

Freedom leads to more diversity on TV

Czech TV emerges as winner of the 5th Media Tenor Award for Diversity in International TV

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The question about quality in television and the duties of public broadcasters compared to private broadcasters is not new. In Germany for instance, growing criticism towards the public broadcaster in terms of its content is emerging, particularly in terms of a more commercial alignment, thereby neglecting the provision of news and information as regulated in its given mandate. In South Africa, since the appointment of Snuki Zikalala, former spokesperson of the Department of Labour in April 2004, growing opposition towards the public broadcaster **SABC** has now led to a formal call by independent institutions for an inquiry into the quality and fairness of broadcasting. It is not only the question of fair and balanced reporting on government or political parties, but the overall ‘bouquet’ of information provided that is under scrutiny – and the key word ‘diversity’ becomes increasingly crucial.

On 28 September 2004, the Media Tenor Award for Diversity in the Media in the category: “International Television media“ was awarded for the fifth time, with Czech TV’s **Udalosti** grabbing the first place, followed by Germany’s **ZDF heute journal** and again the Czech’s **Denik TV Prima**.

The strong performance by Eastern European television news, showing greater diversity than German, American, South African and British television news might have come as a surprise to some, but not to Zdenek Velisek, **Udalosti**, Director of Czech TV (**Ceska Televize**), accepting the award on behalf of Czech TV. According to him, nations previously deprived of free information, are far more demanding to receive accurate and fair information from their respective public broadcasters than ‘established’ broadcasters – hence the strive of Czech TV for a great diversity in news coverage.

The **Media Tenor Award** for Diversity in TV media is aimed at setting a benchmark for quality in television broadcasting, and in this regard a selection of international television media were analysed on a daily basis from 1st July 2003 until 30th June 2004.

In total, 22 television news programmes totalling more than 500 000 individual news items were systematically considered and benchmarked according to ten diversity criteria. The ten criteria focused on a diversity of style (such as interviews, live links, discussions, etc), number of different topics and pro-

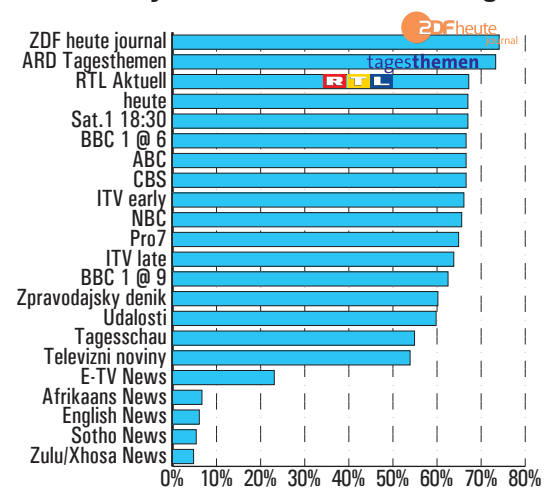
tagonists addressed, a diversity in national and international as well as regional reporting, balanced reporting on own governments, the focus on gender as well as the issue of agenda cutting (in 2004, the focus was Research & Development/Innovation).

The results show a large discrepancy between the broadcasters but also strong similarities between others, indicating the traditional dominance of Western broadcasters in terms of quality might be under attack by the ‘emerging’ countries.

Criterion 1: Use of different stylistic elements

German television news programmes showed the greatest diversity in this particular category. Live interviews, discussions, commentary etc. were all used, while particularly in South Africa and the Czech Republic emphasis was still on the tradition-

