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**A DECOMPOSITION OF TELEVISUAL AUDIENCE SIZE ACCORDING TO PROGRAM'S
CHARACTERISTICS. AN ECONOMETRIC APPROACH ON FRENCH DATA.**

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ABSTRACT

The television program is a public good (Samuelson 1964) with an atypical financing given through advertisers. Channels “sell” programs to viewers against consumption of advertising spot. The TV functioning is based on this relationships. Without an official price system the audience size is the only way for the consumer to express his choice, but didn't give any indication about the satisfaction's level of the viewer. In other words, for a given program, the audience reveals preferences between programs but not the satisfaction.

Television is also an experimental good. The TV program quality can only be determined after consumption. Even if the TV program quality is known *ex post*, it isn't universal: programs are heterogeneous and single goods. This increases the problem of consumer's choice.

This being said, how can we study the demand for television programs in a situation of uncertainty about program quality with a lack of price and heterogeneous products?

Based on Lancaster's theory, the aim of this article is to estimate the characteristics for the demand which allows viewers to obtain information about quality and thus make their choices. The approach by the characteristics of the good presented by Lancaster permits to be aware of viewers preferences for heterogeneous goods offering commons attributes. The definition of concrete and measurable characteristics of TV programs helps to overcome the extreme subjectivity of a viewer concerned with this consumption.

Most of the studies explain the viewer's choice in considering only the type of program as a characteristic of the product. If the gender constitutes a necessary and useful classification to reduce program's heterogeneity, it isn't enough to analyse the demand. Other characteristics must be taken

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into account. Related to the heterogeneity of program types, we propose to group programs in two categories : the set program and the fiction program. This decomposition of programs permits to reduce the gender subjectivity and to make appear a common characteristic : the notoriety. The audience decomposition into different objective and measurable characteristics permit us to define preference relationships for some program characteristics.

We restrict our analyse to TV programs broadcast from September 1st, 2003 to November 9th, 2003 on the four main French channels. We hold back three schedules : “access prime time” from 19h to 20h, “prime time” from 20h30 to 22h30 and “night time” after 22h30. It constitutes a sample of 756 programs. For each program, we consider the following variables: Audience, Channel of broadcast, Type of program, Flow or stock program, (Flow programs join up to set emission ; Stock programs are linked to fiction emission), Origin of program, Recurrence of program, Presence of a celebrity.

We used one of the best known method in term of data analysis: the factor analysis which permits to study correlation between different characteristics of programs and to determine what are the characteristics associated to higher audience. In order to characterise the audience intensity by the specific attributes of programs themselves, we use also a linear regression allowing to bring out the relative implicit price related to program’s characteristics.

Results lead us to retain flow and european program, sport, entertainment, celebrity and programs broadcast between 19h and 22h30 on the main channels (except M6) as pertinent characteristic for the demand and influencing positively audience. This paper validates the idea whereby the presence of celebrity influences audience.

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