

# DANISH AND AUSTRALIAN TELEVISION: THE IMPACT OF FORMAT ADAPTATION

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## Abstract

*Format adaptation plays an increasingly important part in international television. Formats such as Dancing with the Stars and Idol are screened in many territories. The article presents an in-depth case study of how this relatively new and highly internationalised production and business model influences local television markets and leads to changes according to local competitive, financial, cultural and political conditions. It explores the impact of format adaptation on Danish and Australian prime-time schedules between 1995 and 2004/05, and its effect on local content and genres among the main broadcasters. Various media systemic explanations for these trends, differences and similarities are investigated.*

The process of format adaptation— that is, acquiring a foreign television program format and adapting it into a local version — plays an increasingly important part in international television. Formats such as *Dancing with the Stars*, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* and *Idol* are present on television screens in many parts of the world, consequently changing genres during prime time in ways that have not yet been the subject of much academic interest. This study explores the impact of this on Danish and Australian prime-time schedules over the past 10 years, by investigating connections between the historical developments of format adaptation and local content and genres in the main broadcasting schedules of the two countries. The same two weeks of television's peak season for both Denmark and Australia are surveyed in 1995, 2000 and 2004/05.<sup>1</sup>

Denmark and Australia are among the smaller TV markets on the periphery of the Northern European/English-speaking region, of which the United States and the United Kingdom are market leaders when it comes to the export of both programming and formats (Sinclair et al., 1996; Schmitt et al., 2006). The two are, though, different in two ways that may affect their use of format adaptation. First, Denmark has a recently established dual TV system, in which the public sector still dominates. In Australia, commercial players have always overshadowed the public sector. Second, Denmark's first language is not English. American and British programs are therefore not easily accessible to Danish viewers. Format adaptation may have more advantages for Danish than for Australian broadcasters.

## Formats, local content and genre

This analysis covers extended prime time (6.30–10.30 p.m.) on the main channels of the two countries. Denmark's primary channels are the two public service

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broadcasters, DR1 (fully licence fee funded and equivalent to Britain's BBC) and TV2 (advertising funded in a model similar to ITV). The two commercial broadcasters are TV3 and TvDanmark. In Australia, the study covers the five free-to-air broadcasters: ABC, SBS and Networks Seven, Nine and Ten. The latter three are, of course, funded solely by advertising and hence reliant on ratings and audience size. Three areas are investigated:

- the use of format adaptations. Schmitt et al. (2006) and Moran and Keane (2004) suggest a recent increased use of formats in many Western and Asian countries. Is this also the case for Denmark and Australia?
- format adaptations and local content. Moran and Keane (2004) claim that format adaptations in some Asian countries have replaced foreign prime-time programming, especially with broadcasters that have traditionally relied on US imported content. Has something similar happened in Danish and Australian prime time?
- format adaptations and genre. Brunsdon et al. (2001), Frandsen and Carlsen (2005) and Hill (2005) detect dramatic changes in prime time as the result of a rise in factual entertainment programming within the reality and lifestyle genres and a subsequent fall in factual genres, drama and traditional entertainment. Reality and lifestyle are both genres where we find many of the international formats presently used for local adaptations (Schmitt et al., 2005). What are the connections between the use of format adaptations and the popularity of certain genres?

To successfully investigate the generic aspects of television formats, analysis must work with the principal genre divisions. In fact, this leads to possible confusion as no general industry or academic definitions and divisions of genre exist (Mittell, 2004). Accordingly, I have developed my own classification. Table 1 provides an outline of the genre divisions used in the analysis (right column) together with a division of the genres into four main modes of representation (left column). The categories are constructed so as to be as unambiguous as possible, thus making them fairly general but, at the same time, useful for the purpose of the survey.

## Format adaptation in Denmark

The use of format adaptations is very much on the rise in Denmark, most notably on TV 2, TVS and TvDanmark. As Table 2 indicates, the number of adaptations has grown considerably in the surveyed period. In 1995, nine foreign formats made it into the Danish schedules, taking up a total of 15 hours. By 2000, the number had risen slightly to 10 formats and 18.5 hours. In 2004/05, there were an amazing 23 formats taking up 38.5 hours of the prime-time schedules of the four broadcasters. As Table 2 also shows, there was an important change in format genres in 2000 with the appearance of scripted fiction, lifestyle and reality formats in addition to the entertainment formats of 1995.

