



An independent report on Participation TV – quizzes, adult chat and psychic readings

Viewer research summary
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Foreword

Ofcom is the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK's communications industries – television, radio, telecommunications and wireless communications services.

Ofcom's principal duty is to further the interests of citizens and consumers. It is also required to secure a number of other matters including maintaining a sufficient plurality of providers of different television services and the availability throughout the UK of a wide range of television services.

As part of its duties in relation to broadcasting, Ofcom is responsible for setting broadcast standards for the content of programmes. The relevant objectives to be secured by these standards include:

- that persons under the age of eighteen are protected;
- to prevent the inclusion of advertising which may be misleading, harmful or offensive; and
- to provide adequate protection for members of the public from the inclusion in such services of offensive and harmful material.

Ofcom is consulting on how Participation TV (PTV) should be regulated. One aspect of its consultation focuses on 'dedicated PTV', that is television programmes and channels predicated in terms of both content itself and the funding of that content on the use of premium rate services. With the exception of interactive dating channels and shopping channels, dedicated PTV is currently categorised as editorial content – as opposed to a form of advertising – and is therefore regulated under Ofcom's Broadcasting Code. It is a fundamental principle of broadcasting that editorial content and advertising must be kept separate.

The key genres of dedicated PTV examined in Ofcom's consultation paper are Quiz TV, Adult Chat TV and Psychic TV, as these raise particular questions about separation of editorial content from advertising. A key characteristic of these dedicated PTV genres is that they contain prominent, frequent, and sometimes constant, messages to viewers to call (or text) one or more premium rate numbers; the telephone number is displayed almost permanently on screen.

As part of Ofcom's consultation on PTV, Ofcom commissioned independent research agency, Essential, to conduct a piece of audience research to help understand how viewers perceive dedicated PTV and what their concerns are, if any.

Section 1

Executive Summary

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Ofcom is consulting on how Participation TV (PTV) should be regulated. PTV is defined as programmes and channels which encourage viewers to take part, to varying degrees, in return for payment. For further discussion and explanation of the regulatory issues, see <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/participationtv/>
- 1.1.2 PTV includes mainstream programming such as reality shows (e.g. *Big Brother*) magazine format (e.g. *This Morning*) and games shows (e.g. *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*) as well as a sub-category, which Ofcom refers to as 'dedicated PTV'. This sub-category consists of programmes and channels that are dedicated to a particular genre and are based mainly or wholly around viewer participation, usually by means of premium rate services (PRS). Dedicated PTV includes television quizzes, live psychic readings and live adult chat (usually, if not always, involving female presenters).
- 1.1.3 Dedicated PTV often contains frequent, and in some cases constant, messages to viewers to call or text a PRS. Also, in some cases, it is not clear how the PRS being promoted on-air is connected to audience participation in the show. For these reasons, dedicated PTV programmes sometimes appear to include characteristics of advertising. As programmes and advertising are subject to different sets of rules and must be kept separate from each other, Ofcom needs to consider the most appropriate means of regulating dedicated PTV.
- 1.1.4 As part of Ofcom's consultation on PTV, Ofcom commissioned independent research agency, Essential, to conduct some audience research to help understand how viewers perceive dedicated PTV and what their concerns are, if any.

1.2 Research objectives

- 1.2.1 Ofcom commissioned research in order to better understand the underlying motivations for watching, calling, texting, or emailing dedicated PTV programmes and channels. Ofcom also wanted to gain an understanding of how viewers perceive this content, for example as editorial content (i.e. programming), as advertising or as some other type of content. This research was conducted in January - March 2007.
- 1.2.2 Specifically, the research was designed to:
- Measure viewing and calling to different dedicated PTV genres and to profile the viewers.
 - Gauge attitudes towards different dedicated PTV genres and understand the viewing and participation habits of those who watch.
 - Understand where viewers position different dedicated PTV programmes and channels in the broader spectrum of editorial content and advertising,

and identify any differences in the way different PTV genres are perceived.

