless, they felt that there should be a form of technical quality control. They did not advocate editorial control over content. Nevertheless, they did advocate that the final stage of submission to DCTV should verify that colour and sound levels are correct.

Unknown to the respondents, and the researcher, at the time, *University Cribs* had been an entry for the Noise Film Festival. This was an event for young local film makers. This explained and provided a context for the poor technical quality of the production. DCTV must show programmes like this to fulfill its mission. They can also be successfully accommodated without alienating audiences by using the schedule to provide context. If *University Cribs* was scheduled as part of a slot for emerging talent or young film makers it would be unlikely to elicit the negative comments that emerged from the focus groups.

The Storyteller

The final clip from *The Storyteller* was again well-received by all respondents. Indeed many respondents were surprised to see that DCTV produced children's television programmes. Bruce from Group 2 thought 'it's definitely something that they [DCTV] need a bit more of. A little bit more kids' TV, you'd definitely get the viewers like.' Respondents also praised the programme for its educational and multicultural content. Róisín remarked that the racially and ethnically mixed audience of children was very positive.

Working for [Name of Organisation] like – one of our senior international officers ... he always points out all these ads, like these bits of literature like, it is all one standard type of child, it is just an Irish looking child. So, it is like – when I see a programme like that, I am like – well that is just a great mix of different cultures and what not, so I definitely find the values in that plus I love the little art work (Róisín)

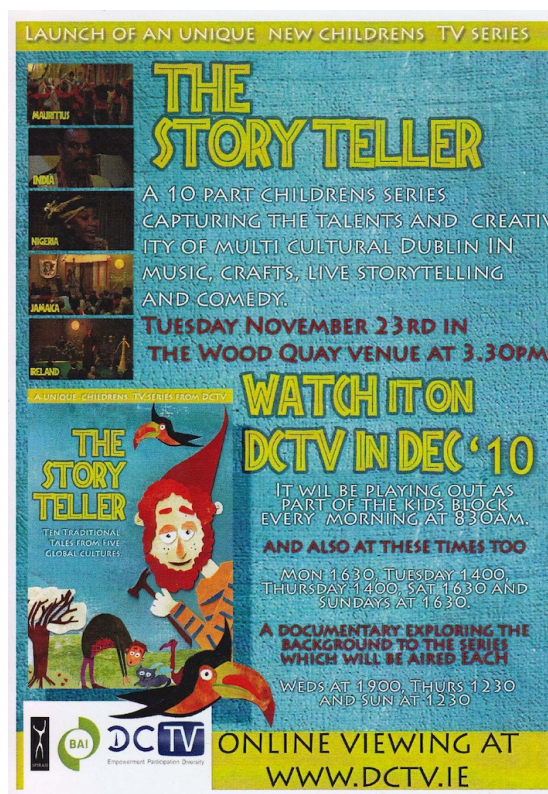
The show was seen to be very educational not only for knowledge of other cultures but also because it included basic learning like numeracy. Respondents were broadly very positive about the programme's art and set design.

There were some criticisms of *The Storyteller*. Respondents from Group 2 were quite critical of the publicity material (Right). 'The flyer for it however is really ugly. It is very hard to read ... And not a good layout but aside from that I thought the programme was great' (Philip: Group 2). George commented that there was a lack of diversity in camera shots. 'More close-ups of the kids' faces would have been nice. I thought there was a real lack of a second camera on the kids ... it was only getting one angle, you could see the kids over at the other side because it was just getting them, it is about the dialogue between him and them' (Group 2). Mairéad from Group 1 remarked that she found that the set looked quite dated. Despite this she thought that it was 'not a bad story for kids.' She was not certain that children would want to watch it but she felt personally that it was suitable for them.

If I was randomly stuck babysitting and I could well go and stick on DCTV there and see what is on. I feel less guilty about sticking a child in front of that than I would sticking them in front of some cartoon. I would be like sit there and count your numbers, learn about yams (Mairéad, Group 1).

A Slot for *The Storyteller*

Again, all the respondents said that they would recommend *The Storyteller* to someone. The majority of respondents felt that the show should be regularly scheduled at a time when children would easily get to see it. This coincided with the actual DCTV slots which were early morning and early afternoon.