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**Table 1: Main modes of representation and genre categories**

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<i>Main mode of representation</i>	<i>Genres</i>
Factual	<i>Factual documentaries and factual (including culture)</i> : Programs treating factual and cultural events with relevance to the public sphere of society; concrete examples are historic documentaries, investigative documentaries, nature documentaries and literature programs; <i>News and current affairs</i> : Programs about current events in the public sphere of society; the new and current affairs programs are often magazine-style and studio-based programs, which treat issues relevant for current events only; <i>Sports</i> : Programs about sports or telecasts of sports events; <i>Children's/young people's</i> : Programs made especially for children or young people; cartoons and fiction for children are not included in this category.
Fiction	<i>Fiction/drama</i> : Programs telling fictive stories like cartoons, movies, drama series, sitcoms and soaps; children's cartoons and fiction are included in this category.
Traditional ent.	<i>Entertainment</i> : Satire, talk, variety, clip shows, game and quiz, gossip, movie shows, concerts, etc.).
Factual ent.	<i>Reality</i> : Programs on intimate issues and about ordinary people experiencing something out of the ordinary, often in a somewhat staged reality; concrete programs are <i>Big Brother</i> , <i>Survivor</i> , <i>Idol</i> , <i>World's Wildest Police Videos</i> , <i>Wife Swap</i> , <i>The Apprentice</i> , etc.); <i>Lifestyle</i> : Programs on issues traditionally pertaining to the private sphere such as interior design, DIY, gardening, personal makeover, child-rearing, cleaning, cooking.

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The format genre change is even more unmistakable in 2004/05. As Table 3 shows, a majority of the adaptations are found either within reality or lifestyle genres. Not surprisingly, both of these types have experienced a general increase in popularity over the surveyed period. There are nine lifestyle and nine reality formats, while only five formats fall within the traditional entertainment subgenres.

Between 1999/2000 and 2004/05, there was a marked change in genre type in the prime-time schedule of Danish television. Entertainment programs based on format adaptation gave way to the remaking of reality and lifestyle program formats which experienced a large growth. This was especially the case on the two commercial broadcasters, where reality and lifestyle constituted between 40 and 50 per cent of the prime-time programming as opposed to virtually being non-existent on the commercial schedules in 1995. However, specialty lifestyle adaptation was also on the rise on the two public broadcasters. On both DR1 and TV 2, 14 per cent of the prime-time programming fell within the two genres.

In 1995, the lifestyle share was only 2 per cent for TV 2 and 7 per cent for DR1, whereas reality was non-existent. The rise of these factual entertainment genres and format adaptations seems to mainly affect traditional entertainment and, in some cases, fiction and sport.

**Table 2: Distribution of Danish format adaptations by year and genre**

	1995	2000	2004/05
Entertainment	<i>Don't Forget Your Toothbrush, Voce Decide (DR1) Wheel of Fortune, Jeopardy, Have a Good Newsweek, Kun for sjov (TV 2) Blind Date, Man O Man, Stjerneskud (TV3)</i>	<i>The Lyrics Board, Are We Getting Married? (DR1) Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?, Jeopardy, Surprise TV2) Helt til grin (TVDanmark) Vita Løgna (TV3) Ready Steady Cook (DR1) Changing Rooms (TV 2)</i>	<i>The Lyrics Board (DR1), Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?, Strictly Come Dancing, Star Search, Jeopardy (TV2)</i>
Fiction			
Lifestyle			<i>D.I.Y. SOS (DR1) How Clean is Your House?, House Doctor, The Block, Holiday Showdown (TV 2) Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, Fra skrot til slot, You are What You Eat (TV3) Stop tyven (TvDanmark)</i>
Reality		<i>Survivor (TV3) The Villa (TvDanmark)</i>	<i>My Restaurant Rules (TV 2), The Farm, Wife Swap, Next Top Model, Survivor, Pop Idol (TV3), The Apprentice, Under Construction, Extreme Makeover (TvDanmark)</i>
Total format hrs	15 hrs	18.5 hrs	38.5 hrs
No. of formats	9 formats	11 formats	23 formats

