A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING QUALITY

IN THE NEWS MEDIA

by

Andrew Anagnos
B.A., Mathematics
Dartmouth College (1984)

and

Karen Van Kirk
B.A., Applied Mathematics
B.A., English
University of California, Berkeley (1985)

Submitted to the Alfred P. Sloan School of Management
on May 17, 1991, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Management

at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
May 1991

© Andrew Anagnos and Karen Van Kirk, 1991. All rights reserved.

The authors hereby grant to MIT permission to reproduce and to
distribute copies of this thesis document in whole or in part.

Signature of Author

MIT Sloan School of Management
May 17, 1991

Signature of Author

MIT Sloan School of Management
May 17, 1991

Certified by

John R. Hauser
Kirin Professor of Marketing

Accepted by

Jeffrey A. Barks
Associate Dean, Master's and Bachelor's Program
A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING QUALITY
IN THE NEWS MEDIA

by

Karen Van Kirk and Andrew Anagnos

Submitted to the Alfred P. Sloan School of Management
on May 17, 1991, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Management

ABSTRACT

The history of the U.S. media has been one of dramatic transformations; film, radio, and
television have succeeded each other as the dominant medium in society. Today, television is
the pre-eminent medium, shaping public perception and values in an unprecedented fashion.
But television's great influence on U.S. culture has fueled an on-going debate among the
broadcasting industry, the government, advertisers, and the viewing public about what should
be the role of television in society. In part, this debate has focused on determining what quality
television is.

The nature of the television service encounter and the degree of customer control over product
perception are just two of the factors that make the television broadcasting industry difficult to fit
into traditional models of quality management. In addition, television production managers and
television marketing managers differ in their customer focus and the quality standard they
maintain, making management of quality in television broadcasting problematic.

Using local television news in Greater Boston as a case study and drawing on qualitative
market research of television news viewers, this paper constructs a framework for analyzing
service quality in the television news business. The framework is based upon viewer quality
attributes which are grouped into three competitive dimensions: Personality, Content, and
Format. These dimensions create Identification, the relationship that exists between the
television news broadcast and the viewer.

It is our view that this framework can be broadly applied to the broadcasting media.

Thesis Supervisor: John R. Hauser
Title: Kirin Professor of Marketing

Thesis Reader: France LeClerc
Title: Assistant Professor of Marketing
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank everyone who contributed to the thought and research that went into this paper. In particular, we would like to thank our reader and our supervisor, France LeClerc and John Hauser, Sloan School of Management, for their valuable insights; and Eric Goldstein of WBZ TV-4 and Dick Weisberg of WHDH Channel 7, for their help in understanding the local news business and the Boston market. We also acknowledge the contributions of Guy Palmer, London Business School, and Gabriel Bitran, Sloan School of Management. Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to our fellow Sloan students, as well as our family and friends who provided encouragement and support when we needed it most.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section / Appendix</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cover Page</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 1: Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2: Background of the Television News Business</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Television Medium</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television News</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Customers of Television News</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3: Characteristics of Television News</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors That Influence Quality Management in Television News Broadcasting</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4: The Voice of the Viewing Customer</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement of Quality in Television News</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining and Measuring Competitive Quality in Television News</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewer Quality Attributes</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Format and Viewer Behavior</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Results</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5: The Competitive Dimensions of Quality</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouping Quality Attributes Into Competitive Dimensions</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 6: Building Viewer Identification</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraints on Building Identification</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Quality Management Constraints: Measuring and Managing Viewer Expectations</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 7: Generalizations and Conclusion</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalizing the Identification Framework to Other News Media</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison With Other Quality Measurement Frameworks</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalizing the Identification Framework to Non-News Media</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Local Television News in Greater Boston</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Description of Focus Group Research</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Description of Survey Research and Analysis</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: Television Ratings Systems</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: House of Quality Analysis</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The mass media is a major part of business in the U.S. today. Television, radio, and the print media are all multibillion dollar industries providing information and entertainment to 250 million consumers in the U.S. alone. In addition, these media supply time and space to support a $100 billion advertising industry. Over 20% of advertising dollars, amounting to $25 billion, are spent on television advertising.¹

Because of its power to transmit lifelike sounds and images into our homes, television has become the primary source of entertainment and information for the majority of people in the U.S. Today, in the U.S., there are over 90 million television sets; and there is at least one TV in 98% of all homes.² The average person in the U.S. spends over 6 hours per day watching television.³ Television programming is a major social force which can shape public perceptions, opinions and behavior; it is an integral part of our culture.

Television news has been praised as television's "noblest service."⁴ It meets public demand for information in a way that is more immediate, compelling and entertaining than newspaper or radio. Like other service businesses, television news offers the combination of a tangible product (the news broadcast or newscast) with the delivery of an intangible service (information and entertainment). As a result, quality in television news must be managed with respect to both production and service. The production of television news is like a job shop -- each

² Sterling p. 658
newscast is different from the one before it; ensuring quality production requires the right blend of prior experience and creative skill. As a service business, television news is characterized by a number of interesting factors:

- Consumption of the service is a personal experience which can vary widely from individual to individual.
- The service encounter is private and controlled by the viewer.
- The service has great social influence.
- The service consumed by the viewer is an intermediate product.
- Habit drives consumption.
- The price of service is essentially free.\(^5\)

Currently, the quality of television news service is gauged in one of two ways: high ratings (see Appendix D) or critical acclaim. Neither of these measures provides any insight into how quality can be implemented through production operations. This paper examines service quality in television news with the intent of providing some insight into quality management in television news. Based on a qualitative analysis of viewer quality attributes, it proposes a structured way to define the quality dimensions that account for the variability in consumption experiences, as well as the differences in viewers’ perceptions of the product. It also examines the influence of viewer attitudes and behavior on quality perception and management.

In the sections that follow, we give a brief background of the television news business (Section 2), including a description of the major characteristics listed above (Section 3). We present the results of our research on the voice of the viewing customer (Section 4), present a three dimensional framework using those results (Section 5), discuss the practical implications of the framework (Section 6), and make some concluding remarks (Section 7).

\(^5\) In considering price, we refer specifically to the price that the consumer pays for the service. Therefore, we purposefully ignore the time or opportunity cost of using the service.
SECTION 2: BACKGROUND OF THE TELEVISION NEWS BUSINESS

The Television Medium

Television programming is broadcast over federally regulated "airwaves" by local television stations. These stations are granted the right to broadcast television programming and advertising according to government regulations. Local television stations typically broadcast a variety of local and syndicated programming. Some stations are affiliated with one of the national networks: the Central Broadcasting Company (CBS), the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), and the Fox Broadcasting Company (Fox). A network affiliate station (or affiliate) has access to the network's programming, all or part of which it may broadcast during the course of a day.

Most television programs are independently produced and then sold to one of the four national networks or syndicated for distribution. Since 1980, the market for independently produced television programs has expanded to include CATV or 'cable' channels, which employ a cable distribution system. The national networks and cable channels also produce programs, including all of their own news programs.

The reasons for television's popularity among viewers are as varied as the different types of programs currently offered. Its popularity with advertisers is partly due to its unique audio-visual impact. As a marketing tool, television has been described as "the closest representation of an actual salesperson in the home."7

6 While most advertisers make their media allocation decisions based on the cost effectiveness (i.e. number of potential customers reached per dollar), some advertisers use television because it is specifically suited to their advertising message. For example, automobile manufacturers may use television because they can demonstrate their product and show it in action, not because of its cost effectiveness.

Television News

In the 1940s, the national radio networks, led by NBC, began broadcasting television programming, including brief national newscasts.¹ Television was still a new medium with very limited accessibility; however, its growth and potential influence were widely anticipated. As early as 1949, NBC president Niles Trammell predicted that "within three years, the broadcast of sound or ear radio over giant networks will be wiped out."² As television transmission, distribution and reception technology advanced during the 1950s, the cost of owning a television set fell. By 1960, the installed base of television sets in the U.S was 45 million (compared to 50 million radios), and television news had become a viable information and entertainment alternative for most U.S. citizens.³⁰

Independent local television stations in the United States have been broadcasting their own news programming for over forty years. Initially, news service broadcasts provided information of national significance. Local stations relied on the national networks and news services, the Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI), to provide these stories. Gradually, stations began to program their own news shows that focused on both local and national news. In the 1960s, local and national television news programs each expanded to a full half-hour and were broadcast several times throughout the day.

Later in the 1960s, advances in television broadcast technology began to provide the televised news a huge competitive advantage over radio news and newspapers. As film footage became a standard component of television news reporting, televised news programming was able to

---


² Sterling p. 262

bring pictures of the news of the day into viewers' homes. With these pictures, daily televised news stories achieved an immediacy and poignancy that had been previously reserved for only the most important news events. An emotional link between the viewer and the news was formed. Television news programs have cultivated this link over the past three decades, and in so doing have expanded the competitive dimensions of television news in the 1990s.

Nearly every local television station that is affiliated with a national network broadcasts locally produced television news programming. Most of these stations broadcast from three to seven programs daily. In addition, many non-affiliated local stations, such as independent Ultra High Frequency (UHF) and publicly funded stations, broadcast their own news programs. News programs vary from one half-hour to one hour in duration, and contain both local and national news stories. In addition, most programs include weather, sports and entertainment news, as well as special news features which provide information on a person, place or issue that is of general interest or relevance.

Local television stations sell advertising spots during their news programming to generate revenues. The revenues generated by sales of advertising during local news programming provides 35-50% of the local television station's total revenues.11 As a result, local news programming is subject to a great deal of competitive analysis and strategic positioning. For this reason, local television news programming tends to be on the leading edge of changes within the television news business.

Three Customers of Television News

Television news serves three distinct customers: viewers, advertisers and station management.12

Viewers

Viewers are the true consumers of television programming. They draw information and entertainment from watching a variety of television programming, including local television news. Viewers watch television news for a wide variety of reasons. They watch television news to meet specific needs such as:

- They seek information about current events for their own enrichment or to have something to talk about with their neighbors or co-workers.
- They need information about upcoming weather so that they can plan their weekend or make travel plans.
- They want to see how their hometown sports teams fared.
- They want to see reviews of the latest movies, plays or other entertainment performance that they may wish to attend.

For this reason, the viewers' perception of quality is based on the accuracy, timeliness and completeness of the news program.13

However, we believe that viewers also watch the television news to enjoy a sense of community from sharing the events of the day with other members of society, knowing that others are hearing the same news at the same time. Because it simulates human interaction,

12 The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) which regulates television broadcasting might also be added to this list, although the FTC is more appropriately considered a customer of the local television station than of the news program. Moreover, the recent deregulation of the broadcasting industry has reduced the impact of the FTC on television programming decisions.