- 1.2.3 The research focuses on three key genres of dedicated PTV described in this report as Quiz TV, Psychic TV and Adult Chat TV. The definitions are listed in the appendix. (In this report Adult Chat is referred to as 'Babe' TV as this was the term used when speaking to respondents.) These genres of dedicated PTV are currently regulated under Ofcom's Broadcasting Code as editorial content, i.e. as programming. However, they usually include repeated invitations to viewers to call in and they prominently display premium rate numbers. They may also promote PRS, which go beyond enabling audiences to participate with the show itself. These genres might therefore be considered to contain advertising-type elements.
- 1.2.4 Other dedicated PTV genres of Home Shopping and Music Video Choice channels, as well as some mainstream programme genres that contain a participation element (e.g. television game shows with contestants where viewers have the chance to call in and win something), are also measured in terms of number of viewers and callers. This provided Ofcom with an overview of different PTV genres, as well as information on viewer habits and preferences as regards PTV generally. (See genre definitions in the appendix.)
- 1.2.5 This research makes the distinction between mainstream television game shows (e.g. *Who wants to be a millionaire*) and dedicated PTV Quiz shows (e.g. *Quiz call*).

Key Findings

1.3 Quantitative research

- 1.3.1 Ofcom commissioned quantitative research by means of an online survey among people aged 16-64 years in Great Britain to measure viewers of and callers to different PTV formats.
- 1.3.2 The most commonly watched dedicated PTV genres among television viewers aged 16-64 years were Music Video Choice channels and Home Shopping channels. 14 per cent of television viewers claim to watch Music Video Choice channels regularly and 13 per cent claim to watch Home Shopping channels. Only 8 per cent of television viewers watch Quiz TV regularly, 3 per cent watch Psychic TV and 1 per cent 'Babe' TV.
- 1.3.3 One third of television viewers (34 per cent) claims to have used a PRS number to participate in a television programme in the past 12 months. This equates to around 12 million people. This figure incorporates all forms of PTV surveyed, including mainstream programmes that have a participation element, as well as dedicated PTV programmes.
- 1.3.4 Of all TV viewers, 17 per cent have called a TV programme where viewers decide what happens (e.g. by voting) in the past 12 months. This equates to around 6 million people. 15 per cent have called a TV game show to try to win a prize and 11 per cent have called a home shopping channel. 7 per cent have called a dedicated PTV Quiz Show, and just under 1 per cent has called a Psychic or 'Babe' programme.

1.3.5 Regular¹ viewers of Quiz TV and Psychic TV are younger and are more likely to be from socio-economic groups D and E than television viewers in general, although viewing spans both of these. Both groups also tend to watch other PTV genres more than television viewers in general. The audience for regular Quiz TV viewers is evenly split between males and females, while 6 in 10 regular Psychic TV viewers are female. Due to the relatively low number of regular 'Babe' viewers in the quantitative sample, viewer profiles cannot be provided for this group.

1.4 Qualitative research

1.4.1 Qualitative research was conducted among respondents who said they had watched Quiz TV, Psychic TV or 'Babe' TV programmes or channels more than once in the last month. The aim was to understand reasons for watching and calling, as well as to understand how viewers perceive different dedicated PTV genres in the broader spectrum of editorial content and advertising.

1.4.2 This research showed that most respondents who considered themselves regular viewers of Quiz TV had a poor impression of the genre, despite watching, and in many cases participating, regularly.

1.4.3 The research suggested that there are two broad groups of Quiz TV viewer/caller. The majority of respondents watched and called in specifically to try to win prizes, while a minority of respondents enjoyed the "brain-teaser" nature of the on-screen puzzles. This first group appeared to derive little enjoyment from viewing the channels themselves. The language used by respondents to describe calling in order to "get through" suggested that respondents were compelled by a sense that they may get lucky and some expressed concern for other people in general that calling in could become addictive. The majority of respondents claimed to have incurred considerable phone bills through calling or sending SMS messages to Quiz TV channels. The second group of Quiz TV viewers were intrigued by the puzzles shown on screen and enjoyed attempting to solve them. They tended to see viewing as harmless fun, or as a way of enjoying personal time. They participated infrequently and rarely incurred heavy telephone bills.