**Table 3: 2004/05 distribution of Danish format adaptations by genre and channel**

Broadcaster /format hours	Lifestyle	Reality	Entertainment
DR1/2.5 hours	<i>D.I.Y. SOS (UK)</i>		<i>The Lyrics Board (Ireland)</i>
TV 2/ 13 hours	<i>How Clean is Your House? (UK) House Doctor (UK) The Block (AUS) Holiday Showdown (UK)</i>	<i>My Restaurant Rules (AUS)</i>	<i>Who Wants to Be a Millionaire (UK) Strictly Come Dancing (UK) Star Search (US) Jeopardy (US)</i>
TV3/ 15.5 hours	<i>Queer Eye for the Straight Guy (US) Fra skrot til slot (Scandinavia) You are What You Eat (UK)</i>	<i>The Farm (Scandinavia) Wife Swap (UK) Next Top Model (US) Survivor (Sweden/ UK) Pop Idol (UK)</i>	
TvDanmark/ 7.5 hours	<i>Stop tyven (UK)</i>	<i>The Apprentice (US) Under Construction (UK) Extreme Makeover (US)</i>	

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On DR1, TV 2 and TvDanmark, adaptations have not replaced the factual genres of documentaries and news and current affairs. On the contrary, these factual genres have been on the rise on both DR1 and TV 2, whereas documentaries on all three channels have maintained a fairly steady level in the surveyed period. Nevertheless, on TV3, reality and lifestyle programs — which for a very large part are adaptations of format programs — have indeed replaced all other genres except for drama. Twenty-one per cent of TV3's prime time is reality, 25 per cent is lifestyle and 54 per cent is drama.

As for a possible relationship between the increase in format adaptation and a similar increase in local content, the correlations are weak. TV 2 has experienced a small rise in local content over the period, which can partly be attributed to the rise in format adaptations, and the same goes for TVS between 2000 and 2004/05. On the other hand, there are no correlations on either DR1 or TvDanmark. Local content and format adaptation levels on DR1 have been steady throughout the period, and TvDanmark's share of local content has actually decreased in the period in spite of a considerable increase in format adaptations. TVS and TV 2 were the most important Danish users of format adaptations in 2004/05. TVS had the most format hours of the four broadcasters — 15.5 hours — whereas TV 2 had 13 hours. TV 2, on the other hand, had the most formats — a total of nine — whereas TVS had eight. TvDanmark came third with a total of 7.5 hours and four formats. DR1 had two that took up only 2.5 hours, which made the station the least important format purchaser of the four.

On a more general level, the findings of the study also uncover striking differences between the Danish public broadcasters and the commercial broadcasters as far as both the general distribution of genres and the specific use of foreign formats for adaptation are concerned. These are differences that existed both historically over the past 10 years and continue to do so in the present, pointing towards an exceptionally and maybe even increasingly biased television system. In this system, the public service sector represents one extreme — with high levels of local content and factual programming, and lower levels of format adaptations — and the commercial sector constitutes another — with low levels of local content and factual programming, and high levels of format adaptations, in relative terms. In 2004/05, both public broadcasters have local content shares of about 80 per cent, of which TV 2's adaptation share is 28 per cent and DR1's only 5 per cent. Thirty-eight per cent of TVS's prime time and only 19 per cent of TvDanmark's prime time consists of locally produced content. In turn, more than 70 per cent of this local content is based on foreign formats on both channels.

## **Format adaptation in Australia**

Formats were only present on the commercial networks. Neither the ABC nor the SBS broadcast any format adaptations in the weeks surveyed, leading to the conclusion that formats play a less significant role in Australian public service broadcasting than they do in the commercial sector. This is substantiated by the fact that SBS has only ever produced one adaptation, namely the 2006 version of

the Danish reality format *Nerds FC*. On the other hand, since 2002 the ABC has adapted several foreign formats, including *Outback House* (based partly on the American format, *Frontier House*, and on the British *Edwardian Country House*). Nevertheless, it has only used adaptations to a limited degree. As for the use of format adaptation in the commercial sector, the three networks display significant differences, historically as well as presently, and there are no consistent trends among them. As is evident in Table 4, format adaptations have played a vital and consistent role on Channel Nine. The share of adaptations has been kept at around 30 per cent of the local content in 1995, 2000 and 2004/05, making Channel Nine the most important adapter of overseas formats in Australia. In the two surveyed weeks of 2004/05, the network had adapted four formats, which equalled a total of 7.25 format hours.