13 According to local television news executives, these are the minimum standards of service quality.
television news is able to achieve a personal touch that is unique among news media. This aspect of television news is particularly pronounced during times of national emergency or crises (e.g., the Persian Gulf War in 1991). In this regard, the viewer's perception of quality is based on his emotional response to the news program.

Advertisers

Advertisers are not consumers of television news, but rather, they benefit from the audience of viewers that the news provides. To them, the true service provided by the news program is the opportunity (i.e., the space and time) to reach a target market. The program which generates the audience may be of relatively little significance to the advertiser. Advertisers typically have a narrow definition of service quality: a responsive station sales staff with the ability to schedule their commercial to deliver audience share and ratings points within target demographics (see Appendix D). To a significant degree, their definition of quality is unaffected by what, how, or when the ratings numbers are achieved.

However, there is some room for advertisers to subjectively evaluate the quality of the service provided by the media. For example, some advertisers wish to avoid associating their products with socially or politically controversial issues. Thus, an advertiser may request that its spots not be shown during a specific program. On the other hand, some advertisers will buy time specifically during a particular program, because their perception of that program's viewers'...

14 Local television executives say that while some advertisers request that their spots be shown during a specific local television program, most advertisers specify only the size and demographic make-up of viewers they wish to reach, leaving the actual placement of the spot up to the station director.

15 There are, of course, extreme exceptions. For example, all airlines have a standing order that news programs omit their advertising spots from any newscast which reports a commercial air disaster.
characteristics matches their target audience. An advertiser that buys time specifically during the evening news is usually targeting a dinner time audience (e.g. to sell a food product), or an upscale, intellectual audience (e.g. to sell a luxury item).

**Station Management**

Station managers view the news as a vehicle to communicate the station's overall role and image in the community. The television news accomplishes this by providing coverage of local events, by providing broadcast time for editorial messages and open debate of current issues, and by showcasing the participation of the station's on-air personalities in community service endeavors. The local news program is one of the station's most powerful public relations tools.

In our analysis and discussion of quality, this paper focuses on the viewer. However, the insights that our framework provides can be applied to the management of quality from the perspective of advertisers and station managers, as well as viewers.

Throughout this paper we will draw illustrative examples from the Greater Boston television news media. For the reader who is unfamiliar with the Boston area television broadcasting stations, and their news programming, a brief background is provided in Appendix A.

---

16 For example, recognizing that the advertising vehicle influences the message, some advertisers may specifically request a spot be run during the news to lend the message credibility (e.g. for a doctor's report recommending an over-the-counter medication) or that it be run before a particular segment because of the advertiser's perception of that segment's audience (e.g. a beer spot might be run just before or after the sports segment).

17 This is how local television news marketing managers characterize advertisers who specifically request that their spots be shown during the evening newscast.
SECTION 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF TELEVISION NEWS

Quality in the television news business can be defined at a basic level as accuracy, timeliness, and completeness. All news programs are first judged by their ability to get the story straight, to report it first (or at least not last) and to tell the whole story (whether this requires a single story on a single day, several stories spread over a single day, or several stories spread over a long period). This definition of quality sets a minimum standard for the core service provided by television news: information.

However, as a basis for establishing competitive advantage or differentiation among news programs, quality takes on a much broader meaning. This broader concept of quality encompasses the entertainment aspect of television news as well as information. It accounts for the fact that television news viewers prefer one program over another, even though they believe that the information they get from either source is the same with respect to its accuracy, timeliness and completeness. In effect, it accounts for the wide differentiation of service in what amounts to a commodity market. This broad definition is what we mean when we refer to quality throughout this paper.

Factors That Influence Quality Management in Television News Broadcasting

As we mentioned earlier, there are several elements of television news broadcasting which directly affect quality management.

- The consumption of the service is a personal experience which can vary widely from individual to individual.

18 According to local television news managers, these are the minimum quality standards.

19 Local television news marketing executives indicate that their research shows that most television news viewers perceive no appreciable difference in content among the local television news programs.
The service encounter is private and controlled by the viewer.

The service has great social influence.

The service consumed by the viewer is an intermediate product.

Habit drives consumption.

The service is essentially free.

These elements are discussed in greater detail in this section.

*Service Consumption Is Private and Personalized*

The intangible element of television news service is the emotion it evokes, the feelings and opinions it creates. This element depends on the individual consuming the service. Two viewers may watch the same newscast and come away with completely different perceptions of the experience depending on the amount and type of information they absorbed, the degree to which they enjoyed the viewing environment, their disposition toward the material content, and their state of mind during the time of viewing.

The consumer's utility is in his perception of the experience of using the product, rather than in the attributes of the product itself. The enjoyment is in watching the newscast, as much as in the information transfer. The consumption of entertainment and information is a very personal experience, and so the viewing experience varies widely from individual to individual. In view of this, quality management must include the management of the viewer's expectation and perception of quality.

*The Service Encounter Is Privately Controlled By The Viewer*

The decision to consume the services provided by television is personal; the service encounter is private, generally occurring at home. To some degree, the service is consumed according to
the viewer's schedule. Thus, the selection among product alternatives is completely a matter of personal taste, attitude and behavior.

In addition to controlling where and when consumption takes place, the viewer determines what other activities he will engage in during television viewing (e.g., cooking, cleaning, conversing on the telephone). He also controls his state of mind during consumption. Thus, the nature of the consumption experience is individually determined. Because each viewer's perception of service quality is based on this experience, the television news producer must manage quality in a heterogeneous environment.

Traditional theories of quality perception and measurement emphasize the importance of the encounter between the server and consumer in measuring and managing quality. A basic element of service businesses is their focus on the service encounter, the interface between the customer and the server, because the service provided is only as good as the customer's perception of the service encounter. Successful service companies improve the user-friendliness of customer interfaces, manage customer expectations through improved communications, and implement specialized problem or exceptions handling. In this way, they actively manage not only their own service quality, but also customer perceptions of service quality. For many firms, this translates into standardization of the service experience.

McDonald's in the fast food industry, Midas Muffler Shops in the automobile service industry,

---

20 Advances in technology have provided the viewer with increasingly greater control over the service encounter. The remote control allows viewers to move rapidly from one program to another, editing out any portion of a program that they do not wish to view. The video cassette recorder enables viewers to tape record television programs and view them at their convenience. It also enables viewers to edit out any material that they do not wish to view. The latest technology in television receivers enables the viewer to see a "split-screen" which shows two different programs simultaneously. In addition, the advent of CATV (or cable TV) has increased the number and variety of options available. Viewers can now choose from as many as seventy viewing options, among which are channels that feature specialized programming -- MTV (music videos), ESPN (sports), CNN (news), to name a few.
and Fotomat in the film development industry are examples of firms that have standardized the service experience. This is not practical in television news because the service encounter is controlled by the viewer.

Television News Has Social Influence

The consumption of television news can influence public opinion and behavior by portraying current events and issues in a particular light through the use of specific language and pictures. In some instances, policy-makers believe that "the structure of television news reporting distorts the ways in which public policy issues are presented to the public."21

The Service is An Intermediate Product

While it may appear that the role of television news is to provide its customers with information and entertainment, it actually generates revenues through its capacity to sell advertising time and space. Television news provides two distinctly different services to two completely different customers. The ambiguity about what customer television news should serve creates organizational problems. The operations group is dedicated to serving the consumer (by producing the intermediate product) and the marketing group serves the advertiser (by selling the final product). The task of management is to balance the desires and objectives of the two groups.

In television news there is an established tradition of serving a "higher purpose."22 The operations division typically measures its performance against subjective standards, such as the journalistic principles established by Edward R. Murrow in the 1950s and 1960s. The


22 Head pp. 228-9
marketing division competes with other programming and other media to provide advertisers with an audience of the 1990s, one that is more in tune with The Simpsons than with current events.\textsuperscript{23} Quality management in television news must be flexible enough to address the objectives of both marketing and operations.

\textit{Habit Drives Consumption}

Consumption of television news products tends to be very habitual.\textsuperscript{24} The effect of habit on consumption is related to the consumer's development of his consideration set. In the case of television news, habit generally governs the viewer's access to the service (e. g. when the viewer typically arrives home from work). Because each station offers several newscasts throughout the day, the potential viewers' access to television news is expanded. Quality management in television news must conform to the effects of habit-based consumption on viewer perceptions.

\textit{The Service Is Essentially Free}

If the access cost of television (the cost of buying a television receiver) is considered a sunk cost, then the price of television is essentially zero (ignoring opportunity costs and the slight cost of power usage). This zero price tag increases the focus on product differentiation, while at the same time limiting the ability of television news competitors to signal competitors or customers through price. In other words, once the viewer has decided to watch television, price is not a parameter which he can use to compare products.

\textsuperscript{23} The March 1991 issue of Harper's magazine reported in its Harper's Index that more Americans would like to have dinner with television cartoon character Bart Simpson than with Ronald Reagan.

\textsuperscript{24} Local television news marketing managers have found that news viewers typically watch news at the same time each day, whether it be in the morning before leaving for work, in the evening after returning home from work, or at night before going to sleep. This is typical of other media businesses such as newspapers which emphasize subscription sales and morning newsstand sales, because most readers prefer to read their paper in the morning. In Boston, both the Boston Globe and The Boston Herald eliminated their afternoon editions because of poor sales.
Traditional theories of quality generally measure customer utility on a per dollar basis, based on the assumption that value is a function of price and that customers compare competing products' utilities per dollar. For television news and other media services, it would be possible to use a utility per unit of leisure time expended to measure service quality and compare products.

These factors are characteristic of television news; they also make quality management problematic. They suggest that we need a different approach to looking at quality in television news. The following section analyzes viewer quality attributes as the building blocks to establishing a framework for quality management.
SECTION 4: THE VOICE OF THE VIEWING CUSTOMER

In this section, we focus on quality from the perspective of the viewer. Although we do not address quality from the perspective of either advertisers or station management, these parties may also have their own subjective definitions of quality that can be similarly examined.

We review the results of qualitative research and identify some of the quality attributes of viewers. These attributes will help to develop the quality framework discussed in Sections 5 and 6.

Measurement of Quality in Television News

Traditionally, there have been two measures of quality in the television news: popularity with viewers as measured by ratings (see Appendix D) and critical praise as measured by a subjective standard of journalistic excellence or sometimes by awards (e.g. the television Emmy Awards). Ratings have limited value because they are a descriptive rather than causal measure. Similarly, subjective evaluations are limited by the fact that they generally do not focus on the either the viewing or advertising customers of television news. In fact, they can often be the source of organizational conflict between marketing managers who focus on viewers and advertisers and the news directors who set the journalistic standards. In the words of Eric Goldstein, Director of Creative Services at Boston's WBZ TV Channel 4, "Edward R. Murrow is a personal hero of mine -- but he wouldn't last very long (as a news anchor) in today's market."