Anne from the youth respondents' group noted that it was important to make parents aware of the existence of the show; 'Like if they knew that was on. Like most kids just know about *Balamory* or *Barney*. Like they know or their Ma's know what time they are on at and they put that on but they wouldn't have any idea about that' (Anne, Group 4).

Publicity and Continuity Material

As stated at the outset, many people in Dublin appear to be unaware of the existence of DCTV. Among, those who are aware of the channel, like many of the respondents in this research, their awareness of DCTV's output is limited. Following the screening of the publicity material a number of perspectives on DCTV's identity emerged. Some respondents felt that DCTV failed to put across a coherent impression of what it was about.

...one thing I could never quite figure out when I was watching DCTV sometimes you would be watching something and you would be – 'What is this all about?' I felt that a bit when I was watching this I said 'What is all this about?' like you know what I mean (Karl, Group 1)

When asked if the publicity material gave him a sense of DCTV was about Karl replied:

For me no. More so the *G Music* thing but the others I would be oblivious now I would have to say. I kind of get it because I am very familiar with DCTV I suppose but it is still a bit mind boggling for me. To be honest I wouldn't get a clear sense of the identity thing at all from that (Karl, Group 1)

Youth respondents found that the impression of the channel given by the collection of publicity material was confusing. It presented too much of a mix of ideas and styles to give a clear impression of what the station was about. Jane from the youth group argued that there was no problem in showing a lot of different material. The difficulty was in separating out the various styles, genres and themes addressed by DCTV.

There is not a problem with that – you could do all different stuff but it is just the way they put it together like – it is like say films, like you can't really make one film with horror, drama, romance and all together. It just doesn't work out like. It is kind of – you kind of have to separate it like if you are going to do a piece about drama, do it about drama. Like you can tie in stuff with it, if it goes but you can't just throw all of it together and expect it to work (Jane, Group 3).

Brendan, from the same group, felt that the promotional material needed to be far more focused and practical in the information it provided.

They should get straight to the point, what it is, what is about, when it is on and who and what is happening. Not like going on and going on saying about this, that and the other and not getting to the point, saying what is happening, when it is on and where. Like if it was TV3,

they would have at the end of it like 'TV3, Saturday 9.30' or whatever (Brendan, Group 3).

This view of the publicity material may have been a product of how the material was presented in the focus group. It was a collection of promotions for the station, for specific programmes and for concerns beyond DCTV like the Older & Bolder pensions campaign for example. Nevertheless, respondents were also critical of specific aspects of the promotional material rather than just the five minute mix of general material.



Some of the material was considered to give an impression that DCTV was 'unprofessional.' One spot featured a still picture and text from a computer (Right). Brian raised the issue. Philip enquired if this was deliberate. Brian said that it just made the channel look unprofessional. George also added that a promo for getting involved in DCTV came across 'as something that you would get shown in school. This kind of educational standard.' He felt it was important to make this clip 'punchy'; 'you have got to make it look like that by getting involved in this you are having the time of your life.'

Importantly, people also saw that some of the DCTV promotional material was quite negative or self-deprecating. The following exchange took place about the monthly schedule (see Appendix 3).

Bruce: Just looking at *Afloat* there as well. Did you see this "P.S. - This is in the description for the programme – "Apologies for the one second lags that for some reason replaced the three cut to black spread throughout the movie." No explanation given on that.

Philip: Stuff like that why even tell.

Bruce: Just fix it.

Andrew: Or just say nothing. (Group 2)

Mairéad from Group 1 expanded on this saying 'there is no way I am ever going to watch that programme because I am already convinced it doesn't work' (Group 1). Respondents also noted that some publicity contained negative references to DCTV's low budget for example. Karl thought it was 'absolutely crazy to put a comment like that in.' He said the budgeting issue was important but that the point could be made in a 'nicer' more positive manner. As Karl saw it, negative comments on funding came across as "whatever you do don't fucking complain because it is not like we have any money and don't give out about it" that is what it sounds like to me.' There was a fear here that negativity and a self-deprecating apologetic stance would damage engagement among viewers and potential programme makers alike.