**Table 4: Distribution of Australian format adaptations according to year and genre**

	1995	2000	2004/05
Current affairs	<i>60 Minutes</i> (Channel Nine)	<i>60 Minutes</i> (Channel Nine)	<i>60 Minutes</i> (Channel Nine)
Entertainment	<i>Gladiators</i> , <i>World's Greatest Commercials</i> , <i>World's Wackiest Videos</i> (Channel Seven) <i>Sale of the Century</i> , <i>Australia's Funniest Home Videos</i> , <i>World's Weirdest TV</i> , <i>Don't Forget Your Toothbrush</i> , <i>This is Your Life</i> (Channel Nine) <i>Your Favourite Commercials</i> (Ten)	<i>World's Funniest Bloopers</i> (Channel Seven) <i>Australia's Funniest Home Videos</i> , <i>Sale of the New Century</i> , <i>Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?</i> , <i>Surprise — Surprise</i> , <i>This is Your Life</i> (Channel Nine)	<i>Dancing with the Stars</i> (Channel Seven) <i>Australia's Funniest Home Videos</i> , <i>Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?</i> , <i>This is Your Life</i> (Channel Nine)
Lifestyle		<i>Ground Force</i> (Channel Seven) <i>Changing Rooms</i> (Channel Nine)	<i>Queer Eye for the Straight Guy</i> (Ten)
Reality		<i>Treasure Island</i> (NZ), <i>The Villa</i> (UK), <i>Pop Stars</i> (NZ) (Channel Seven)	<i>World's Worst Drivers Caught on Tape</i> (Channel Nine) <i>The Band</i> (US), <i>World's Wildest Police Videos</i> (Ten) <i>The X Factor</i> , <i>Australian Idol</i> (Ten)
Total format hrs	14.5 hrs	18.5 hrs	16.75 hrs
No. of formats	10 formats	15 formats	8 formats

As for Channel Ten, format adaptations have also come to play quite a vital role in its schedule, but mainly in the period between 2000 and 2004/05. Approximately one in four locally produced hours was based on overseas formats in 2004/05, which equals three formats and seven format hours, making Channel Ten the second most important format purchaser in Australia (see Table 5). Format adaptations, however, played a much less important role on Channel Ten's prime

time in 1995 and 2000, partly due to a much smaller share of local content. Channel Seven's format adaptation seems significantly less important in prime time compared with Channel Nine and Channel Ten. As a matter of fact, in 2004/05, Channel Seven only had one format, *Dancing with the Stars*, that took up 2.5 hours of the schedule, making that network the only one of the Australian — as well as the Danish — broadcasters to experience an actual adaptation decrease in 2004/05.

**Table 5: Distribution of Australian format adaptations according to genre and channel, 2004/05**

<i>Broadcaster /format hours</i>	<i>Lifestyle</i>	<i>Reality</i>	<i>Entertainment</i>	<i>Current affairs</i>
Channel Seven/ 2.5 hrs			<i>Dancing with the Stars</i> (UK)	
Channel Nine/ 7.25 hrs			<i>Funniest Home Videos</i> (US)	<i>60 Minutes</i> (US)
			<i>Millionaire</i> (UK)	
			<i>This is Your Life</i> (US)	
Ten/ 4 hrs	<i>Queer Eye ...</i> (US)	<i>The X Factor</i> (UK)		
		<i>Australian Idol</i> (UK)		

When it comes to possible correlations between format adaptation and local content shares, only Channel Ten's rise in local content seems to be somewhat aided by an increased use of format adaptations. Channel Ten has gone from a 14 per cent local content share in 1995 to 46 per cent share in 2004/05, and at the same time format adaptations have risen considerably. In 2004/05, this made up 27 per cent of the locally produced content. On Channel Nine, the share of adaptations has paralleled the share of local content throughout all three years surveyed. This implies that format hours on Channel Nine have gone down when local content has gone down and vice versa. Channel Seven displayed the exact opposite trend. When local content on Channel Seven went down, format hours went up. This essentially means that format adaptation has played little or no part in the rise and fall of local content broadcast on that network. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case.