Currently, news managers use both of these measures of quality that exist in the industry. For example, consider a news program that introduces a new feature which receives viewer approval based on follow-up research. However, the newscast's ratings do not improve. Most
news managers would consider the new feature a success, even though marketing managers would have gained nothing new to sell to advertisers. On the other hand, if the feature won an award or critical praise, marketing managers would advertise that fact to improve ratings and to influence advertisers that their newscast delivers a better demographic profile of viewers.

Despite these practices, however, most news and marketing managers make decisions based on their "gut feel," developed through years of experience producing news and other television programming. Our goal is to provide them with a structured way of thinking about the quality attributes that contribute to this gut feel.

**Defining and Measuring Competitive Quality in Television News**

To establish a framework for managing quality, we needed to establish a better definition of quality than ratings or journalistic excellence. As a start, we focused on the competitive elements of television news. In particular, we wanted to identify the elements that differentiate news programming. We wanted to answer the question: What makes one news show "better" than another? To do this, we had to understand what we meant by "better".

To identify the differentiation elements that contribute to the broader competitive definition of quality in television news, we conducted the following qualitative research:

1. We interviewed managers who produce and market local television news.
2. We conducted a focus group with news viewers between 25 and 34 years old.
3. We surveyed a viewers in the same age group regarding their news viewing behavior.

As we identified the range of quality attributes which affect news viewers' perceptions and attitudes, we also tried to get a sense of how viewers' behavior was affected by their attitudes
about quality. The following describes our findings and proposes one way to measure competitive quality attributes.

**Viewer Quality Attributes**

Determining important service quality attributes for television news is a tricky proposition. Contradictions between market research and ratings data indicate that news consumers’ viewing habits do not necessarily reflect their stated attitudes. In other words, the hand on the remote does not always do what the voice at the focus group says it will.

In order to identify quality attributes that affect behavior, we collected qualitative data about what news viewers would do if presented with news viewing options. We conducted a focus group with a diverse group of viewers in the 25-34 age group. Participants viewed videotaped segments of local news broadcasts from April 1991 from each of the three network affiliates. Participants were asked to tell us when they would pay attention, tune out mentally, switch channels, leave the room, etc. We wanted them to tell us what would be their behavior, rather than their attitude, toward each segment.

Our questions focused on the general aspects of the segments, rather than on the specific news content. For example, if a participant responded that he would not watch a feature on parental consent for teenage abortions, we would try to ascertain whether it was the specific topic that dissuaded him, or whether it was a general attribute such as the feature reporter, the length of the feature, the presentation of bad news, emphasis on the local aspect of the news, etc.

A complete description of our focus group research methods and results is presented in Appendix B. A brief summary of our findings is presented here.
Using the House of Quality methodology, we identified a list of quality attributes from the focus group participants' actual and described behavior towards the segments they viewed.

This list is presented in Figure 1. This is not intended to represent a comprehensive or descriptive list, but rather a representative list of attributes that viewers articulate when asked about their television news viewing behavior. (See Appendix E for the full House of Quality analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 1: Viewer Quality Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Attractiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrasiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness/Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation Characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous/Entertaining Personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious/No-Nonsense Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable/Relaxed Demeanor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal of Interviewees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeliness of News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility of Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth/Completeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conciseness of Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Hold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcast Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency in Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know What Stories Are Upcoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic Presentation of Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, news managers in the Boston area also consider other quality attributes which did not come up during the focus group to be important. Because viewers have increased control over what they watch due to the rise of the remote control, news managers feel that they must give viewers a specific reason to tune in to their broadcast at a specific time (beyond the consistent scheduling of the sports and weather reports). These attributes include:

- Emphasis on "good news" in addition to bad.
- Comprehensive coverage of state and local politics.
- Presentation of relevant and interesting feature stories.

---

Although we found some contradictions among the various attributes identified by the focus group, we attribute the inconsistencies to two facts: 1) the "target" audience for television news is very broad and heterogeneous and 2) the attributes are perceived. Invariably, different segments of the audience will be attracted by different attributes that they perceive to be present in the newscast. News program managers should view the list as one which provides an overview of potential quality attributes, one which they can pare down or enhance to complement their market strategy.

Program Format and Viewer Behavior

Some research has been devoted to grouping news viewers into categories based on their interests in viewing television news. Robert Wicks found that news viewers can be grouped into three discrete benefit-oriented segments, each with different quality attributes. Wicks's groups are:

2. Reinforcement minded viewers (who like upbeat, positive news).
3. Credibility minded viewers.

Wicks suggests that news managers create more tailored or specialized shows to target viewers based on his groupings and that advertisers wishing to target those viewers will be eager to advertise on the specialized shows. However, Wicks's conclusions are based on the attitudes of viewers towards content, not on viewers' behavior.

In our focus group research, we discovered a couple of aspects of behavior worth noting. First, when asked to describe their general behavior when watching the local news, all of the

participants said that typically they would not devote their full attention to the broadcast but would engage in some other activity simultaneously. They would pay more or less attention to the news as their interest was piqued. This would tend to support Wicks' views.

However, we also posed a hypothetical question to the participants: "Suppose there are two newscasts; one is fairly serious, the other lighter, more feature-oriented. One is on at 6:00 p.m., the other at 11:00 p.m. Would you make an effort to see the one that better suits your tastes?" The overwhelming response to this was that the time of the broadcast was far more important than its emphasis. Viewers are in the habit of turning on news at a certain time during the day and are willing to watch news that may not be exactly in tune with their preferences. Some viewers always tune in at the same time; others tune in "whenever I get home from work." This effect carried over into decisions about what segments to watch within a program for viewers who typically engaged in activities (e.g. preparing dinner) that did not allow them to freely choose which segments they could watch.

Survey Results
As a result of the focus group, we decided to conduct a brief survey of viewer behavior, a description of which appears in Appendix C. The purpose of the survey was to provide some descriptive information about viewer behavior. We asked the following questions:

1. Is television news your main source of news?
2. How many days per week do you watch local television news?
3. Do you watch the news primarily for information or entertainment?
4. How do you characterize your television news viewing habits?
Although 25% of those surveyed responded that television was their main source of news, only 7% made an effort to watch the news every day, and 64% of the respondents watch local news less than three days a week. The fact that 79% of the respondents stated that they watch the news primarily for information is consistent with what the news managers told us; viewers are unwilling to "admit" that they watch the news for entertainment. However, news managers have found that entertaining newscasts are far more popular than more serious newscasts. Also, by observing the reactions of the focus group participants, we confirmed that news viewers are indeed highly entertained by what they see on the news and often pay more attention to sensational new (such as a story on a recent scandal involving the Kennedy family) than to a hard news story (such as the impact of the current economic crisis in Massachusetts).

From the survey we found that, at least qualitatively, viewers could be categorized based on their viewing behavior into two groups:

*Casual Viewers:* Among those we surveyed, 64% watch the news because they happened to be home during the broadcast and 29% watch the news because they happened to be watching television and nothing preferable is being broadcast on another channel. Of this subset, 78% said they watch television news less than once per week. This group might include viewers looking for cocktail party or office conversation, as well as stay-at-home types.

*Serious Viewers:* Among those we surveyed 25% try to watch the news when they have not had a chance to read the paper, and 7% make an effort to watch the news at least once during the day. Of this subset, 77% reported that they watch television news at least three times per week, about half of whom try to see the news on television just about every day. This group includes news know-it-alls, as well as specific interest groups (e. g. sports or weather nuts).
In Section 5, we build a framework for media quality, by grouping viewer attributes (which are based on both attitude and behavior) into competitive dimensions which managers can use to differentiate, operationalize and market their media service. By focusing on these competitive dimensions, managers will effectively be focusing on meeting customer quality requirements.
SECTION 5: THE COMPETITIVE DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY

To provide a structured approach to managing viewer quality attributes, we created a framework geared towards service delivery. Although the framework is our own design, we feel that the underlying concept is useful for understanding the production characteristics used to manage quality.

Grouping Quality Attributes into Competitive Dimensions

Once we had collected qualitative information about viewer behavior and quality attributes, we constructed a framework of competitive dimensions to connect these quality attributes with television news service delivery. We chose the dimensions that were mentioned frequently during interviews with news managers and viewers. We propose that this framework enables television news managers to design and manage the news delivery system that will meet viewers’ quality expectations. We do not propose the framework as an expression of customer needs.

We grouped the viewer attributes identified in Section 4 into the following competitive dimensions: Personality, Content and Format. We suggest that television news managers can differentiate their service across these dimensions in an attempt to build an identity that will develop long-lasting relationships with their viewers. Figure 2 shows how we specifically grouped quality attributes into these dimensions.27

27 These groupings represent our opinion about how customer attributes can be assigned to primary competitive dimensions. As the House of Quality diagram in Appendix E shows, many of the customer attributes can be affected by choices made along more than one of these dimensions.
Figure 2: Quality Attributes Define Personality, Content, Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Attractiveness</td>
<td>Good Journalism</td>
<td>Air Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Appeal</td>
<td>Relevance of News</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrasiveness</td>
<td>Timeliness of News</td>
<td>Previews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Graphics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness</td>
<td>Depth</td>
<td>Use of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Completeness</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Conciseness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>Local Emphasis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriousness</td>
<td>Appeal of Interviewees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-Nonsense Approach</td>
<td>Emotional Hold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Sensationalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed Demeanor</td>
<td>Entertainment Value</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intellectual Challenge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Personality dimension is critical because a newscast simulates human interaction with the viewer without actual face-to-face contact. The focus group participants emphasized the importance of the physical appearance or projected personality of the on-air talent. In addition, news managers believe that the on-air personalities are the primary reason viewers watch one station rather than another. The Content dimension encompasses the primary service provided by a news organization: information transmission. Format includes parameters such as broadcast time and consistent sequence of segments (e.g., sports, weather). The three dimensions are the major categories in the House of Quality Production Characteristics (see Appendix E).

Together, these three dimensions create the bond between the viewing audience and television news, which is as much a part of the television news product as is the information conveyed to the viewers.

**Personality**

Personality encompasses the quality attributes that are associated with the on-air talent. This talent includes anchorpersons, sportscasters, weatherpersons, and reporters. The viewer forms
a bond with the news anchor (as well as with the weather and sports anchors) that is based on perceived characteristics such as trust, warmth, longevity, and personality—the same traits that build friendship. News managers must concern themselves with how these perceptions are created and maintained.

Selecting and developing on-air personalities with whom viewers will be able to develop a positive relationship involves understanding and managing tradeoffs among the expectations of the various audience segments. Developing wide Personality appeal is accomplished by selecting talent whose on-air personalities complement one another and who are able to establish a rapport with each other.

