

Background

Television on demand: a public service for the digital society ZDF creating more choice for TV viewers

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Digitalisation will change our viewing habits. In a few years, video on demand will be an integral part of the way television is used, just like teletext is today.

Alongside the existing uses of the medium based on watching particular programmes at scheduled times, viewers will learn to regard television offerings as something that is no longer limited by time and space, but as a service they can tailor to their own rhythms, whether at home or on the move, at fixed times or quite spontaneously.

By developing its Mediathek online video player, ZDF has laid the foundations for giving viewers this freedom. If they miss a programme or a particular item, or want to watch an evening's scheduled output again, if they'd prefer to watch something at another time at home or on the move, on a television screen or a mobile device, they will soon be able to do so.

For a whole week after the live broadcast, ZDF offers video-on-demand access to almost its entire information programming and selected films, series episodes and educational offerings.

Yet this does not mean – and we at ZDF are convinced of this – that "real-time television" will cease to play its central role. Even though the distinctions between data networks and TV networks are blurring, with their convergence allowing viewers an almost free choice of uses, the linear delivery of programmes as a channel offering reliable, up-to-date information, fascinating knowledge, exciting drama and well-made entertainment will still shape our everyday experience of television in the near future.

Television on demand gives viewers added value at no added expense. We provide this public service for the digital media society as part of our existing broadcasting remit – a mission to ensure broadcasting services for all, without technical obstacles, without tollgates and on every distribution channel which viewers may individually choose for their television reception.

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