When it comes to programming types, Channel Ten is also the only one of the three networks to demonstrate parallel increases in the reality genre and the use of reality formats. The percentage share of the genre rose from 4 to 14 per cent of prime time between 2000 and 2004/05, which is due primarily to the two format adaptations *Australian Idol* and *The X Factor*. Both of these took up a considerable number of prime-time hours. There are no similar correlations between the reality genre and format adaptation on either Channel Seven or Channel Nine. Nor is there any apparent connection between the lifestyle genre and format adaptation on any of the networks.

When one examines Tables 4 and 5, it is evident that the majority of Australian format adaptations are found within traditional entertainment subgenres, even in 2004/05.

After the appearance of various lifestyle, and especially reality, formats in 2000, the number of both actually decreased in 2004/05. In 2000, there were two lifestyle formats and six reality formats. In 2004/05, there was only one lifestyle format and two reality formats. This is the exact opposite trend to that occurring in Denmark, where both lifestyle and reality formats have experienced a continuous increase over the surveyed period. The number of entertainment formats on the Australian networks has also reduced slightly. In fact, both the number of formats and the amount of format hours peaked in 2000 where there were a total of 15 formats and 18.5 format hours, compared with only seven formats and 16.75 format hours in 2004/05 (see Table 4). Once again, this runs counter to the Danish trend, which saw more than a doubling of both formats and format hours in the same period.

Like the Danish system, the Australian television system is polarised between the commercial sector and the public service sector. On the one hand, the ABC and the SBS have comparatively high levels of local content and factual programming, and few or no format adaptations. On the other hand, Channel Seven, Channel Nine and Channel Ten have much lower levels of local content and factual programming. Format adaptations play a relatively important role in their local program production. In addition, fiction (the large majority of which originates in the United States) plays a much more dominant role on the commercial broadcasters than on the ABC and the SBS. On the three commercial broadcasters, the prime-time share of fiction is about 60 per cent while on the ABC and the SBS it is only about 20 per cent. However, as is evident in Table 6, the polarisation does not seem quite as strong as in Denmark.

**Table 6: Percentage share of factual, entertainment and local content on Danish and Australian public service and commercial broadcasters in 2004/05**

	<i>Factual (documentary and news/current affairs) (%)</i>	<i>Entertainment (incl. reality and lifestyle) (%)</i>	<i>Local content (%)</i>
PSB Denmark: DR1/TV 2	49/50	21/30	83/82
PSB Australia: ABC/SBS	49/56	29/13	75/73
Commercial Denmark: TV3/ TvDK	0/6	46/48	38/19
Commercial Australia: 7/9/10	14/13/2	23/27/30	60/41/46

Again, various observations are in order. Australian public broadcasters transmit a little less local content than Danish public broadcasters, while Australian commercial broadcasters have comparatively more local content than their Danish

counterparts. The Australian commercial networks have a relatively larger share of factual content — in this case, news and current affairs and documentaries — than do the Danish commercial broadcasters. It is to these differences that we now turn.

## Denmark and Australia compared

The Danish and Australian schedules can be contrasted and parallels drawn between the two countries. The above findings indicate four essential trends that can be summarised as follows:

1. Danish broadcasters use more formats than do their Australian counterparts.
2. There are clearer Danish connections between formats and local content and genre change.
3. Factual genres have not been marginalised because of the popularity of lifestyle and reality formats.
4. Denmark has seen a greater polarisation between public and commercial broadcasters than Australia.

Let's examine each of these propositions in turn.