This is a difficult task; viewers' comments are particularly brutal about on-air personalities they do not like, and their reasons for liking other personalities seem lukewarm in comparison. In other words, it is much easier to offend than to please viewers in the selection of on-air talent. For example, we heard anchors called "disingenuous", "arrogant", "fake", and "dull beyond belief". The more favorable comments ran along the lines of "a nice guy", "better looking", "entertaining", and "I like them because I've been watching them a long time." There is a precarious balance between selecting on-air personalities who will be individualistic enough to differentiate the newscast while still having wide appeal.

*Differentiation Along the Personality Dimension*

One way that managers create differentiation along the Personality dimension without making dramatic changes to the cast is through the development of regular feature segments called franchises; for example, on every Tuesday evening, the newscast will close with one of the anchors doing a short piece about a certain community issue. These segments are designed to enhance viewer perceptions of on-air personalities, and to develop a stronger bond between
the viewer and the personality. Past experience suggests that the franchise can be an effective tool for doing this. Highly successful franchises can affect the strategies of the local news programs by becoming a high-profile advertising emphasis, or by pulling viewers away from other channels.

Another way to differentiate along the Personality dimension is through the style, tone and familiarity of the on-air talent -- the degree to which the program is formal or informal, light or serious, etc. Because of their experience and strong viewer following, many of the on-air talent make the decisions that affect the tone and style of the news program. Typically, decisions about appearance, demeanor, and interaction with other on-air talent are left to the anchors. Occasionally station managers will advise the on-air talent of viewer perceptions of these actions, based on the station's market research.

*Personality in the Boston Market*

In Boston, the on-air talent situation (anchors, sports, and weather people) has been relatively stable over the last ten years. The on-air personalities have built a loyal following based on their various characteristics, whether it be the sincerity and professionalism of Channel 7's R.D. Saul, the friendly family atmosphere generated by the husband and wife team of Chet Curtis and Natalie Jacobson of Channel 5, or the humor of Channel 4 sports anchor Bob Lobel. As a result, station managers are reluctant to make changes because of the time it takes to build viewer loyalty to new on-air talent who possess different personality characteristics.

Franchises are used for different purposes in the Boston market. For example, Channel 4 has a successful, long running franchise that features Jack Williams. The franchise features a local child who is available for adoption. It appears regularly on the Wednesday evening newscast, and is called *Wednesday's Child*. The purpose of the franchise is to showcase the caring,
friendly, personal side of an experienced professional news anchor. In contrast, Channel 7 station management knows that it is very difficult to build viewer loyalty for a "new kid on the block" in the current Boston television news market, and has developed a similar franchise to feature its newest on-air personality, Margie Reedy. The weekly segment, called Comeback Kids, profiles a teen or young adult who was once "down and out" or involved with crime, and has turned his or her life around.

Channel 4 sports anchor Bob Lobel's humorous and immensely popular Sports Spotlight franchise has influenced the strategy of the entire Boston market. Lobel negotiated one of the highest paying contracts for a local television news anchor on the strength of his franchise. As a result, Channel 4 increased his air-time, and its emphasis on sports news coverage. When its ratings improved, the other stations followed suit.

An example of how decisions made by the on-air talent are tempered by management's market research is the entertaining and often humorous on-air relationship between Bob Lobel and one of the news anchors. They developed the on-air repartee on their own initiative. Although viewers' initial reaction was favorable, station news managers continued to monitor viewer reaction until they found that viewers no longer enjoyed the byplay between the two anchors. At that point, the station management counseled them to gradually tone down the relationship.

**Content**

Content refers to the information contained in the newscast. This includes story mix (between local, national and international news, entertainment, weather and sports reporting) and the emphasis or "angle" within each story (e.g. the local angle to the outbreak of war in the Persian Gulf as opposed to the full international view of the story). The decision-making
process for each newscast is very fluid; the “script” and content of the newscast change throughout the day as news events develop. The news director has the final decision on what stories are included and in what order. The news director is aided by the general manager and a marketing manager in these decisions. In addition to meetings throughout the day in which these people (and the personnel responsible for assigning stories, market research, etc.) determine the content and format of the day’s newscasts, there is post-hoc analysis of previous broadcasts to share understanding of what was effective and what was not.

In making Content decisions, the conflict between traditional journalistic conventions and marketing considerations come into play. The job of a news organization is twofold: it has a social and political responsibility to provide viewers with information about their government and community, but it must also generate high enough ratings so that advertisers will be attracted to the station. The content of a news broadcast is therefore determined through a mixture of “journalistic convention modified by customer desires”, according to Eric Goldstein.

Because of this twofold responsibility and because customers say conflicting things about what they would like to see, managing the Content dimension is challenging. For example, viewers often say that governmental or political news coverage is boring. However, if it is excluded from the broadcast, viewers complain that the newscast is incomplete. This indicates that viewers feel that one of the reasons that they should be watching the news is in order to be well-informed citizens, and that the news broadcasters have the obligation to provide them with important or relevant information. Also, some viewers prefer to have a conversational knowledge of several current events (the cocktail party approach) rather than in-depth knowledge of a few key stories. These viewers’ perception of quality will depend largely on the number of stories covered during each broadcast. Conversely, other viewers are solely interested in stories that affect them directly; they may prefer in-depth coverage of local news.
Our focus group research found that relevance was one of the most important quality attributes of the Content dimension. In addition, conciseness is appreciated by the viewers, as is timeliness. This was most apparent as the focus group participants made comments like, "I have heard what I want to hear about this story—if they don’t have any new information, they shouldn’t keep talking about it."

**Differentiation Along the Content Dimension**

Some stations have policies which guide the daily selection of stories (for example, a consistent emphasis on local coverage over national or international stories). Other stations are flexible in response to daily events; they prioritize each day’s stories (local, national, international) that they feel are of the most interest to their viewers regardless of the scope.

News broadcast content is obviously dictated to a large extent by current news events. However, each news broadcast usually includes some "soft" news or a special feature of a less immediate nature. Some of these features are developed and filmed with a specific air date in mind (for example, a feature on the deterioration of public schools might be broadcast soon after heavy budget cuts are announced). Others are produced as "hold for release"; they enable production managers to manage the supply and demand of news segments. Because they are prepared and held "in the can", they can be shown on a light news day. They are moved around fairly easily, so they are the "first to go" to make air-time for late-breaking news or expanded coverage of news of great importance. In contrast, investigative reports are aired as soon as they are completed because a key competitive factor in investigative reporting is being the first with the story.

Because of their power to draw a particular audience segment, soft news and features are increasingly being acknowledged as critical competitive weapons. Typically, the subject of the
story is not covered on competing stations, making these features a powerful tool for
differentiation. For example, one channel may establish a reputation for the best coverage of
medical issues through special features.

The franchises discussed in the Personality section above can also be used to differentiate the
local stations along the Content dimension, as franchises are developed around news features
that focus on similar issues (e.g. medicine, education, the local economy). Following the lead
of local television programs, national network programs have recently added feature franchises
to their newscasts. Features such as NBC's *The Daily Difference*, CBS's *Eye on America* or
ABC's *American Agenda* help build viewer loyalty to the competing news programs.

*Content in the Boston Market*

Boston's Channel 7, which places a great emphasis on local news coverage, pursues a general
policy of prioritizing the sequence of stories based on their local interest. Channel 5 also
emphasizes local coverage, but does this through its program of regular features with local
appeal, such as its weekly *High Five* feature which profiles a local high school student-athlete,
or its long running series profiling public teachers in Eastern Massachusetts, *Great
Expectations*.

*Format*

Product delivery characteristics make up the Format dimension. Formatting considerations for
local news broadcasts include these operational parameters:

- Time and length of broadcast.
- Order in which stories are presented and segments (news, weather, sports, entertainment, features) appear.
- Timing of features, weather, sports, entertainment within broadcast.
• Number of news anchors, positioning at the news desk, and variety of camera angles.

• Mix between live reporting and taped footage with voice-over report.

• "Background parameters"—set, lighting, music, graphics, and billboards.28

Format decisions are increasingly driven by the presence of remote control. For example, ratings technology currently gives viewing credit for a show only if it is tuned in for seven and a half minutes straight. Consequently, most TV shows are produced in segments that are at least seven minutes between commercials. Also, the ratings are reported for fifteen-minute blocks (to get credit for viewers during the fifteen-minute block, the station has to be viewed for seven and a half minutes of that time). Most news managers schedule segments strategically to maximize ratings.

Our focus group research found broadcast time to be a critical Format parameter; participants said they would "never make an effort to get there [for a show that better suits my tastes along the Content and Personality dimensions]" and "I'd watch whichever one I'm home for." Another very important aspect of the Format dimension is format consistency from day to day so that people know when they need to pay more attention to hear the information in which they are the most interested (e.g. sports or weather).

Differentiation Along the Format Dimension

Every aspect of the Format dimension is used for differentiation, although broadcast times usually overlap within a given market. The use of graphics has become increasingly important to grab and hold the attention of viewers who use the remote control to rapidly "zap" between 

28 In television news, a billboard is a border or other background graphic which frames the anchorperson or reporter on screen. They are quite common in sports reporting.
channels, viewing each channel for only a moment. Graphics, and billboards in particular, are used to catch and hold the viewers' attention. For example, one of the segments viewed by the focus group included a graphic which read "99% Sure", with a picture of a reputed crime suspect. Every participant noted that the graphic would catch their attention if they were switching between channels. Ironically, the participants noticed that the graphic was also misleading: while the news anchor said that the police were 99% sure that a crime had taken place, the graphic implied that they were 99% sure that the suspect had committed the crime.

*Format in the Boston Market*

In many respects the network affiliates in Boston use similar formats. All three use two anchors, sharing the main anchor desk with the weather and sports anchors. They all use film footage extensively, reserving live reporting for late breaking stories or stories of major significance. The three stations follow a basic news/weather/sports/entertainment sequence in nearly all of their broadcasts, and they employ similar camera angles. They all preview the upcoming news segments heavily. All three stations also make use of graphics and billboards to catch and keep the viewers' attention.

However, some significant variations in format exist among the stations. For example, Channel 7 has recently begun providing a short preview of both the weather and sports reports early in its broadcasts. These short segments, called *First Weather* and *First Sports*, belie the standard sequencing of the broadcast, and draw viewers who prefer to get this information in advance. In addition, Channel 7 is the only local station showing news from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m and Channel 4 the only station with local news from 7:30 to 8:00 p.m. Also, from the point of view of the camera, news reporters on Channel 7 generally present their stories away from the anchor desk, whereas Channel 5's reporters sit at the desk with the anchor team.
Channel 4 strategically schedules its sports segment to take advantage of the draw of its popular sports anchor, Bob Lobel. Mr. Lobel's sportscast is scheduled (from preview to conclusion) to span two fifteen-minute blocks in the hope that viewers will tune in before and stay tuned after the segment, thus giving the station viewing credit for both blocks.