While they had their criticisms, most respondents were very positive about the quality and diversity of programmes being screened. As Mairéad said 'their stuff is good and they shouldn't be

too apologetic for it. Down playing themselves as the poor relation.’ She thought that DCTV should be adopting an approach similar to that of TG4.

I think TnaG [Teilifís na Gaeilge] had the same thing with resource issues and stuff like that and what they have done is they have come out amazingly strongly. People know them as a station where you are going to get high quality, quite specialised decent documentaries without all the fluff and stuff that you are going to get on TV3.... People will watch stuff on TnaG, they are doing that series on the Irish Civil War all those documentaries that were on recently and people were emailing each other and saying you should check this out. They should have themselves known for the same thing for high quality, local programming that people will make an effort to go and watch and on at accessible time (Group 1)

Brian from Group 2 thought that the station gave the impression of being very ‘left wing.’ He continued, ‘not that that is a bad thing but it might put certain people off’ (Brian Group 2). This comment was prompted by the promotional slot featuring Trade Union TV. He went on to say that he would probably agree with what was being said but the fact that the promotion was branded as Trade Union TV made him feel that he was ‘being spoon fed a little bit.’

There was a related view here among many respondents that DCTV was too serious and too heavy in its engagement with social issues. Jane thought that this was visible in DCTV’s perceived concentration on documentaries. She thought that DCTV was doing ‘a bit too much on documentaries and other people’s lives.’

I think they should calm down a bit on the whole documentary kind of stuff as well. I think they kind of do need to start like making a few pieces of stuff like that are watchable like little drama programmes or something like that and they should kind of put like a few – like two or three documentaries in it a day at the most. I wouldn’t put like a whole day with just constant documentaries. I would go off my head watching documentaries all day. I like the Discovery Channel but I wouldn’t sit there and watch the Discovery Channel all day like watching documentaries like. You want to shake it up a bit. You want to watch like a drama programme. Then probably a few documentaries and then probably a film later on before you go to bed like (Jane, Group 3).

The DCTV Schedule

It is flamboyantly confusing like, it really is. That is mind boggling. I have no idea what time any of the stuff is on. I don’t know why they just didn’t put down like a weekly schedule or daily schedule or something like that and highlight the things or whatever. I wouldn’t have a clue now what is going on (Karl, Group 1).

The main response on the monthly schedule was that it was very complicated and hard to read. All groups advocated the use of a weekly or daily schedule to simplify programme information. Most people have grown up with television schedules as they are presented in newspapers. This provides a quick and easy to read overview of the day’s television. Respondents could not readily understand the ‘block system’ employed by DCTV. Nor did they think that viewers would take the time necessary to decipher the monthly schedule to identify a programme that they wanted to watch.

Rather than a daily schedule, this takes up too much print, too much time anyway. So you want to be able to condense it down.... Like when you study it enough you notice on a Monday it’s [programme] on at 11 o’clock, on a Wednesday it’s on 11 and Thursday at 5, but

somebody who wouldn't bother, okay now when you sit and look at it and you can see what it is about. But someone just taking a glance at the paper maybe won't relate to that (Tom, Group 3)

As noted earlier, most respondents were willing to make time for programmes that were reliably referred to them. The schedule in its current form, however, seemed to militate against such referrals and appointments to view.

George said he didn't know 'what the block system is.' He was 'really confused as to when stuff is on' (Group 2). Mairéad had some knowledge of the DCTV block system. Nevertheless she did not 'know how it works in practice' and 'to actually try and schedule anything to watch it would be difficult enough just looking at that... If you were looking at something like *California Dreaming* and trying to figure out what time it is on at every week it is not immediately that clear' (Mairéad, Group 1). There was also a view that schedule times for programme blocks were arbitrary and random. Jane said that DCTV should 'Just do what the normal TV Guide kind of does, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday...'

A Visual Schedule

Philip from Group 2 advocated a clearer visual. This he noted could include highlights from the day which could be presented in a text box with a picture at the top of the daily or weekly schedule.