### More formats in Denmark than in Australia

There are striking differences between the Danish and the Australian television systems in terms of format adaptation. In 2004/05, Denmark had more adaptations than Australia. This was evident in both the number of formats and the actual format hours broadcast. Moreover, all four Danish broadcasters use format adaptation. In Australia, by contrast, only the three commercial networks had adaptations in their schedules. As Table 7 demonstrates, the 2004/05 prime-time schedules of the four Danish broadcasters contained a total of 23 formats and 38.5 format hours, against only eight formats and 16.75 format hours in the Australian schedules. Table 7 suggests that this polarisation between the two systems is of recent origin. In 1995 and 2000, the differences were a lot less marked. In both years, the broadcasting systems of the two countries were on par. In fact, from 2000 to 2004/05, Australia has even experienced a decrease in the use of formats on prime-time television.

**Table 7: The development of format hours and number of formats in Denmark and Australia**

	<i>1995 Denmark</i>	<i>1995 Australia</i>	<i>2000 Denmark</i>	<i>2000 Australia</i>	<i>2004/5 Denmark</i>	<i>2004/05 Australia</i>
Format hours	15 hrs	14.5 hrs	18.5 hrs	18.5 hrs	38.5 hrs	16.75 hrs
No. of formats	9 formats	10 formats	11 formats	15 formats	23 formats	8 formats

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## **Clearer Danish connections between formats and local content and genre development**

In Denmark there are also clearer connections between the rise of the reality and lifestyle genres and the increase in format adaptation. An increase in format remaking within the lifestyle and reality genres seems to correspond with a similar rise in the two genres. In addition, there is a minor parallel between a rise in local content on TV2 and TV3 and a higher share of format adaptation. In Australia, the development of format adaptations cannot consistently be linked to developments in local content and/or in the lifestyle and reality genres. Only Channel Ten shows some links between a rise in local content and in reality programming and an increased use of format adaptation. Channel Ten and TV3 have both traditionally relied heavily on imported content. They have both experienced a local content increase partly aided by format adaptations, an explanation that has been offered elsewhere by Moran and Keane (2004). On the other hand, TvDanmark, which has also relied significantly on imported content, has not experienced the same kind of local content increase despite more frequent use of format adaptation. In fact, TvDanmark's share of local content has instead decreased significantly.

## **No marginalisation of factual genres triggered by the appearance of lifestyle and reality formats**

Generally there has been no marginalisation of the factual genres of documentaries, and news and current affairs, due to an increase in lifestyle and reality formats. Nevertheless, on Danish TV3, lifestyle and reality have indeed replaced all other genres with the exception of drama. On the other channels — both the Danish and the Australian — lifestyle and reality shows seem to have, more than anything, taken the place of traditional entertainment, drama and sport. Channel Seven, DR1 and TV 2 have even experienced an increase in news and current affairs, whilst the level of the factual genres has been steady on TvDanmark, Channel Nine and Channel Ten.

## **Larger polarisation in Denmark**

As mentioned above, there is a clear polarisation between the commercial and the public sector on Danish as well as on Australian television. Yet several factors intervene to make this division seem stronger in Denmark. First, the Australian public broadcasters have a little less local content than the Danish public broadcasters, while the Australian commercial broadcasters have comparatively more local content than their European counterparts. Second, the Australian commercial networks have a relatively larger share of factual content — in this case, documentaries, and news and current affairs — than the Danish commercial broadcasters. Only TvDanmark has a small share of documentary programming. TVS has no factual programming at all. Table 6 demonstrates the differences in the distribution of documentary, news and current affairs genres as opposed to the traditional and factual entertainment genres in the two countries, and the differences in local content shares.

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Another important difference between the Australian and Danish commercial broadcasters is that TVS and TvDanmark have high shares of traditional and factual entertainment compared with Channel Seven, Channel Nine and Channel Ten. In turn, these have higher shares of the factual genres and fiction. Having said this, an important exception is Australia's Channel Ten, which has a small share of documentaries and news and current affairs. In many ways, this feature gives it a closer resemblance to TVS and TvDanmark than to Channel Seven and Channel Nine. An explanation for this anomaly may be found in historical similarities and in the fact that Channel Ten — like TVS and TvDanmark — is a relatively new player in the national territory's commercial free-to-air market. Channel Seven and Channel Nine were the two original commercial networks in Australia. They have benefited from a larger consolidation in the local market and a competitive head start to their rival. This has been very much the case with Denmark's DR1 and TV 2. Channel Ten has — much like TVS and TvDanmark — had to distinguish itself from its older competitors. It has done so by targeting a younger demographic than the established commercial networks. TvDanmark, and especially TVS, have also chosen to target the younger and commercially more interesting demographics as a means to generate advertising revenue and gain a stronger foothold in the Danish market.