The three dimensions described in this section represent what we believe is a useful structure for looking at the quality attributes identified by news viewers. In Section 6, we discuss the combined effect of the Personality, Content, and Format dimensions.
SECTION 6: BUILDING VIEWER IDENTIFICATION

The Personality, Content, and Format dimensions combine to create a set of viewer feelings and perceptions which we call Identification. This Identification characterizes the viewer's emotional relationship with the news program. As the focus group participants put it, news viewers typically feel that they have "their" news show. They are accustomed to seeing the same television news people and program when they come home from work in the evening or before they go to sleep at the end of the day. By nature, human beings are creatures of habit, and news viewers get in the habit of watching television news and getting information in a familiar order and format.

To build viewer Identification, news managers differentiate their programs along the three dimensions described in section 5. The Personality dimension is used to establish a bond with the viewer, the Content dimension meets the viewers' needs for information and/or entertainment, and the Format dimension is used to match viewers' schedules and behavior patterns.

Thus, Identification develops a relationship that is based on meeting the emotional, intellectual, and physical needs of the viewer. For example, some viewers may watch television news when they are at home alone because the familiar voices and faces are a close substitute for companionship. Other viewers habitually end their day in front of the 11:00 p.m. news, gathering information for office conversation, checking the performance of the local sports team, and learning tomorrow's weather so they can make plans accordingly. Still other viewers turn on the news so they can understand the days events and how they will be affected by them.

The challenge for the news manager lies in meeting all of these needs for a very heterogenous
audience. While a Content differentiation approach like Wicks's would meet the emotional and intellectual needs of the different benefit-based segments of viewers, it falls short in meeting viewers' behavioral needs. In our research, we found that viewers are willing to sacrifice their preference for specific Content elements in favor of a more convenient Format.

As the number of viewer options has increased (through the proliferation of cable TV) and the ability of the viewer to control his options has increased (through the use of the remote control), Identification has become a critical device for retaining viewer loyalty, not only for a particular news program, but for specific segments within the program. Managers have been pressured to develop specific vehicles such as franchises and special features to build program identification segment by segment.

**Constraints On Building Identification**

The three dimensions, Personality, Content, and Format, are used by news managers to differentiate their programs. However, there are some constraints on how far along these axes a manager can go to successfully differentiate. The House of Quality correlation matrix details these constraints (see Appendix E). One of these constraints is the habitual nature of news viewing. The relationship that is developed between the news broadcast and the viewer is, as we have characterized it, quite deep. This means that a change along any of the axes will upset the equilibrium of the relationship. The challenge, then, is to make it clear to the viewer that the change does actually meet his needs and will make him more comfortable with the news service.

Because viewers build an Identification with a given news show (based largely on their relationships with the on-air personalities), news viewing habits are very strong and audience loyalties to a particular show or on-air personality are extremely difficult to change. News
managers considering format or personality changes must weigh the likelihood that the change will incent loyal viewers of other stations to make a change and watch their show against the chance of alienating current viewers. The difficulty in assessing the resistance point for both of these groups means that designing a system that delivers exactly what viewers want to see is not a guarantee of a net gain in viewership.

Personality, Content, and Format all provide opportunities for differentiation. However, each dimension must be consistent with the other two. In other words, the on-air personalities must be "appropriate" for the subject about which they are speaking (e.g. viewers don't want to see CBS network news anchor Dan Rather reporting on pop singer Madonna's latest music video controversy) and the content of the news show must be compatible with the format (e.g. it does not make much sense to strive for international emphasis and to lead the broadcast with a brief update on local weather and sports).

In addition, there are interactions between Personality, Content, and Format which limit how closely each dimension can be tailored to meet viewer needs. For example, the length of the broadcast (a Format parameter) influences the Content dimension (how much depth can be pursued for each story). It is impossible to design a news broadcast that matches every viewer's desire for depth vs. breadth of coverage.

Also, although the nature of news broadcasts is evolving, the traditional nature of news broadcasts is conservative (in the tradition of Edward R. Murrow). Because people take news seriously, they don't want it to be too outrageous; this limits the amount of Content differentiation a news manager can successfully create.

Local market conditions contribute other constraints. For example, the on-air personalities in the
Boston news market have been largely the same for the past ten years. This stability in the Personality dimension has forced news managers to differentiate their programs through the Content and Format dimensions. Also, the conservative Boston market is more amenable to slow, incremental change than are other markets, like Los Angeles. The innovation introduction process is necessarily slower in the Boston market—news managers may generate ideas for differentiating faster than their viewers’ are able to accept these changes.

Additional Quality Management Constraints: Measuring and Managing Viewer Expectations

One element that contributes to a gap between customer expectations and management’s perception of these expectations is a potential danger in any business: management’s intense daily involvement in production prevents it from understanding the customer’s view. News directors who watch three news broadcasts simultaneously three times a day, five days a week find it difficult to understand the perspective of their viewers who come home exhausted at 6:00 and turn on the news for diversion or relaxation.

A news director watching his competitors’ shows at the same time as his own will compare format and content characteristics among the shows. A viewer at home is less likely to think critically about format and content (in fact, most viewers, when asked, say that there is no content difference among the news shows), and more likely to form an opinion based on an intangible feeling (Identification) that these format and content choice create. This gap in perspective between the management and the viewer makes it difficult for managers to understand the Identification created for their viewers through their Personality, Content, and Format decisions. As WBZ’s Goldstein said, “News directors live, sleep and breathe news broadcasts—how can they be in touch with what the ordinary viewer thinks?”
Marketing managers are fully aware that the voice of their viewer provides three (sometimes overlapping) kinds of information:

1. Some of the research they perform provides them with new insight about product improvement opportunities.
2. Some of what the customers tell the managers through the research reflects what they (the viewers) truly desire to see in a news broadcast.
3. Some of the customers' responses reflect viewer expectations, which are based on societal norms or on the expectations that news managers have developed through their advertising.

According to Goldstein, "these three things help news managers intuit new product opportunities".

But in the case of viewer expectations, measurement is not a fully reliable solution to this problem. In fact, since news advertisements explicitly or implicitly tell the viewer what he should seek in a news broadcast, the question becomes whether it preferable to manage viewer expectations or measure them.

Because it can be consumed on a daily basis and is essentially free to the viewing customer, the broadcast itself is also an effective means of managing customer expectations.

Standardization has traditionally been the way in which news managers have managed their customers' expectations. Viewers habitually turn the news on at a certain time of day and

---

29 Because the decision to consume the services provided by television is private, there may be significant problems in measuring viewer preferences. Viewers will respond to a survey or behave in a focus group based on their perceptions of what they "should" watch on television, rather than what they actually do watch. Television news viewers may mislead market researchers about the amount and content of news they watch in order to appear more informed and responsible about keeping up with current events. In general, viewers will try to appear to be more discriminating or intellectual, regardless of their actual behavior.
generally do not spend much time at other times during the day wondering about how the news broadcast can be improved. So, consumption of the product itself tends to form expectations for the product.
SECTION 7: GENERALIZATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Generalizing the Identification Framework to Other News Media

The news affects virtually every member of society. News managers feel that they have the responsibility to keep citizens informed about events and issues that affect them; they try to design news broadcasts that are appealing and accessible to as many people as possible. Creating programs with wide appeal is also consistent with news managers' business responsibility: generating advertising revenues.

The radio, newspaper, and magazine businesses are facing many of the same competitive pressures as television. Audience options are exploding; the number of specialty newspapers and magazines has been growing, as has the number of television and radio stations.\(^{30}\) Readers can be much more selective about the type of information and entertainment they get than they were ten years ago. Managers in the general news business must deliver a product which can compete with the wide variety of specialty offerings while meeting the needs of the broad and heterogenous news audience.

The framework concept described in sections 5 and 6 can be applied to news media beyond local television news. Personality, Content, and Format include quality attributes that are the basis for differentiation in any news medium. Identification, by any other name (e. g. a magazine's image, a newspaper's editorial position, a radio station's "format"), is an important element of other news media. A discussion of how the framework's three dimensions may be generalized to other media follows.

\(^{30}\) Sterling pp. 634-7
Personality

The Personality dimension describes the characteristics and traits of the humans associated with the news service that are evident to the audience. For example, the Personality dimension includes magazine and newspaper writers, radio announcers, interviewees, etc. In addition, all of the cultural values and stereotypes associated with these characteristics and traits add to audiences' perception of the personality of the presenter or writer. Some of the characteristics or traits on which this perception is based include:

- The style of the communication taking place (e.g. pleasant delivery of community news, editorial writing with a political slant, disc jockey games interspersed with music news).
- Publicity activities undertaken by media personalities.
- Any information about the media personality's personal life that is made public.
- The reputation or image of the personality's television station, newspaper, magazine, or radio station. This can work both ways; for example, George Will's association with Newsweek enhances the magazine's conservative image. This spills onto others who write for the magazine.
- In visual media such as television, physical appearance contributes to the audience's perception of personality. Some written media are also trying to use physical appearance to enhance the image of their writers. The Boston Globe has small sketches of regular columnists' faces next to their work.
- In audio-based media such as radio, the performer's voice influences audience perception of personality.

Content

The Content dimension describes the explicit communication to the audience. This includes any opinion bias the communication may carry or imply. Understanding this dimension also
Includes analyzing the focus or emphasis of the communication through examining the order and method in which the facts are presented. Other parameters of the Content dimension include geographic or specialty interest coverage, willingness to tackle taboo subjects, and the presence of/emphasis on sports, business, comics, editorials, etc. in a print media service.

Format

The Format dimension includes all of the operational parameters that are visible to the audience. These include timing of delivery, distribution channels, background parameters (those things which affect the look and sound of the product), mix of stories or features, order of presentation of stories and/or features. The "sequencing option" also affects the Format dimension: whether the audience can choose the order in which information is absorbed (e.g. when reading a newspaper) or is subject to the sequencing decision of management (e.g. television news broadcast or radio program).

For example, radio Format parameters include the number and timing of news breaks, the frequency of traffic reports, etc. In print media services, Format parameters include story placement, consistency in placing features in the same location, number and size of pictures, font selections, etc.

Identification

As they do for a local television news program, the Personality, Content, and Format dimensions create an Identification for other news services. Identification is not necessarily a marketing pitch to a certain audience segment. Personality, Content, and Format build an intangible package; a personalized sense of Identification which bonds the audience to the product. Awareness of a products' Identification affects decisions about Personality, Content, and Format. News managers recognize that any changes they make among the Personality,
Content, or Format dimensions will change how audiences identify with their service.

**Comparison With Other Quality Measurement Frameworks**

One way of understanding the Identification framework is to compare it to established service quality analysis frameworks. For example, Garvin designates eight dimensions of quality which are designed to give managers a "conceptual bridge" to the consumer's vantage point.  