1.4.4 For the majority of Quiz TV viewers interviewed, the purpose of participation with this genre was ultimately to "get through", i.e. to gain an opportunity to guess the answer to a puzzle or quiz. In the eyes of many of the callers interviewed, this was more akin to gambling than game-playing.

1.4.5 The qualitative research suggested that regular viewers of Psychic TV, particularly female viewers, felt the content could be very engaging and could play an important role in helping them consider problems and challenges in their lives. The programming was felt to be trustworthy, particularly by female respondents. However, many expressed concerns about their experiences in *telephoning* TV 'psychics'. Calling tended to be infrequent, but bursts of calling could be triggered by specific personal events or "lows". Some respondents in these circumstances claimed to have experienced very high telephone bills.

¹ Respondents were asked which of the PTV genres they watched regularly. Therefore 'regular' viewing was defined by the respondents.

- 1.4.6 Respondents who watched 'Babe' TV had pragmatic views about the programming and expressed very few concerns about content or practices. There was strong support for "soft" adult content on television. For most respondents, the channels were felt to provide a dual benefit through telephone interaction with "girls" and through engaging on-screen content. All respondents implied that the purpose of watching or calling 'Babe' channels was normally sexual gratification, although the channels were also seen as entertaining or amusing. Respondents did not raise concerns about excessive telephone bills or addictive behaviour, and appeared to feel that they were getting what they paid for.
- 1.4.7 Respondents were asked to discuss the purpose of different genres of PTV and specifically to consider whether in their view the purpose of different genres was primarily 'entertainment' or 'advertising'. Respondents were generally more inclined to treat their preferred genre as 'entertainment', while genres that they did not watch, or watched less frequently were often described as 'advertising'. However, Quiz TV was generally described by non-viewers *and* by many viewers as 'advertising'. A minority believed these channels to contain entertaining editorial content. Psychic TV was seen by non-viewers as primarily advertising. However, it was firmly believed by viewers, especially female viewers, to provide engaging programmes. Likewise, 'Babe' TV was treated as 'advertising' by non-viewers but among viewers it was felt to provide engaging programming that could be enjoyed without calling in.
- 1.4.8 The qualitative research uncovered some issues that caused concern among viewers. These issues related to Quiz TV and Psychic TV but not to 'Babe' TV. The concerns can be classified as follows:
- Potential vulnerability of some callers (especially with regard to Psychic TV): some participants hinted that their judgement may sometimes be impaired at the time of participation.
 - The size of phone bills incurred by some callers: a number of respondents claimed to have experienced very high phone bills after heavy use of PRS to call Quiz or Psychic channels or through sending premium rate SMS messages to Quiz channels.
 - Possibility of addiction: a minority of respondents expressed concerns about the possibility of becoming addicted to calling in.
 - The expectation of or allegations of "scams": many respondents expressed feelings of resignation and even acceptance of practices which were often described as "scams".
- 1.4.9 Some respondents made references to inappropriate conduct on the part of Quiz TV channels, which generally related to a perceived practice of manipulating caller queues. With regard to Psychic TV some respondents referred to a set limit of 20 minutes per call as a technique to maximise revenue from customers.
- 1.4.10 There was, however, also a general sense that these dedicated PTV genres were robustly regulated, based on respondents perception that all TV channels in general were felt to be subject to certain codes or regulations. However, most respondents expressed some concern if PTV were to be

subjected to what they described as “nanny-state” intervention. Many felt that as adults they were responsible for their own actions and that tighter regulation was unnecessary. Despite their claimed views on regulation of the industry, when respondents were informed that the research was being carried out on behalf of Ofcom, most welcomed this and it was seen as a very positive move.