To conclude this part of the analysis, one might say that in many ways, judging from genre composition and levels of local and foreign content, Denmark's commercial broadcasters seem more 'commercial' and 'populist' than their Australian counterparts. In addition, Denmark's public broadcasters appear to be a little more 'public service' oriented because of slightly higher levels of local content, especially when judged from an historical perspective. Still, when it comes to shares of documentaries, news and current affairs, and traditional/factual entertainment programming, the public broadcasters in the two countries are more or less on par. In Australia, the commercial and the public sectors are statistically closer to each other than is the case in Denmark. In the light of this, it is interesting that format adaptation is a fairly well-established practice on the Danish public service broadcasters, whereas adaptations are virtually non-existent on the ABC and the SBS.

## **Media systemic perspectives and explanations**

A number of systemic factors in the Danish and the Australian television systems can be outlined as explanations for why the respective schedules exhibit these patterns.

### **Different market sizes**

The two television markets are relatively different in size. Australian broadcasters have a market of 20 million people; the Danish broadcasters only have 5 million potential viewers. Although they are both fairly small markets when compared with markets like the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the United States, we are still safe in assuming that Australian commercial broadcasting generates

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more advertising revenue than does the Danish market. More finance is then generally available for production.

Therefore the Danish players — probably like players in other very small markets — may opt for the ‘safe’ format adaptations with a proven track record more frequently than their Australian counterparts. In addition, TV 2 holds a very dominant position in the Danish market for TV advertising due to media regulation, which has traditionally favoured the public broadcasters. This dominant position may very well make the two private commercial broadcasters, TVS and TvDanmark, even ‘poorer’, and therefore again more inclined to opt for the safer option, which in this case is adapting a foreign format instead of developing an original program. Also, because TV 2 is commercially driven despite its public service remit, it has an obligation towards its advertisers to provide as many viewers as possible, and may therefore be more prone to using formats, which has proven successful with viewers in other countries. The other public broadcaster, DR1, is fully licence-fee funded and therefore not responsible to advertisers. Instead, DR1 has an obligation to attract a large variety of Danish viewers, which it does by offering a wider variety of programming types. DR1 may therefore be less dependent on international formats because they are often highly standardised and targeted towards broad, mainstream audience as opposed to niche audiences.

### **Different ideas of public service**

As the analysis has shown, the Danish public broadcasters have a much higher use of format adaptations than the Australian public broadcasters, the ABC and the SBS. This may be explained by the fact that public service is viewed and treated differently in the two countries. Danish public broadcasters have historically, legislatively and financially been treated as more important than the commercial broadcasters and have, additionally, been obliged to have very broad appeal (Bruhn Jensen, 2003, 1997). Popular appeal includes entertainment — traditional as well as factual — which is where we find a great deal of format adaptation. The Australian public sector has historically, legislatively and financially been understood and treated as an alternative to the commercial television broadcasters (Flew, 2006, 2002). The public sector has to provide something the commercial sector does not, which is likely to be part of the reason why the ABC and the SBS are reluctant to use format adaptations.

### **Australia: Early Americanisation and English as primary language**

Australian TV was a commercial and fairly ‘Americanised’ system from the beginning of the service, with very high levels of primarily American content. Australians have, therefore, been accustomed to foreign content — that is, mainly American but also British or, less importantly, other English-language content (Flew, 2006; Moran, 1997). Additionally, Australia’s primary language is English, making American and British programs highly accessible to the general TV audience. Hence the ‘need’ for adaptations of overseas formats may not be as urgent and the advantages not as great for Australian as for Danish broadcasters, who have traditionally had to rely on a very large amount of local content in order to fight off competition from foreign language competitors (Bruhn Jensen, 1997; Sondergaard, 2003).