These dimensions are performance, features, reliability, conformance, durability, serviceability, aesthetics, and perceived quality. The Identification framework is based on the assumption that this "conceptual bridge" is impossible to make with a viewer who is zipping through television channels rapidly, looking for something to grab his attention. The Identification framework is designed to measure quality in terms of differentiation, something that would tempt a viewer to slow down the zipping and tune into a newscast for an extended period of time.

Analyzing a news service in the context of Garvin’s dimensions would require a thorough understanding of the Personality, Content, and Format decisions that are a part of the news service. For example, some of Garvin’s dimensions encompass all of the competitive dimensions for television news (e.g. performance, features, serviceability, perceived quality—choices along the Personality, Content, and Format dimensions all contribute to these dimensions). Others relate to one or two of the Identification framework dimensions only (e.g. aesthetics relates to the physical appearance of the on-air personalities and the overall "look" of the newscast, reliability would be a function of consistent format decisions and credible content).

Zeithaml (et al) discuss quality management in terms of closing the four gaps between (1)  

customer expectations and management's perceptions of these expectations, (2) management perceptions of customer expectations and service delivery system specifications, (3) service delivery system specifications and the actual service delivery, and (4) service delivery and communication to customers about this service delivery.32 This framework's initial focus on customer expectations does not encourage differentiation and thus may be inappropriate for use in a business such as television news, where the increasing array of viewer options makes differentiation critical.

**Generalizing the Identification Framework to Non-News Media**

Non-news media services can also be viewed in terms of Personality, Content, and Format, and the Identification created by these dimensions. These competitive dimensions are potentially much richer in entertainment-oriented television programming in news programming. For instance, the Personality dimension encompasses not only the actor in a role, but the traits of the character being portrayed as well. The Content dimension includes the theme (comedy, drama) and plot of any fictional representation like a film or TV series. In television, formatting/broadcast time considerations are much more critical for non-news programming than for news because most stations broadcast news at roughly the same time and there is more room for differentiation during non-news programming hours. For instance, our view of the Fox Network's decision to broadcast *The Simpsons* opposite the NBC's perennial number one program, *The Cosby Show* is that it enhanced the Personality dimension of *The Simpsons*. By "taking on the establishment" (represented by the long-standing popularity of *The Cosby Show*), the animated characters on *The Simpsons* seem gutsier and more determined; they have an appealing underdog quality.

Conclusion

We have used the Identification framework to analyze the local television news business and examine some of the interesting issues there. The Identification framework is a useful way of looking at other types of media businesses as well. In using the Identification framework to analyze another media business, it is important to be consistent with the methodology of this paper. Specifically, the reader should:

1. Determine the specific attributes within the Personality, Content, and Format dimensions. Examine these attributes to understand where there exists an opportunity to differentiate. For example, Channel 7's *First Weather* and *First Sports* represent a program Format innovation based on the fact that viewers place value in knowing what stories are going to be shown later in the newscast.

2. Determine if one of the competitive dimensions is more important to the positioning strategy than the others. For example, Content is the most critical factor in EPSN's strategy to broadcast only sports and USA Today has distinguished itself from other newspapers by differentiating dramatically along the Format dimension.

3. Determine the balance and interrelationships between the dimensions. In television news, the length of the newscast (Format) affects the depth of the coverage (Content).

Knowing the elements of the competitive dimensions and the relative importance of each dimension helps to determine the nature of the audience Identification. Understanding the relative importance of Personality, Content and Format focuses formulation of the differentiation strategy where it will have the greatest impact. Recognizing the delicate balance between the dimensions helps to differentiate without upsetting the existing Identification.

Understanding how positioning along the competitive dimensions affects identifications is the key to understanding how changes to any of the dimensions will affect the audience for a
particular media service. Personality changes constitute far-reaching, strategic moves in televised news services, dramatically altering each viewer's identification with the broadcast. Personality changes have a lesser effect on other media services such as ESPN, where Content is the dominant dimension. In considering changes to Personality, Content, or Format, the manager must be aware of the interactions between the three dimensions and the resultant tradeoffs.

When applying the elements of the framework, it is critical to be aware of the assumptions made about the audiences' preferences and expectations and how those assumptions arose. Market conditions are also important in considering the competitive dimensions in a media service. For example, the stability in the Boston local television news business of the Personality dimension has led to innovations in Content and Format. Even though Personality is the dominant dimension in the television news business, the market's sensitivity to change in that dimension forced managers to focus on the other dimensions.

Technological advances continue to increase the audience's control over their exposure to media services. The number of media options continues to grow rapidly. Getting any attention in this environment will become more and more difficult and differentiation will continue to be a key success factor. The Identification framework provides a structured way of thinking about viewer quality attributes and the differentiation opportunities they provide.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Reports


Journals, Magazines, Newspapers


Demby, Emanuel H. "Research alters style, not substance, of TV news", Marketing News, January 3, 1986


Trager, Cara S. "New York papers playing the numbers game", *Advertising Age*, January 23, 1986


APPENDIX A: LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS IN GREATER BOSTON

Local television news in Greater Boston is dominated by the three network affiliates, WBZ Channel 4 (NBC), WCVB Channel 5 (ABC), and WHDH (former WNEV) Channel 7 (CBS). Although it is difficult to compare ratings because of the differences in air times and the increased competition with syndicated entertainment programs, these three serve over 95% of the news viewing audience in Eastern Massachusetts.33

Channel 4 broadcasts five news programs daily during the week, including one-half hour long newscasts at 6:30 a.m., 12 noon, 5:30 p.m., 7:30 p.m. and 11:00 p.m., and a full hour at 6:00 p.m. Channel 5 broadcasts four news programs daily, including one-half hour long newscasts at 6:30 a.m., 12 noon, and 11:00 p.m., and a full hour at 6:00 p.m. Channel 7 broadcasts five news programs daily including one-half hour long newscasts at 6:30 a.m., 12 noon, 6:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m., and a full hour at 5:00 p.m. In addition, all three stations repeat their 11:00 p.m. newscasts in the early morning. One other local station, WLVI Channel 56, provides a one hour long news programming at 10:00 p.m., but it attracts a very limited audience. The local public television station, WGBH Channel 2, offered a one hour news program at 10:00 p.m., that was discontinued in 1991 due to a cutback in public television funding. All three stations cut back to two newscasts on weekends (usually at 6:30 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.), generally to allow time for highly rated network sports programming during the day.

This represents a dramatic increase in the number of programming hours devoted to local news since the 1970s. In the past, each station offered three one-half hour newscasts at noon, 6:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m., for a total of one and one-half hours (compared to the current three and one-half hours on Channel 4, three hours on Channel 7 and two and one-half hours on

Channel 5). As a result, the percentage of total station revenues provided by news programming has jumped by an average of nearly 200%.

All three stations employ a similar format for nearly all of their newscasts. The newscast is co-hosted by two news anchors (typically one man and one woman), who are joined at the news desk by a sports anchor, and a meteorologist who reports the weather forecast. These people are typically referred to as on-air talent. They are occasionally joined at the desk by the entertainment reporter or a reporter who is reporting a "special feature."34 The rest of the news is reported live or through taped reports by investigative or "beat" reporters.35

The on-air talent have been relatively stable during the past ten years, with most of the turnover occurring among the morning and noontime newscasts. The higher profile evening talent has been especially stable: five of the six current news anchor have been in their positions for roughly ten years. All three sports anchors have held that position for over five years.

The competitive situation has fluctuated somewhat over the past ten years, with each station enjoying a leadership position in the various time slots at some point. However, the situation has been very stable over the past two or three years. In the time slots where the news programs compete directly, Channel 5 enjoys the highest rated program in the most lucrative 6:00 p.m. time slot (followed by Channel 4). Channel 4 has the highest rated news program at 11:00 p.m., and Channel 7 has the highest rated programs at 6:30 a.m. and noon. (For a discussion of television ratings and how they relate to advertising revenues, see Appendix D)

In general, it is difficult to measure the relative position based on the ratings of newscasts

34 A special feature is not truly a news story, but rather an informative story about a relevant person or issue.

35 A beat reporter is permanently assigned to cover a specific person, group or event (e. g. Mayor Ray Flynn, the state House of Representatives, the Boston Red Sox).
alone. For example, Channel 7, which begins its evening news programming the earliest, ranks last in the ratings for its evening news broadcasts. However, it ranks first from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., when it broadcasts game show programming against the end of the other two stations' local and national news programming.

The ownership of two of the three stations has also been quite stable. Channel 4 was built and is still owned by Group W broadcasting, a subsidiary of Westinghouse. Channel 5 has been owned by Capital City Communication since 1973. Channel 7 has been owned by Kraft Communication since 1989.

The three stations enjoy distinctly different images. Channel 7 has the reputation of focusing on local news, at the expense of national and international news coverage. Channel 4 has the reputation of prioritizing local news over national and international news only when it has greater impact on the viewers. Channel 5 has the reputation of being community oriented; it generally devotes the most time to editorial segments.

In addition, Channel 4 has the reputation as being the most innovative, whereas the other stations tend to wait and only follow if the innovation is successful. A recent example of this was Channel 4's introduction of its 24 Hour News Source campaign in September 1990. As part of this campaign, Channel 4 began broadcasting hourly news updates, and flashing a 24 Hour News Source billboard (showing the current time and weather) on the screen every half-hour. The image gained wide acceptance in late 1990 and early 1991, due in part to the crises and events leading up to the war in the Persian Gulf. Channel 4 is currently able to generate excess revenues from sponsorship of the news updates and billboard. The campaign has since been copied by Channel 5. However, in anticipation of the move, Channel 4 had already prepared an advertising campaign, which emphasized that Channel 4 was the first 24 hour
news source, keeping its 24 hour news image largely intact. Oddly enough, the creation and preservation of that image has not been translated into improved ratings for Channel 4's news programs.

All three stations own modern broadcasting facilities, and employ a full staff of operations, production, marketing, creative and support personnel. However, the stations' most valuable assets are their on-air talent. The most prominent on-air talent is represented by the news anchorpersons, sports anchor and weather reporter for the evening (5:00 - 7:00 p.m.) and late night (11:00 p.m.) newscasts. The people who currently occupy these positions on the three affiliate stations are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Anchors</th>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>Weather</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4  Liz Walker, Jack Williams</td>
<td>Bob Lobel</td>
<td>Nancy Russo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Chet Curtis, Natalie Jacobson</td>
<td>Mike Lynch</td>
<td>Dick Albert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Margie Reedy, R. D. Saul</td>
<td>John Dennis</td>
<td>Harvey Leonard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: DESCRIPTION OF FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

As part of our qualitative research, we conducted a focus group of six news viewers between the ages of 26 and 30. Our objective was twofold:

1. To determine attributes that affect the viewer’s perception of quality in a television news broadcast across the full scope of segment types,
2. To evaluate the tradeoffs that viewers make between their attitudes towards viewing television news and how they actually behave while viewing.