Section 2

Research methodology

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 As BARB does not measure the dedicated PTV channels, Ofcom commissioned bespoke quantitative research to measure the number of viewers and callers for different PTV formats, including specific dedicated PTV genres (Quiz TV, Psychic TV and 'Babe' TV), and to profile their viewers. Ofcom also commissioned qualitative research to explore the attitudes and motivations of viewers and callers of these different dedicated PTV genres.

2.2 Quantitative Research

2.2.1 An online survey was chosen to measure the number of viewers and callers. While an online sample cannot be nationally representative, as it does not represent the non-online population, this methodology allows respondents to be honest in answering sensitive questions (e.g. watching 'Babe' TV.) A parallel telephone survey, which was designed to be representative of the general population, was also used to compare online survey results with those among the general population. The number of viewers and callers to most genres is similar across both surveys and for the purposes of this report, the online data are reported.

2.2.2 An online sample of 3041 adults aged 16-64 in Great Britain (GB) was surveyed in January-February 2007 via the Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) online omnibus *OnlineBus*. There were quotas for sex and age (interlocking), as well as quotas for region, social class, and television platform (non-interlocking). The sample was weighted by gender, age, socio-economic grouping and working status to ensure it was nationally representative. No regional weighting was applied but the regional distribution in the sample is in line with the general population. The research was designed and overseen by independent research agency, Essential.

2.2.3 All respondents were asked '*Do you watch TV at home nowadays?*'. All data in this report are based on those who watch television at home, which is 96 per cent of adults in Great Britain aged 16-64. (Base 2905.2)

2.2.4 Detailed descriptions of each PTV genre were used to minimise respondent uncertainty or misattribution of different genres. The genre descriptions are provided in the appendix.

2.3 Qualitative research

2.3.1 Ofcom commissioned independent research agency Essential to design and conduct qualitative research³. Two phases were conducted in February and

2 For a sample size of n=2905, at a confidence level of 95%, the confidence interval is between +/- 1.8% and +/- 0.3%.

3 It should be noted that the qualitative research took place during a period of intense media coverage of alleged irregularities in the use of PRS in television programmes, following revelations about phone-ins during *Richard and Judy* on Channel 4, *Saturday Kitchen* on BBC One, and a number of other shows and channels.

March 2007. Exploratory individual depth interviews were initially conducted among respondents who claimed to have watched Quiz TV, Psychic TV or 'Babe' TV programmes/channels more than once in the last month. The aim of the depth interviews was to examine the issues and to inform the design of the subsequent discussion groups.

2.3.2 The online quantitative survey results were then used to profile viewers of each genre, and this information helped to design the recruitment for the second stage of qualitative research. This stage was designed to explore the issues in depth. The sample was made up as follows:

Figure 1: Qualitative research locations and respondents (second stage)

Quiz TV viewers	Psychic TV viewers	'Babe' TV viewers
Two discussion groups	Two discussion groups	Five individual depth interviews ⁴
London: 7 males aged 20-39, socio-economic groups C1C2	London: 8 females, various ages, socio-economic groups C1C2	London: males aged 20-39, socio-economic groups C1C2D
Birmingham: 8 females, various ages, socio-economic groups C2DE	Birmingham: 7 males aged 20-39, socio-economic groups C1C2D	

⁴ Individual interviews were preferred to group discussions due to the low number of viewers and sensitive nature of discussions.