1 Different stylistic elements.TV news not just about ‘news reading’



Diversity of stylistic elements in percent

Source: Media Tenor
03/07/01 – 04/06/30

Basis: All news reports on 22
international TV-programmes

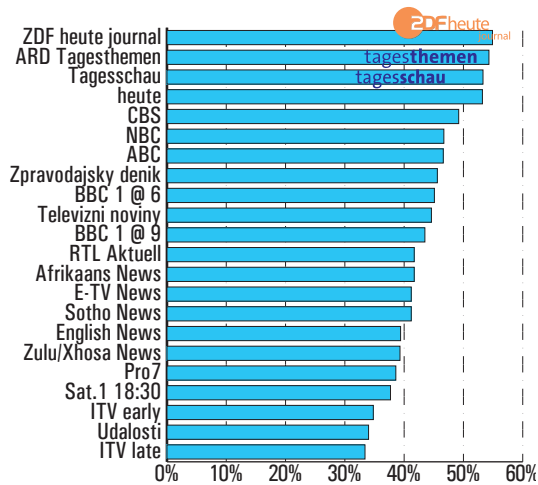
al way of news reading from an introduction by the presenter followed by the visuals. In South Africa 95% of all news items followed this structure, in Germany this was on average only the case in 25% of all items.

Criterion 2: Use of different issues

German television again showed that it utilised the news time to address the greatest variety of issues in the time available, while British private media in particular preferred to report on issues more extensively rather than offering different types of information. Generally speaking, private broadcasters offered less diversity in covered topics than the public broadcasters during the analysed period.

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2 Different issues: variety of information on the same old story?



Variety of issues in percent

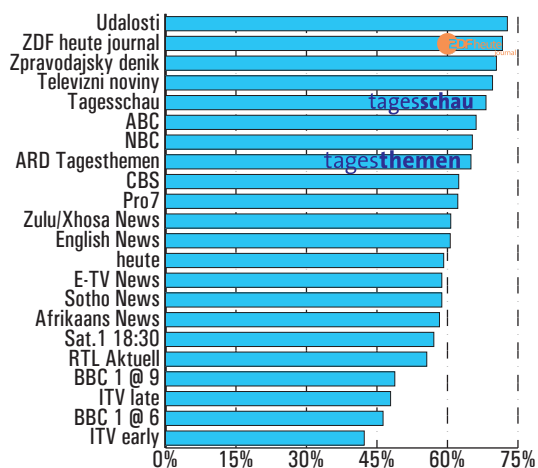
Source: Media Tenor
03/07/01 – 04/06/30

Basis: All news reports on 22 international TV-programmes

Criterion 3: Use of different protagonists

Like any news type, television is particularly tempted to report only on those that are creating news (government, political parties etc) rather than going out and looking for protagonists that might be newsworthy. Media Tenor's analysis shows that television in the Czech Republic was particularly successful in offering a variety of protagonists to report on, while British television (both private and public) focused on average on far less subjects. Of the top ten most reported on news protagonists,

3 Different protagonists – focus on a few or many?



Variety of protagonists considered to be newsworthy

Source: Media Tenor
03/07/01 – 04/06/30

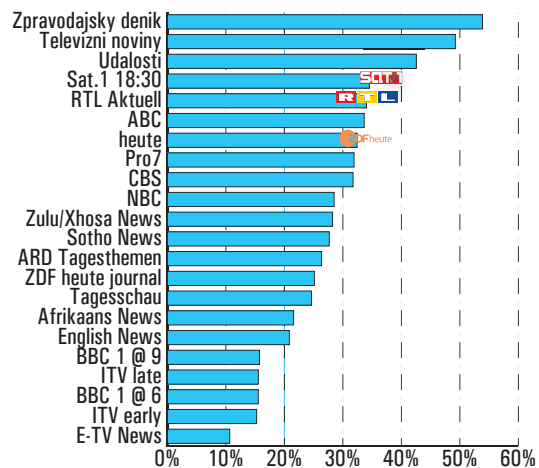
Basis: All news reports on 22 international TV-programmes

Czech television spend only 28% of its 'time', while on ITV this was 58%.