Methodology

Before the focus group session began, participants were asked a few general questions about local television news to characterize how often they watch and when, what aspects lead them to choose one broadcast over another, what drives their news viewing behavior, and whether they view local television news primarily for information or entertainment. Their responses are summarized in the participant profiles.

During the session, which lasted about 90 minutes, participants viewed videotaped segments of local news broadcasts from April 1991. They were asked to describe their reaction to the segment. We grouped reactions into information regarding both viewer behavior and television news attitude. The behavioral information included

- whether or not the viewer paid attention to the segment (some viewers left the room or read a magazine during particular segments),
- whether the viewer would switch to another news broadcast (if that option were available)
- (if the viewer paid attention) how much of the segment would he or she watch, i.e. at what point would the viewer stop watching (“tuning out” mentally or
physically).

The attribute information included

- what were the viewers' general feelings about the segment were, what they did
  and did not like, what attributes of the segment made an impression on them,
  etc.
- what specific attributes of television news (positive or negative) were embodied
  in the segment,
- how the segment confirmed or contradicted their general attitudes about
  television news.

The setting for the focus group was a spacious living room. Pizza and beverages were made
available to the participants, who were encouraged to behave as if they were watching
Television in their own homes. The participants were free to move around, converse with each
other, or read a magazine as long as their behavior was consistent with how they would
normally watch television. Two of the participants were the parents of a two-year old child. We
specifically requested that they bring the child to the focus group (along with toys and books to
entertain him) in order to observe their true television viewing behavior.

The Participants

A: Twenty-six year old male professional (single). Moderate to high news consumption,
driven primarily by format (prefers the half-hour broadcast at night). Generally watches
because he happens to be at home when the broadcast is shown. Primary reason for
watching is information. Conservative political and social views. Two years living in
Greater Boston.

B: Twenty-nine year old male professional (single). Low news consumption, driven by
content (will watch news to "see" the story). Generally watches in the evening (6:00 p.m.) because he happens to be home and "in the mood to watch TV". Primary reason for watching is information. Moderate to conservative political and social views. Two years living in Greater Boston.

C: Twenty-nine year old male professional (single). Moderate news consumption. Likes to watch because he enjoys the local newscasters. Watches either the evening or night time broadcasts because he happens to be at home. Primary reason for watching is information. Moderate political and social views. Seven years living in Greater Boston.

D: Twenty-seven year old female professional (single). Low news consumption. Hit or miss approach to news viewing. Watches television news because she happens to be at home; will continue to watch only if it is interesting (i.e., because of the content). Initially gave information as the primary reason for watching; she changed to entertainment after the session. Conservative political and social views. Two years living in Greater Boston.

E: Thirty year old male academic (married to F). One child. Moderate to high news consumption. Watches the late night news if he happens to be at home. Likes to get all the news (including weather, sports, special features) in short (half-hour) format. Primary reason for watching is information. Moderate to conservative political and social views. Two years living in Greater Boston.

F: Twenty-seven year old female homemaker (married to E). One child. High news consumption. Makes time to watch the news at least once a day, usually at night (11:00 p.m.). Consumption driven by format, again, comprehensive coverage in a short period of time. Primary reason for watching is information. Moderate to liberal political and social views. Two years living in Greater Boston.

C & B also live in the same household. This allowed us to see influence of those with whom you might be watching.
The Segments Shown to Participants

The following segments were shown (in this sequence) during the focus group. The segment was shown to the group until all participants indicated that they would no longer be paying attention to the segment.

From the April 9, 1991 broadcast of the WCVB-TV 5 Nightcast, 11:00 -11:30 p.m. (Chet Curtis and Natalie Jacobson, news anchors; Mike Lynch, sports anchor; Dick Albert, weather reporter):

5A. Lead story about an alleged rape that occurred at the Kennedy family compound in Florida.

5B. Local communities suffering from the recession consider instituting their own daily lotteries.

5C. Restrictive Massachusetts parental consent laws forces teenagers seeking abortions to travel to New Hampshire.

5D. "Teletrend" data regarding states with parental consent laws presented in graphic format.

5E. Small plane crash off coast of Massachusetts.

5F. Death of a Mass state prison inmate allegedly due to mistreatment.

5G. Shuttle pictures of the earth lead-in to weather segment.

5H. Sports segment including coverage of local ice hockey and baseball teams.

From the April 11, 1991 broadcast of the WBZ-TV 4 Evening News, 6:00-7:00 p.m. (Liz Walker and Jack Williams, news anchors; Bob Lobel, sports anchor; Nancy Russo, weather reporter):

4A. Mideast peace initiative.

4B. Speculated shutdown of Fort Devens and impact on local economy.

4C. Space shuttle mission.

4D. Controversial biography of Nancy Reagan published.
4E. Friendly banter between on-air personalities.
4F. Traffic report.
4G. Lead-in to sports, with humorous exchange between anchors.
4H. Sports segment, including pre-game coverage of ice hockey playoffs.
4I. Controversial research indicates oat bran has minimal impact on health.

From the April 8, 1991 broadcast of the WHDH-TV 7 Evening News, 5:00-6:00 p.m. (Edie Tarbox and R. D. Saul, news anchors; John Dennis, sports anchor; Harvey Leonard, weather reporter):

7A. Governor Weld gets approval of pay cuts for high paid state employees.
7B. Massachusetts unemployment benefits may be reduced.
7C. Secretary of State Baker visits Persian Gulf; update on Kurdish refugee situation.
7D. Research study indicates negative effects of cholesterol on children.
7E. Lengthy chat between anchorpersons about the children of one of them.
7F. Privatization of state "lemon law" agency.
7G. Michael Landon inoperable liver cancer.

The reactions of the focus group participants were quite varied depending on the segment. There were a several instances of group consensus. For example, all of the participants were very interested in hearing about the plane crash (although most "tuned out" after determining it did not involve anyone famous or anyone they know). Also, everyone agreed that they did not want to see national or international news coverage during a local news broadcast; they watched the national news or read the newspaper to learn about national or international events.
Behavior

The major aspects of news viewing behavior mentioned by the participant were:

1. Participants are in the habit of turning on news at certain times during the day (on returning from work or ending their day) and they don't think about television news at other times.

2. Tendency to listen to/watch news while doing something else (e.g., fixing or eating dinner, preparing for bed, reading newspaper or magazine). People pay more attention to the broadcast when they hear something interesting.

3. Everyone agreed that there was little to keep them from switching channels, although some viewers would take longer to make the flipping decision than would others.

4. Tendency for less regular news viewers to wander around different news broadcasts at beginning of broadcast looking for something interesting more than regular news viewers who have a favorite station.

5. People like to listen to major headlines at beginning of broadcast and get an overall feeling of their level of intellectual attention and commitment to the upcoming broadcast. Also, viewers try to catch the previews before the commercial which describe what stories are upcoming in the broadcast. Again, this helps the viewer decide on the level of mental commitment to getting back to that station after the commercial break.

6. For stories that run more than one day, people get a little bored or irritated when the story is repeated and there is not much new information (e.g., the Kennedy story).

7. People with whom you are viewing affect behavior. If you are watching with someone you know will be interested in or upset by a story, you may resist flipping channels habits in order to give that person a chance to see something
or to excite debate: "if I was here I'd watch it" (i.e. if someone else had the remote) or "I want to watch this just to see [my roommate] get angry."

8. People watch if there is some emotion excited (e.g. the plane crash story excited alarm, the lottery story incited anger in a vehemently anti-lottery viewer).

9. People will listen to stories on the sensational side (Kennedy story, teen abortions/parental consent laws, Kitty Kelly Nancy Reagan biography).

10. People pay much more attention to those stories which can affect them or their families (B is the son of an commercial airline pilot; the words "Plane Crash" in the graphic immediately grabbed his attention; the two parents in the group expressed the most interest in the story about children and cholesterol).

In addition, we made some general observations about behavior:

1. The visual content of the news is important. Some people described how, during certain stories, they would watch the pictures without listening to the talk.

2. People pay little or no attention to national or international events reported on the local news broadcast.

3. Wide range of different attitudes about the weather report, but most people do not change channels. Some people just wait for the forecasts at the end; they don't change channels because they don't want to miss it. Others are very interested in weather outside of the immediate area or in watching the weather maps.

4. Most viewers will watch at least the beginning of the sports report to learn how the local teams fared or to hear about the performances of nationwide superstars. After this, however, there is a definite drop in interest among viewers who are not big sports fans. Big sports fans know exactly when to "zip
over' to another channel in order to catch the sports report.

5. Televised traffic reporting is generally regarded as useless; few people would pay any attention to this at all.

6. There are what we call "cross-personality effects"; for example, E (a big sports fan) has never seen Bob Lobel's sportscast because he does not like Liz and will not watch Channel 4.

Quality Attributes

Based on the focus group discussion during the different segments, we have determined the most important customer attributes for local news viewing:

Personality Attributes

Physical Attractiveness of News Anchors and Reporters

Focus Group Comments/Reactions

C likes Natalie: "because she is a babe."

B on Jack: "Jack looks too painted." Also: "He hasn't changed in 15 years: he's fake."

E a fan of Edie [Tarbox] "because she looks pretty good."

Personal Appeal of News Anchors and Reporters

Focus Group Comments/Reactions

B on Joe Day (Channel 7 reporter): "a drip"

F on Joe Day: "bleah"

D: "Those [Channel 7] reporters turn me off"

F on John Dennis: "He looks nice."

E: "I like John Dennis--he's kind of sarcastic."

E on Natalie: "She's got a nasally voice."

C on Margie: "I think she's ok" but "Edie's [Tarbox] much better looking"

C: "John Dennis isn't bad."

-64-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abrasive</td>
<td>E on Liz: “She’s arrogant.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B on Liz: “She gets on my nerves.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>A on R.D. and Margie: “dull beyond belief”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C on R.D.: “R.D. Saul is a ding dong”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly/Empathetic</td>
<td>C on Jack: “He’s a good guy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous/Entertaining</td>
<td>General comments on Dick Albert (Channel 5 weatherperson): “love his expressions”  “Find him entertaining”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Journalist</td>
<td>B on Chet and Natalie: “They seem a little more straightforward.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B on John Dennis: “He’s okay, a little bit more factual, not a comedian.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious/Straightforward/No-Nonsense</td>
<td>A: “I like Natalie because she gave John Silber hell.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced/Longevity/Familiarity</td>
<td>C likes Liz and Jack “because I’ve been watching them a long time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness/Appeal of Interviewees</td>
<td>B on an interviewee: “She’s pretty grim, so I’m probably out pretty soon” (he had been interested in story up to this point).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comfortable/Relaxed

Content Attributes

Relevance

Importance of weather report to everyone.

The parents in the group were the most interested in the report on children and cholesterol.