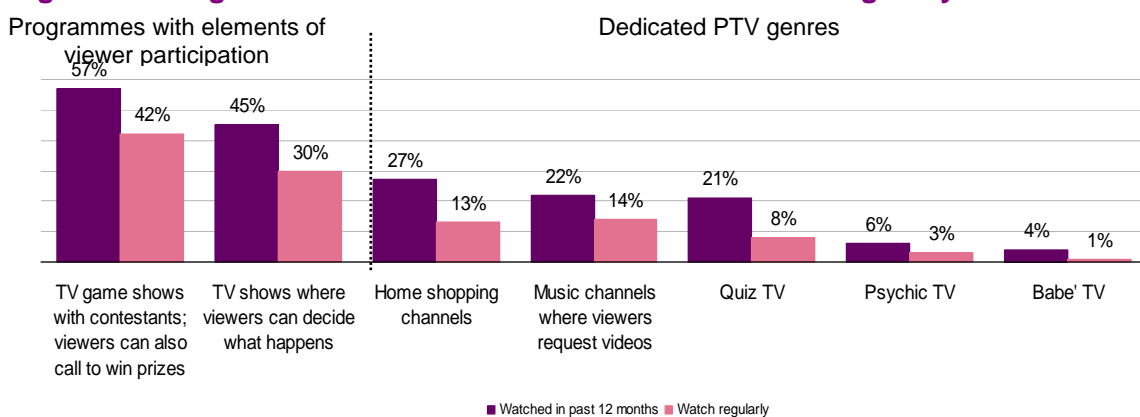
Section 3

PTV viewer and caller levels and profiles

3.1 Viewing to PTV genres

- 3.1.1 Results of the online survey showed that 57 per cent of television viewers aged 16-64 claim to have seen a television game show which features a PRS-based audience participation element in the last 12 months (e.g. *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire*). 45 per cent have seen a TV show where viewers can decide what happens in the programme (e.g. *Big Brother*, *X Factor*, *I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here*).
- 3.1.2 In terms of dedicated PTV genres, Home Shopping channels and Music Video Choice channels are the ones with the highest number of viewers. More than one quarter of television viewers say they have watched a Home Shopping channel in the past 12 months and 22 per cent have watched a Music Video Choice channel. Approximately one in five television viewers say they have watched Quiz TV in the past 12 months, whereas only 6 per cent have watched Psychic TV and 4 per cent have watched 'Babe' TV. (In this report Adult Chat is referred to as 'Babe' TV as this was the term used when speaking to respondents.)
- 3.1.3 Again, in terms of dedicated PTV genres, Music Video Choice channels and Home Shopping channels are the most commonly watched PTV genres: 14 per cent of TV viewers say they watch Music Video Choice channels regularly and 13 per cent watch Home Shopping channels regularly. Some 8 per cent of television viewers say they watch Quiz TV regularly, 3 per cent watch Psychic TV and 1 per cent 'Babe' TV.

Figure 2: PTV genres viewed in last 12 months and viewed regularly



"Which of the following have you watched on TV in the last 12 months?"

"And which, if any, do you watch regularly nowadays?"

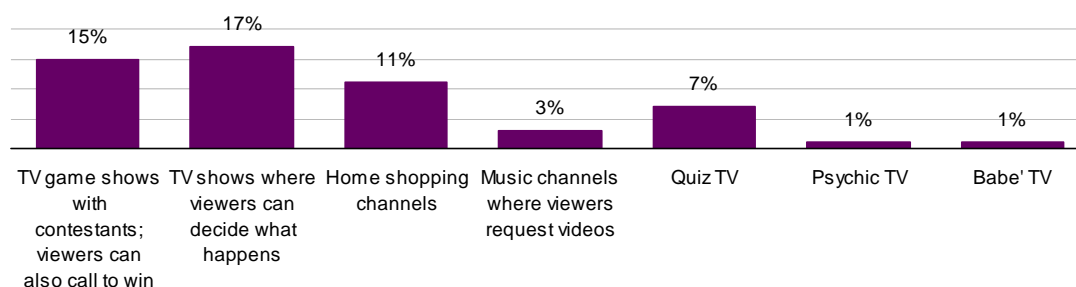
Base 2905 GB TV viewers aged 16-64

Source: Essential /TNS OnlineBus internet survey. January – February 2007.