Criterion 4: Ratio of national and regional news

The discrepancy between regional and local news was particularly large in the set of analysed media and here 'emerging' broadcasters seem to have a different agenda. While Zpravodajsky Denik from the Czech Republic had 54% of its news items focusing on regional or provincial issues, South Africa's private broadcaster ETV had only 11% regional news – the least of all the analysed news broadcasters. On average 29% of the news items of all programmes were of regional/local content.

4 Ratio of national and regional news: who has the local info?



Share of regional news in percent

Source: Media Tenor
03/07/01 – 04/06/30

Basis: All news reports on 22 international TV-programmes

Criterion 5: International versus national news

In terms of the ratio of international versus national news, the discrepancy could also not have been greater. While German private broadcaster Sat 1 18.30 had a 54% international focus, the Zulu/Xhosa news in South Africa featured only 15% international news. While one might argue that this is due to a particular regional focus of the broadcaster (KwaZulu Natal and Cape Provinces) the 'national' bulletin in English also 'only' carried 22% of international media.

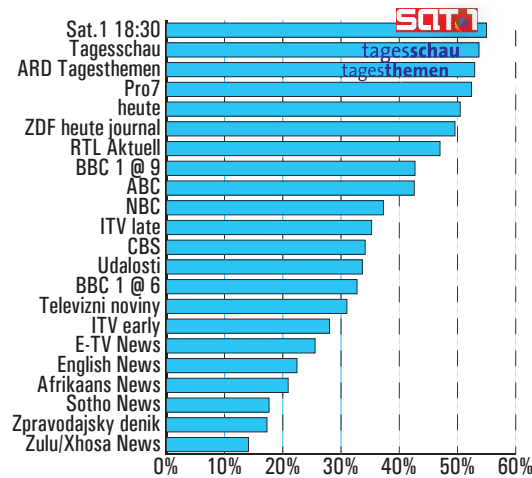
Criterion 6: Policy versus general coverage

The issue of policy coverage versus other issues such as campaigning was of particular importance in 2004 with elections in the United States and South Africa taking place. Traditionally, television broadcasters are particularly weak in reporting on policy issues. These issues tend to be more difficult

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5 Ratio of national and international news

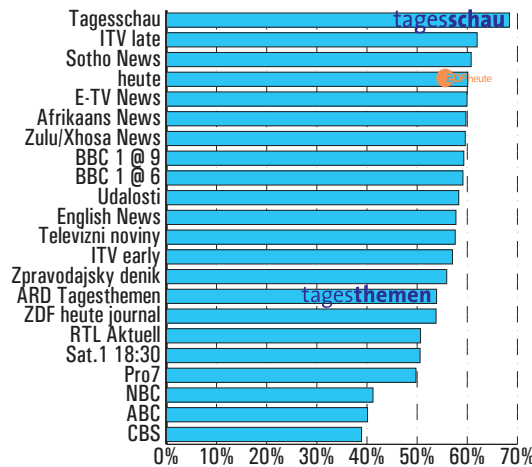


Share of international news in percent

Source: Media Tenor
03/07/01 – 04/06/30

Basis: All news reports on 22 international TV-programmes

6 Political coverage: policy versus general coverage



Share of policy coverage in percent

Source: Media Tenor
03/07/01 – 04/06/30

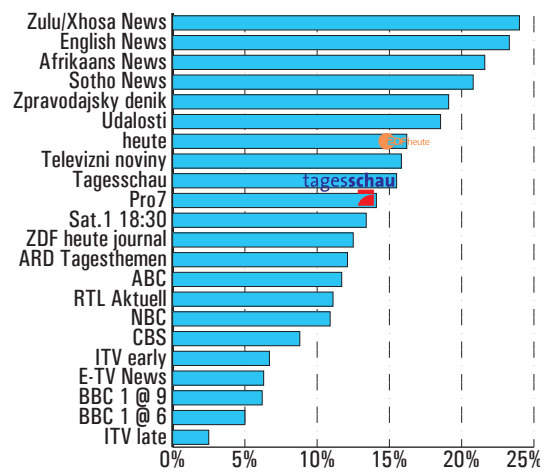
Basis: All news reports on 22 international TV-programmes

to depict visually on TV than in print media. But one would have expected the ratio of policy issues particularly high in countries where elections were held, but unfortunately this was not confirmed by Media Tenor's research. The share was extremely low in the United States where the broadcasters showed only 40% of policy content in political coverage, compared to 60% in South Africa. On average, 55% of political coverage during the analysed period focused on policy issues.

