

## **SATELLITE & CABLE BROADCASTERS' GROUP**

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### **Introduction to the Satellite and Cable Broadcasting Sector**

Satellite and cable broadcasting is one of the fastest growing sectors in the communications industries. From modest beginnings in the late 1980's satellite and cable has grown into a multi-billion pound industry.

With the advent of new digital technologies satellite and cable broadcasting has come of age. Over 40% of all homes with a television subscribed to a multi-channel television service.

Satellite and cable broadcasting is able to offer viewers a wider variety and choice of channels, genres and programmes than traditional television. In all genres of programming – children and youth, art and music, news and documentaries, films and entertainment, sport and education – there has been an explosion of choice.

This has led to increased investment in the UK television industry and the emergence of new interactive services. Innovations pioneered by the satellite and cable sector range from interactive news and sports services, to home shopping and even on-screen individual health advice.

This has changed the way people watch television, bringing them freedom to view in a way which suits their own interests and lifestyle. The majority of satellite and cable channels are niche services, providing for individual tastes and interests, whether they be minority or mainstream. There is choice and diversity for everyone, young or old, regardless of their cultural or ethnic origin.

Satellite and cable broadcasters operate in an extremely competitive and volatile environment. Unlike the analogue terrestrial public service networks, they do not have privileged access to scarce Government-controlled spectrum or must-carry status which delivers universal coverage, so they are unable to attract the massive advertising revenues that such spectrum generates. Nor do they benefit from any from universally levied public funding, as the BBC does, with its substantial licence fee. Instead they depend entirely on their own programming investments and marketing initiatives to attract and keep audiences across a range of different broadcasting platforms.

Despite these competitive disadvantages the UK satellite and cable broadcasting industry continues to grow, thanks to the investment & innovation of multi-channel broadcasters. An industry survey in 2001 found that members of the Satellite and Cable Broadcasters' Group broadcast more than 300,000 hours of programming. Over 50,000 hours were original productions, over 95,000 hours were broadcast with subtitles. The sector directly employed over [42,000] jobs in the UK alone.

For this growth to continue, the most important requirement for the satellite and cable sector is a stable and supportive regulatory environment. Low barriers to entry have allowed the sector to flourish and innovate with niche broadcasters competing head to head with global giants.

The industry has readily welcomed the deregulation principles underpinning the new communications framework to be introduced under OFCOM. It is imperative to the success of the digital future that the sector must be free to compete, innovate and flourish under this new framework.

**The Satellite and Cable Broadcasters' Group is the trade association for satellite and cable programme providers. Its members air more than 70 channels in the UK and in addition broadcast many more services from the UK to continental Europe and beyond.**

**The aims of the SCBG are:**

- **to ensure that the important and special characteristics of the satellite and cable sector are effectively communicated - especially to those with a responsibility for devising the regulatory framework in which it operates**
- **to support and enhance the central role played by satellite and cable broadcasters in bringing choice and control to UK viewers - and in delivering the Government's aim of an accessible and affordable nation-wide roll-out of digital television**
- **to communicate the huge economic, employment and social benefits that the satellite and cable sector generates for the UK.**