3.2 Callers to PTV genres

- 3.2.1 One third of television viewers (34%) say they have used a premium rate phone number to participate in a television programme in the past 12 months. This equates to around 12 million people. This figure incorporates all forms of PTV surveyed, including mainstream programmes which have a participation element, as well as dedicated PTV programmes.
- 3.2.2 Of all television viewers, 17 per cent have called a TV programme where viewers decide what happens (e.g. by voting) in the past 12 months. (This equates to approximately 6 million people.) 15 per cent have called a TV game show to try to win a prize and 11 per cent have called a Home Shopping channel. 7 per cent have called a Quiz TV programme, but just under 1 per cent have called a Psychic or 'Babe' programme.

Figure 3: PTV callers by genre in the last 12 months



“Which, if any, have you phoned into using a landline or mobile phone in order to chat, vote, shop, or win a prize in the last 12 months?”

Base 2905 GB television viewers aged 16-64

Source: Essential Research/TNS OnlineBus internet survey. January – February 2007.

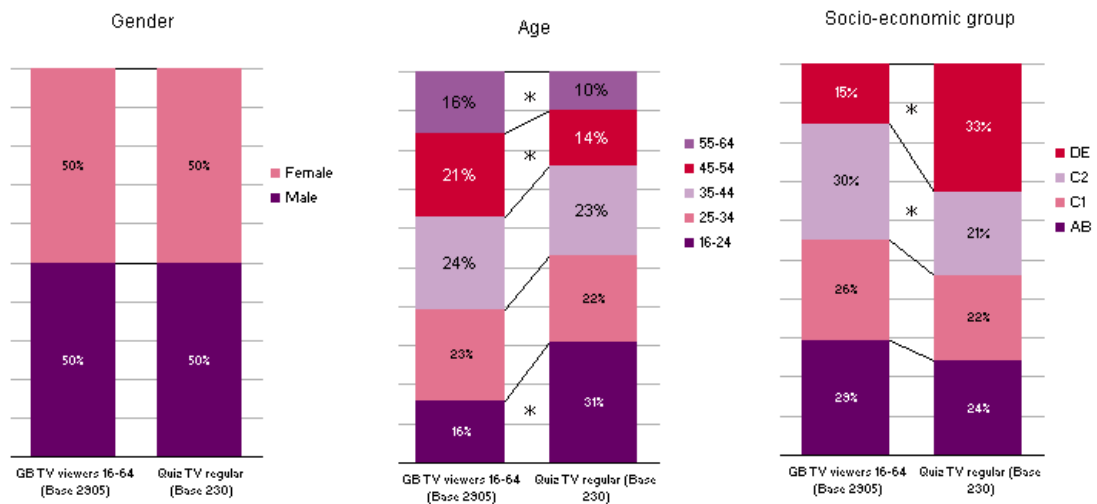
- 3.2.3 Among regular viewers of Quiz TV (8 per cent of television viewers), the proportion of viewers who have called in to a programme in the past 12 months is approximately eight in ten. Among Psychic TV regular viewers (3 per cent of television viewers) one third has called in. The small sample size for 'Babe' TV regular viewers prevents analysis of this genre⁵.

3.3 Profile of regular Quiz TV viewers

- 3.3.1 The online survey revealed that people who say they are regular viewers of Quiz TV tend to be younger and tend to be from socio-economic groups D and E, compared to television viewers in general, although viewing spans all demographic groups. The audience was evenly split between male and female viewers.

⁵ Due to the low number of regular 'Babe' viewers in the quantitative sample it was not possible to provide quantitative viewer profiles for this group.