Criterion 7: Diversity in financial reporting

Clearly, there seems to be a different understanding in financial coverage on news between the 'emerging' countries and the established. While in South Africa and the Czech Republic the top ten financial

7 Diversity in financial reporting: is the share price all that counts?



Share of top ten financial issues in percent

Source: Media Tenor
03/07/01 – 04/06/30

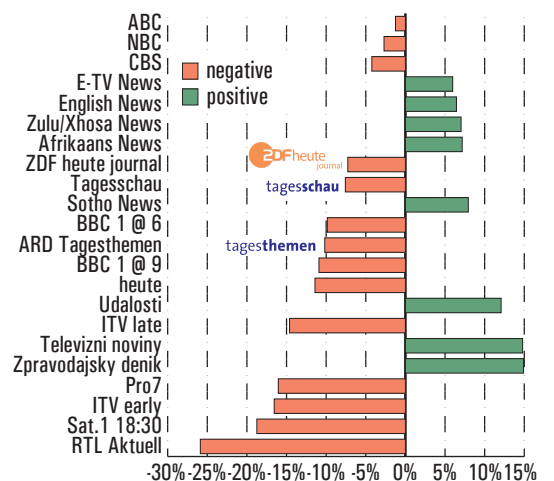
Basis: All news reports on 22 international TV-programmes

issues featured only in 80% of all financial news items, British and U.S. media were particularly one sided with between 90% and 95% of the content devoted to ten financial issues only. The question arises whether business and economy play a more crucial role in emerging countries than in the Western world, or is the viewer satisfied with less information?

Criterion 8: Rating of Government

The issue of balanced reporting is particularly difficult for public broadcasters due to stakeholder and mandate issue. It is naturally not only a question of volume devoted to government but also the dealing with it in terms of positive and negative coverage.

8 Rating of Government - to criticise or not to criticise?



Share of negative/ positive coverage in percent

Source: Media Tenor
03/07/01 – 04/06/30

Basis: All news reports on 22 international TV-programmes

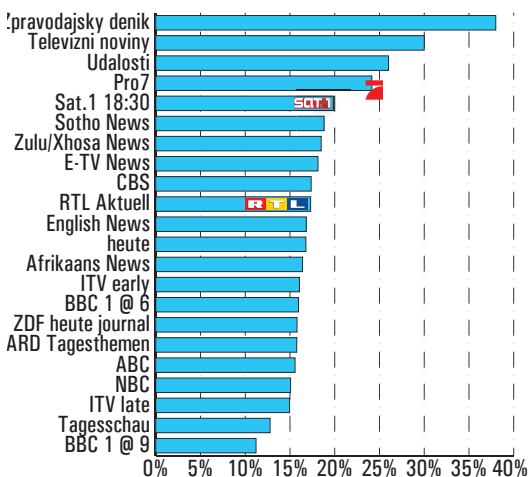
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More importantly, it is a question of who controls the debate. As the debate is continuing internationally, it was felt that the analysis should focus on the rating distance from a neutral position, not taking into account any favour for positive or negative swings. Most 'balanced' in this regard were U.S. television news with German private broadcasters the most directly and indirectly explicitly expressing an opinion (in this case negative) towards the German government.