For example let's say *Rialto Rights in Action*, is the favourite programme that day. That they would have minimal descriptions and you know but in the middle of the whole thing, up here there would be a box with a picture and it would be like DCTV funded a local community group to investigate what was going on ... tune in to see. It is like picking certain moments of the day that are worth tuning into and highlighting those (Group 2).

There were a number of comments that the schedule format was visually unattractive and inconsistent. In the daily schedule for instance programmes were presented in three columns. Most had descriptions but some, like NALA for example, did not (See Appendix 4). Andrew stressed that it is 'hard to read. Very hard to read.' (Group 2). The visual presentation of the schedule presented a bigger problem for older viewers with poor eyesight. Visual accessibility arose as an unexpected but important aspect of the schedule design.

It could be clearer I think, you know. I think the times are fine, as I say this is hard to judge because my eyesight, I don't know about you but my eyesight's really, without glasses it's really bad (Malachy, Group 3)

The daily schedule was found to be far clearer and more accessible than the monthly presentation of programme blocks. Nevertheless, programmes were presented in a very small font size.

Viewers' Suggestions for DCTV

During the focus groups people offered a number of suggestions on how DCTV profile, content and schedule might be improved. These are presented briefly here.

Advertising

Tom from Group 3 advocated the use of advertising local papers such as *The Dubliner* to attract attention to DCTV.

Yes it's not funded by anybody. I was going to say for advertising purposes – you know *The Dubliner* or whatever comes out once a week, if there was something in it, if there was a short schedule or something that might help. You know if you want to watch something in particular – it would be good advertising or get the word out to it... You'd get a wider audience – the older people mightn't have either the internet as such ... or know how to use it in a lot of cases (Tom, Group 3)

Respondents also suggested that programmes be advertised in local shops through flyers or posters. This is likely to be very effective where a local community will be given an opportunity to see themselves, their locality or their neighbours on television.

Combining Community Outreach and Research

Malachy from Group 3 suggested that DCTV could combine research and publicity by holding focus groups or audience panels in the broader Dublin area. These, he thought, could be hosted in community centres as a means of introducing people to DCTV.

Raising Awareness of Services for the Elderly

Older respondents also felt that DCTV could include more content that raised awareness of services for elderly people. In particular they mentioned the 'friendly phone call' service. This was a valuable service by older people were often unaware of it (see <http://www.friendlycallservice.com>)

Missing Genres

Respondents noted that certain types of programmes just seem to be absent from DCTV. Youth respondents felt that DCTV was quite serious with an over-concentration on documentaries. They felt that the station should present more locally produced drama and entertainment. Older viewers felt that older films from the 1930s and 1940s could be screened as an economical way of entertaining and engaging older viewers. They mentioned cowboy films, Shirley Temple films, Laurel and Hardy, *Bonanza* and so on.

Sport was also identified as a missing genre on DCTV Respondents who were enthusiastic sports followers thought that DCTV could possibly screen some local matches. Perhaps more feasibly, Brendan from Group 4 also suggested that many community sports clubs are unknown. DCTV he felt could create community engagement by making people aware of the hidden clubs that were in their areas.

Recommendations for Discussion

This closing section outlines a number of possible strategies to create greater engagement among the DCTV audience.

Regular Programme Slots

The block system is confusing. The monthly schedule was found to be very unhelpful and should possibly be discontinued. Respondents found the daily schedule to be far more useful and accessible. Moreover, viewers expect programmes to be at the same time each week. There is a need to create regular and recognisable slots in the week. This is more likely to create habitual viewing.

Anchor Points

More regular programme slots are likely to give rise to regular and habitual viewing. However, DCTV's mission cannot be fulfilled by creating the highly rationalised and homogenised type of programme grid that is typical of many commercial and public service broadcasters. DCTV needs to preserve innovation, diversity and inclusiveness. To combine the benefits of regular programming with the ability to surprise and challenge audiences it is recommended that fixed anchor points be identified in the schedule. Some examples can be seen in Appendix One. These could serve as regular viewing appointments while special events, one-off programmes and diverse community productions can be accommodated flexibly outside of these fixed slots.