Figure 4: Profile of regular Quiz TV viewers



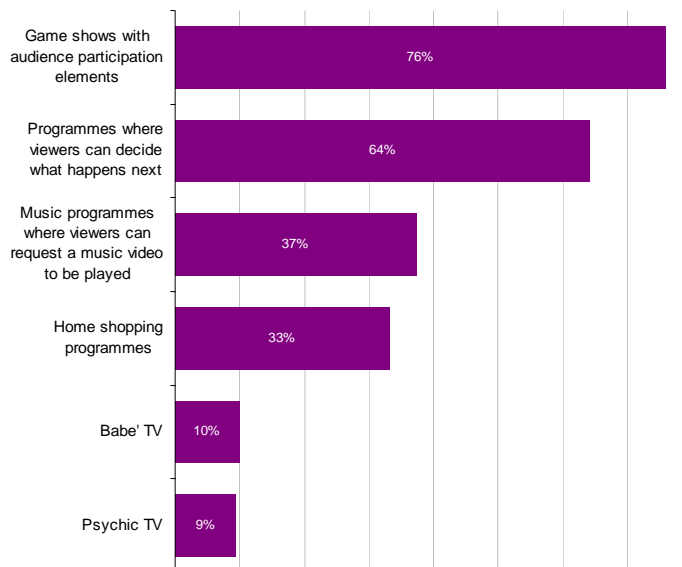
Base 2905 GB TV viewers aged 16-64.

Source: Essential Research/TNS OnlineBus internet survey. January – February 2007.

* indicates statistically significant differences (significance level of at least 95%) versus the corresponding figure.

3.3.2 There is some overlap with regular viewing of other PTV genres: Nearly 8 in 10 also claim to regularly watch game shows with elements of audience participation and more than 6 in 10 watch programmes where viewers can decide what happens in the programme. However, only 1 in 10 watches Psychic TV or 'Babe' TV.

Figure 5: Viewing of Other PTV genres by regular Quiz TV viewers



“And which, if any, do you watch regularly nowadays?”

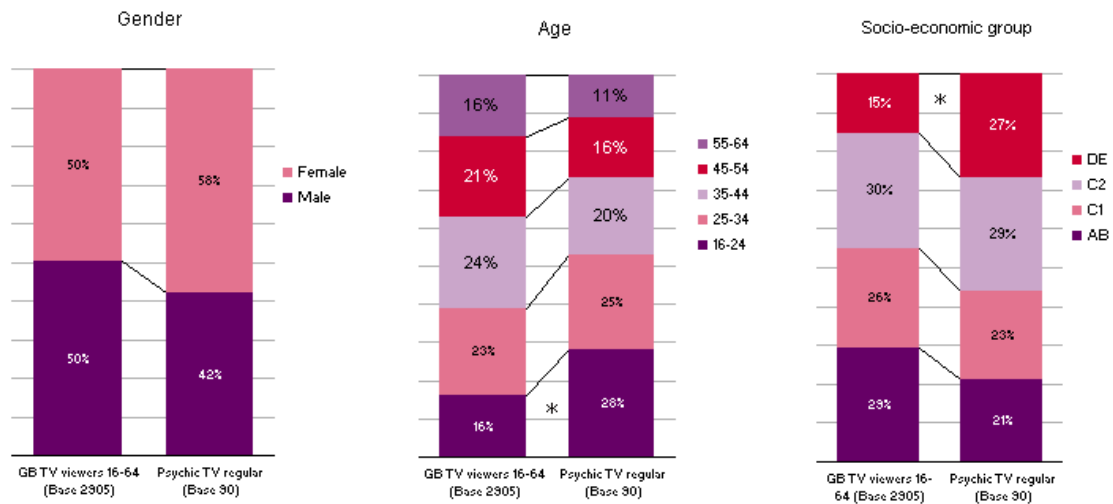
Base 230 regular Quiz TV viewers aged 16-64.

Source: Essential Research/TNS OnlineBus internet survey. January – February 2007.

3.4 Profile of regular Psychic TV viewers

3.4.1 The online survey showed that just under 6 in 10 regular viewers of Psychic TV are female. People who watch Psychic TV regularly tend to be younger and from socio-economic groups D and E, compared to television viewers in general, although viewing spans all demographic groups. More than 4 in 10 regular viewers are ABC1 and more than a quarter are aged over 45.

