

Case Study: Reconstructing BBC News 24

In December 2002, the government ordered the BBC to overhaul its 24-hour news channel, BBC News 24. The reasoning behind this was that the style and format of the programmes were too similar to those of the BBC's commercial competitors. The BBC is a publicly funded company, dependent upon licence fees paid by television audiences, and its top executives claim that its coverage of news is more trustworthy than that given by private companies. There is great concern with presenting an image of quality, accuracy and authority, therefore, and the BBC is keen to distinguish itself from its rivals. Tessa Jowell, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, ordered an independent review of the situation that was headed by Richard Lambert; it was emphasised that as a public service, the BBC should have a distinct identity from commercial channels in order to sustain its reputation as a principal source of news and information. BBC News 24 provides a continuous, 'rolling' news service, in which the headlines are complemented by sports news, weather reports and 'infotainment' at regular intervals. However, with the growth of satellite, cable and digital television, there is an increasing number of channels for audiences to choose between, including many that provide global coverage of world events. Nevertheless, the BBC claims that it welcomes the challenge to improve its service.

http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Press_notices/archive_2002/dcms47_2002.htm

http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Press_notices/archive_2002/dcms219_2002.htm

<http://www.allbusiness.com/technology/telecommunications-conferencing/362770-1.html>

<http://www.tvhome.co.uk/bbcnews24/about.phtml>

http://www.bbccharterreview.org.uk/pdf_documents/independentreviewnews24.pdf

Questions:

1. Who do you think has the most power in determining the content of BBC news?
2. What kind of image do the owners and controllers of the BBC hold of the news channel's audience?
3. To what extent do commercial pressures shape the content of BBC News 24?
4. How has the competition between public and private television companies been affected by globalization?
5. Why is it important for the BBC to retain a distinct public image?