Criterion 9: Gender representation

With the exception of Czech news, the answer is a clear no. While between 26% and 38% of all people quoted on Czech television were female **BBC** and Germany's **Tagesschau** were particularly low with only 12% of all people depicted with more than 5

9 Gender representation: is equality represented in the news?



Share of women quoted on television in percent

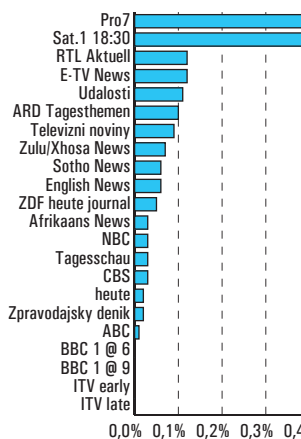
Source: Media Tenor 03/07/01 - 04/06/30 Basis: All news reports on 22 international TV-programmes

seconds being women. On average, women took up only 18% of all quoted people. In South Africa, where 40% of parliamentarians are female, and women in general play a more prominent public role, television allocated a mere 16% to women.

Criterion 10: Agenda cutting

Some of the issues critical to any society remain constantly underreported. Every year, **Media Tenor** selects an issue that has received particularly less attention in the media world-wide, even though it plays a major role in society. In previous years this had been for instance HIV/Aids and for 2004 the topical group of Research and Development, Science and Innovation was selected. On average, less than 0.1% of coverage on television news within the selected

10 Agenda Cutting



Share of coverage on research and development in percent

Source: Media Tenor 03/07/01 - 04/06/30 Basis: All news reports on 22 international TV-programmes

media dealt with this issue, which at the same time is an issue that could potentially lead to more positive coverage in the media, taking into account that media are often accused of reporting on negative news only. The 'highest' share of coverage on R & D was found to be on Germany's private broadcaster **Pro7** Nachrichten with 0.54% with the least on British television (less than 0.01%).

And the winner is...

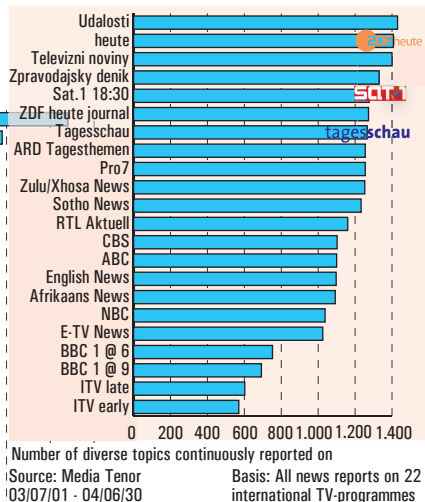
Amongst the 22 analysed media, Czech and German television news programmes came out on top, while previous winners such as **ITN** and **SABC** dropped to the lower half of the diversity index. The lack of consistency over a continuous period of time indicates that the issue of diversity in television media probably depends largely on world events and protagonists dominating them rather than a clear strategy from the side of the news team to deliver balanced and diverse information to its target audiences. Generally, the differences in diversity over the past few years have been fluctuating rather than constantly improved, indicating that a lot still needs to be done to improve the quality of television journalism internationally. The current debates on objectivity of reporting (also in the light of the 'embedded' reporting on the Iraq war) might lead to more and diverse broadcast policies in terms of the editorial policy. For television, diversity is still a goal to be reached.

Basis:

Media: All news reports on ARD Tagesthemen, heute, Pro7 Nachrichten, RTL Aktuell, Sat.1 18:30, Tagesschau, ZDF heute journal, Afrikaans News, English News, E-TV News, Sotho News, Zulu/Xhosa News, BBC 1 @ 6, BBC 1 @ 9, ITV early, ITV late, ABC, CBS, NBC, Televizni noviny, Udalosti, Zpravodajsky denik.

Time: 1 July 2003 - 30 June 2004

11 The winners



Number of diverse topics continuously reported on Source: Media Tenor 03/07/01 - 04/06/30 Basis: All news reports on 22 international TV-programmes

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