The Schedule and DCTV's Identity

DCTV has an opportunity to use its schedule to build its identity. This could be achieved by identifying programme themes that reflect DCTV's mission that can be inserted into fixed anchor points. The examples provided in Appendix One are Current Affairs, Imported Documentary, New Producers and Children's Programming. This creates the potential to have regular 'flagship' programmes that viewers will associate with DCTV.

During the focus groups, it also emerged that many respondents have a distrust of 'mainstream media.' There is an opportunity here for DCTV to genuinely identify itself as a media source that is free from the restrictions of mainstream broadcasters. Trust between local producers and viewers may be an important part of DCTV's identity to be amplified in future

Schedule Presentation and Distribution

Descriptions in the schedule need to be consistent and accurate. The DCTV mailing list could be used as a means of distributing a weekly schedule. An electronic schedule containing web-links to videos could also better facilitate people whose schedule prevents them from catching original television broadcasts. The use of an email schedule could also be a low cost means of encouraging referred viewing.

Internet Distribution

DCTV is a cross-platform media organisation. Currently, however its website causes confusion for some users. It also does not offer a searchable archive of programmes. Videos online should be made available by programme rather than by block. A low cost means needs to be found to make web-based programmes easier to find and share. This could possibly be achieved by organising programme lists by genre and by alphabetical order.

Referred Viewing

In the focus groups, respondents appeared most likely to change their viewing habits if they received a trusted recommendation for a programme. It may be possible for DCTV to build on its current referral activities through social networks like Facebook. If themed anchor points are created in the schedule word of mouth referrals are also likely to build audience engagement.

Engagement with Mainstream Media

While the focus groups suggested that audiences were willing to engage in 'alternative' media the fact remains that mainstream television and newspapers remain the dominant means of publicity. DCTV currently has a very low profile in mainstream media. For example, a search for 'Dublin Community Television' raised no results on *The Irish Times* online. At the time of writing, a similar search for 'DCTV' yielded only eight results appearing over the period from 13 December 2002 to 9 December 2009. Respondents broadly felt that DCTV should be more broadly publicized through local and national papers, magazines and local radio.

Further Research

As stated at the outset, this report can only serve as a starting point for research on understanding and developing engagement with DCTV's audience. A deeper, ongoing research relationship with community audiences could be achieved through further qualitative research and through the creation of a DCTV audience panel.

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Appendix One: Possible Weekly Schedule Anchor Points

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
07:00							
08:00		Childrens	Childrens	Childrens	Childrens	Childrens	
09:00							Childrens
10:00							Childrens
11:00							Childrens
12:00							
13:00							
14:00							
15:00							
16:00	New Producers	Childrens	Childrens	Childrens	Childrens	Childrens	
17:00	New Producers						
18:00							
19:00						New Producers	Current Affairs
20:00	Imported Documentary	Current Affairs	Current Affairs			New Producers	Current Affairs
21:00		Current Affairs	Imported Documentary	Imported Documentary	New Producers		
22:00		Current Affairs	Imported Documentary	Imported Documentary			
23:00					New Producers		

Appendix Two: DCTV Focus Group Topic Guide

Outline

Explanation of research and mobiles off

Introductions: names and Background (10 mins)

Can we just go around the room briefly and could everyone tell me what their main impression are of DCTV? (20 mins)

Discussion of Media Consumption During the Average Week

Here the aim is to draw a picture of each day of the week in terms of atmosphere, activity, and media usage.

Monday: Discussion of today's media use. What were you listening to, reading today?

Discussion of days from Tuesday to Sunday

Probe: Weekly media highlights? (20 mins)

Review of DCTV clips (30 mins)

Rialto Rights in Action

California Dreaming

Bulletin Board and 'Grammar' (5 mins)

University Cribs

The Storyteller

What do you make of that clip?

Probes: What is it about?

How well is it produced?

Would you recommend that programme to anyone?

What do you think is a good time to show that programme?

Discussion of schedule and schedule material (20 mins)

What are your first impressions of schedule?

Probe: What do you make of the bloc system?

Within the limits of funding and time, how do you think DCTV could be improved?

(10 mins)