One viewer expressed great interest in the oat bran story; after the focus group we learned he had been suffering from constipation.

B, a New Hampshire native, said he was interested in the teen abortion/parental consent laws story because it refers to New Hampshire.

Timeliness

Viewers did not want to see the same story day after day. This came up during the Kennedy story, which they felt was given too much time.

Local emphasis

Participants had little interest in local news coverage of inter/national events.

Credibility

Participants were suspicious of some data sources.

A: "It may be right but it's a biased source"; suspicious of the information provided by the National Abortion Rights Action League on parental consent laws.

Everyone got a big laugh when hearing that Proctor & Gamble had sponsored the research which determined that paper diapers are better for the baby than cloth (the anchor person also appeared to find this humorous).
| Depth/Completeness | D "likes it when they do those in-depth feature things."  
|                    | B appreciates extra facts/background information (e.g. the TeleTrends describing the number of states with parental consent laws).  
|                    | C liked in-depth weather coverage: "The weather channel was invented for me!"  
| Conciseness | About halfway through the (long) oat bran story, B was "still in but getting bored really fast--I want them to tell me what they're going to tell me." E was no longer paying attention: "This definitely goes on too long."  
| Incites Emotion or covers social/political ground about which viewer feels strongly | Every participant was bored with the local lottery story, except for C, who is vehemently anti-lottery: "This whole thing is the embodiment of evil right here in our commonwealth" and "I would watch it because it makes me so angry--I want to see what buttholes the people in our government are."  
|                    | E: "I'm definitely in [watching a story about the potential closure of Fort Devens]; I want to hear Ted Kennedy whine."  
| Sensationalism | D on the Kitty Kelly/Nancy Reagan story: "If they start to gossip [I'd be watching]...but if they're just talking about the book...." followed by (when they started to gossip) "SMUT, absolute smut!" When asked "But aren't you going to watch it?", D replied "Yes".  
|                    | B: "Was he sodomized or something?" about the prison death story.  
|                    | B: "Oh, teen abortions--[C]'s awake" when parental consent law story introduced.  

-67-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entertainment Value</th>
<th>Several participants wanted to watch the sports highlights, even though they were a couple of weeks old. When asked why, the participants said that they found the replays entertaining.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>B: &quot;On the weather report: &quot;I'd be watching all this stuff. I look at the weather maps and make my own predictions then see if I'm right.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format Attributes</td>
<td><strong>Focus Group Comments/Reactions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcast time</td>
<td>None of the participants would make an effort to watch a news broadcast that meets their information needs or style preferences more closely than an option that is available at their preferred viewing time. They watch at the same time every day, e.g. when they get home from work, are getting ready for bed, or just killing time between work and evening activities. &quot;I'd never make an effort to get there [for the show that is more appealing to me]... &quot;I wouldn't go out of my way to watch the serious one&quot;... &quot;I'd watch whichever one I'm home for&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency in format from day to day</td>
<td>D: &quot;It's a matter of when you get home, you turn on the TV. If I got home at 7:30 I might watch it [WBZ's 7:30 Report].&quot; Compare this to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E: &quot;If it's 7:30, I'm just waiting till 11.&quot; (E's schedule and news viewing habits are much more regular than D's.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A knows to &quot;zip over&quot; to sports at quarter after the hour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E: &quot;The news is over for me after the sports&quot;; he is confident that everything of interest has been covered up to and through the sports report.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
F: "I like to hear what's coming up next; then I know if I'll turn it (change the channel)." General consensus about this.

Potentially misleading graphics affect credibility of content: Channel 5 flashed a graphic during this story that said "99% Sure" with a picture of the alleged rapist in the Kennedy story while the anchor reported that the Palm Beach police were 99% sure that a sexual assault took place. The participants noted that it would be very easy to believe, if you were not paying close attention, that someone was 99% sure that the accused rapist was guilty.

Channel 5 also flashed a graphic that said "First Report". There was confusion as to whether this meant that the story was Channel 5's lead story for the day or if they had some kind of exclusive or late-breaking information.

Mixed reaction on the Teletrends presentation. A said, "I feel like I'm watching USA Today" while E liked the colored graphics.

While the "Plane Crash" graphic "captures your attention" (B), one of the graphics shown as a lead-in to the sports was barely noticed and totally ignored.

Many of the interviews we saw were deemed "useless" by the group. This occurred in the parental consent, local lotteries, Kitty Kelly, and Kurdish refugee stories.
APPENDIX C: DESCRIPTION OF SURVEY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

As part of our qualitative research, we surveyed television viewers to gain a general understanding of viewer behavior with respect to television news. We asked 84 people the following questions:

1. Is television news your main source of news?
2. How many days per week do you watch local television news?
3. Do you watch the news primarily for information or entertainment?
4. How do you characterize your television news viewing habits?

Descriptive Results

Stressing the qualitative nature of this survey, we report that, among the people surveyed, we found the following:

25% responded that television was their main source of news

25% watched the local television news less than 1 day per week.

39% watched the local television news 1-3 days per week.

21% watched the local television news 3-5 day per week.

14% watched the local television news just about every day.

79% watched the news primarily for information.

21% watched the news primarily for entertainment.

64% watched the news because they happened to be home during the broadcast.
29% watched the news because they happened to be watching television and nothing preferable was being broadcast on another channel.

25% tried to watch the news because they had not had a chance to read the paper.

7% made an effort to watch the news at least once during the day.

Of those surveyed, 61% were men and 39% were women; the average age of the sample was 29 for men, 26 for women and 28 overall. Interestingly, the results varied little from men to women, although 36% of the women replied that television was their main source of news, compared to 18% of the men.
APPENDIX D: TELEVISION RATINGS SYSTEMS

Ratings agencies monitor television viewing patterns and sell this information to television stations, advertising agencies, and media planning firms. The largest rating agencies are A.C. Nielsen and Arbitron. The agencies publish daily, weekly and monthly reports with viewer demographics by station in fifteen minute intervals throughout the day. The viewers being monitored must be tuned in to a particular station for seven and a half consecutive minutes in order for that station to receive credit for being viewed during that quarter hour. This minimum time requirement has become particularly important with the advent of the remote control, since many viewers use the remote to switch to another station during commercial breaks.

Advertising agencies and media planning firms contract with television stations for exposure for each ad. For example, advertising agencies or media planning firms and the television station will agree on a "media goal" and determine a price for this goal. The media goal specifies demonstration points, percentage of time, net reach, and frequency of airing. The television station then places the ad in its rotation in a manner to meet the contract. If the ratings come in and show that the exposure was not met, the station has to provide "make good" time to that advertiser. Sometimes an advertiser will request that its advertisement air during a specific show (the most obvious example of this, of course, is the advertisements that run during the Super Bowl). These contracts are negotiated separately.

Exposure is measured in two ways. A ratings point represents a given number of households (about 21,000 households in the Boston television market). A share point is a percentage of the sets in use in the area at a given time. Advertisers usually base their contracts based on ratings points.
In the past, television audiences were measured through the use of diaries maintained by a sample of households which were corroborated with data from electronic meters on televisions. This led to problems with compliance and accuracy. In 1987, Nielsen supplemented this methodology with push-button "peoplemeters"; household members push a button on a box that resembles a remote control device to indicate their arrival or departure from the room where the television is on, and a meter on the television tracks the station being watched. In 1990, there were 4,000 peoplemeters in American households and 100,000 meter/diary households. In addition, Nielsen mails 200,000 diaries to homes during "sweeps" ratings periods.\(^{36}\) Data from these households is extrapolated and the industry generally accepts that this is a representative sample of the American public.

There is controversy in the industry about the accuracy of the peoplemeter measurements. When the peoplemeters were instituted, the viewership numbers dropped dramatically. These declines were as high as 22 percent for certain parts of the day and population segment, and affected broadcast networks, independent stations, and cable. The networks had to supply an estimated $100 million in free advertisements during the first three months of 1990 (when the use of peoplemeters became more widespread) because rating guarantees were not met based on the new measurements. Network management claims that, since peoplemeters are installed for two year periods, people get tired of using them after a while and viewership numbers show an inaccurate drop.

Television stations have other dissatisfactions with current ratings measurement systems. For example, they feel that group viewing (e. g. in pubs, dormitories, workplaces) is underestimated and \(^{36}\) that the households in the Nielsen sample do not reflect the "buying demographics" of the American public accurately (i. e. they feel that highly educated and wealthy people are under-

The technology for ratings measurement continues to improve. Potential future enhancements range from "passive scanning", in which a device counts people in the room by detecting motion (using sonar technology) or heat (using infrared technology), to sensors that would be carried, worn, or inserted under the skin. These sensors will "read" the wearer and identify who they are and also their physiological state, perhaps in response to stimuli created by television or advertising messages.
APPENDIX E: HOUSE OF QUALITY ANALYSIS

The House of Quality methodology allows us to look at the relationship between viewer quality attributes and the competitive dimensions of the identification framework and to understand how changes along the competitive dimensions might affect the viewers' perception of quality. The identification framework dimensions—Personality, Content, and Format—are the main Engineering or Production Characteristics that news managers adapt in order to better meet viewer quality attributes. Within each dimension, there are operational parameters (e.g. the selection of on-air talent and the development of franchises showcasing on-air talent are parameters within the Personality dimension).

The House of Quality diagram (exhibit E-1 on the following page) makes these relationships explicit. We have indicated where operational parameters within each dimension will have a strong positive, weak positive, strong negative, or weak negative effect on each viewer attribute. We assigned each of the operational parameters to a primary dimension, but in fact, there are interactions between the dimensions and parameters that the news manager needs to keep in mind. The correlation matrix or roof of the house shows these interactions. For example, the development of franchises may have as its primary purpose the showcasing of an individual talent, but will inevitably affect the Content parameters of "amount of local coverage" or "number of soft news features".

Based on our interviews with local news managers, we have assigned a relative importance to each of the viewer attributes. However, further research should focus on refining these estimates (with more focus groups and surveying). Investigating the relative importance of each customer attribute would help managers understand where their operational decisions would have the most impact.
### Exhibit E-1:

**House Of Quality for Television News Production**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumer Attributes</th>
<th>PERSONALITY</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appearance of On-Air Talent</td>
<td>Demandez/Style of On-Air Talent</td>
<td>Franchises Featur...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Attractiveness</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Abrasive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly/Empathetic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appealing Presentation Style</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous/Entertaining Manner</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Journalism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious/No Nonsense Approach</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced Reporters/ Anchors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable/Relaxed Demeanor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appealing Interviewers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant News</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timely News</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Emphasis of News</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility of Information</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth/Completeness of Information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conciseness of Reporting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Hold</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensationalism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment Value</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient Broadcast Time</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent Format/Sequence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know What’s Coming Up</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic Presentation of Info</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Of Live Interviews/Reporting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>