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## **Mature dual TV system in Australia**

Additionally, Australia has a much more mature dual television system. Television broadcasting was, from the beginning, both public and private. Denmark has had commercial television for less than two decades, and even had a monopolistic public service broadcaster until 1988. Australia's broadcasters may therefore be less susceptible to contemporary trends because all players are already quite consolidated in the system. In Denmark, the players — especially the relatively new commercial television broadcasters — are still trying to find their place in an evolving system. Format adaptation may be a response to this situation. One sign of a greater Australian broadcasting maturity may be the fact that local levels of adaptation have remained consistent across the period. Less fluctuation in genre levels — for example, within reality and lifestyle — compared with Denmark may be another indication. Yet another explanation may lie in the longer history of commercial television in Australia. Hence Australian broadcasters appear to react more readily to broad industry trends such as format adaptation and genre developments. Lifestyle and reality programming seems to be waning in Australia, while in Denmark these formats have increased considerably over the 10-year period. In fact, format adaptation has been a practice employed for many decades in Australia, whereas the advantages of the practice are just dawning on broadcasters in countries such as Denmark. Broadcasters may use formats intensively but later employ them more sparingly as the dual system matures.

## **Turbulent transition in Denmark**

Another reason why the use of formats is presently significantly higher in Denmark could be the fact that Danish television has recently undergone an extremely turbulent transition from a one-channel, public-service monopoly to a commercialised and internationalised multi-channel system. There are now no less than 12 Danish-language channels available. The shift has inevitably led to increased competition in the market. The Danish players may therefore be more open to the 'safer' option of adapting foreign formats. There is a growing demand for content which Danish broadcasters and producers struggle to meet.

## **More drama in Australian schedules**

Both historically and at present, Australian schedules carry a larger share of drama compared with Danish schedules. Drama is different to other genres such as entertainment. It has been claimed that US drama is narratively transparent and understandable for audiences elsewhere (Olson, 1995). This transparency may account for US TV drama abundance on Australian television. In any case, this element may help explain the relative international lack of drama format adaptation compared with formats in traditional and factual entertainment (Schmitt et al., 2006).

## **A pervasive Danish public service ideology**

An explanation for the significant increase in factual entertainment genres in Denmark — especially lifestyle, but also reality — could be the historic importance of educational genres in its public service tradition (Carlsen and Frandsen, 2005).

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This tradition may have had an affect on the commercial broadcasters too. For a large part, their employees worked for the public broadcasters and were trained in a public-service outlook and ideology. Hence successful international formats in factual entertainment genres are likely to have been beneficial for Danish broadcasters, being in line with this tradition. Most lifestyle formats originate in the United Kingdom, which has a similar tradition for educational and informative public service television, again suggesting a fit with Danish television.

Summing up, we can say that the historical maturity of the Australian dual system and larger advertising revenues may underpin local broadcasters' more consistent use of format adaptation compared with the much more recent spectacular growth in Denmark, which has coincided with the introduction of a dual system. The fact that Australia is English-speaking and has been accustomed to large amounts of US and UK programming may help explain why there are fewer formats on Australian TV. This imported programming is not as alien as it might be to Danes, used to Danish programming in the public service system. They are also at a linguistic distance from English. The different responsibilities of the broadcasters offer further insight into the phenomenon. Danish public broadcasters' remit is to provide a full-scale service (including entertainment formats) that will be more popular than the commercial competition, whereas Australian public broadcasters must offer an alternative and primarily offer services not supplied commercially. More drama appears on Australian television, and this too has helped preclude format adaptation. Denmark has had a public service tradition of informative and 'documentaristic' programming, which helps incline broadcasters towards factual entertainment genres, in which international formats are abundant.

## Note

- 1 The three years are chosen according to a number of TV historical reasons in the two countries. The reasons are described in detail in Jensen (2007). Briefly, 1995 represents the 'good old days' of the Australian free-to-air monopoly on one side and the Danish public service duopoly on the other; 2000 represents an increased competition from subscription TV, in Australia's case, and commercial TV, in Denmark's case. Finally, 2004/05 represents a period with an exponential growth in the exchange of international formats and an introduction of even more commercial and DTT players in the two markets. 2004/05 refers to the fact that the analysis is carried out on the basis of a week in October 2004 and a week in April 2005, as the main body of the analysis was initialised and carried out in July 2005 — that is, before October 2005.

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