Figure 6: Profile of regular Psychic TV viewers



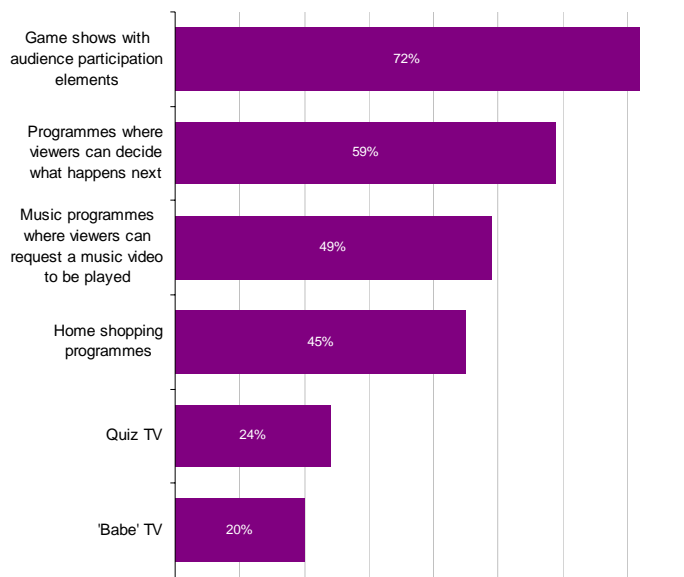
Base 2905 GB TV viewers aged 16-64.

Source: Essential Research/TNS OnlineBus internet survey. January – February 2007

* indicates statistically significant differences (significance level of at least 95%) versus the corresponding figure.

3.4.2 Regular viewers of Psychic TV also tend to view other PTV genres more than TV viewers in general. More than 7 in 10 also claim to regularly watch game shows with some audience participation and around 6 in 10 watch programmes where viewers can decide what happens. Around one quarter claims to watch Quiz TV and one fifth watches 'Babe' TV.

Figure 7: Viewing of Other PTV genres by regular Psychic TV viewers



“And which, if any, do you watch regularly nowadays?”

Base 90 Regular Psychic TV viewers aged 16-64

Source: Essential Research/TNS OnlineBus internet survey. January – February 2007.

Section 4

PTV viewer habits and attitudes

4.1 Factors common to viewers of different dedicated PTV genres

- 4.1.1 In the qualitative research, viewers of dedicated PTV genres also tended to enjoy mainstream programmes where viewer participation is an important element of the programme (such as *Big Brother*, *X Factor* or *I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here*) and generally regarded telephone interactivity as a positive addition to the television viewing experience.
- 4.1.2 Their viewing tended to take place alone, although viewing 'Babe' TV after the pub with friends was a notable exception to this, and often late at night. Many respondents claimed they had initially happened upon PTV programmes or channels simply by "channel flicking" (i.e. frequently pressing 'channel up' or 'channel down' on the remote control) late at night. Once they had discovered these programmes or channels, subsequent viewing tended not to be structured or appointment-based. "Channel flicking" continued to be the primary way of locating the channels and only a few respondents said they used the electronic programme guide (EPG) to seek specific channels.
- 4.1.3 Regular viewers of particular genres tended to initially describe those genres as harmless fun, although they did mention some concerns spontaneously. These are covered in more detail in Section 6. Respondents were immediately less positive about PTV genres that they did not watch regularly.

4.2 Attitudes of Quiz TV viewers towards Quiz TV

- 4.2.1 Many of the respondents who watched Quiz TV regularly tended to mistrust, and even appeared to dislike, Quiz TV channels, often describing them as a "rip-off" or a "con", despite watching them regularly. All of the respondents in the Quiz TV discussions had called Quiz TV channels before and this participation had shaped their attitudes. (See Section 6.)
- 4.2.2 The majority of Quiz TV respondents had a low opinion of Quiz TV presenters who were generally seen as "sales people" encouraging viewers to call in and were regarded with some disdain. Despite this, most claimed the presenters have little bearing on their decision to call in. A minority of respondents claimed to enjoy the company of the Quiz TV presenters.

4.3 Motivations for watching and calling Quiz TV

- 4.3.1 The qualitative research suggests there are two broad groups of Quiz TV viewer / caller. The majority of respondents watched and called in specifically to try to win prizes (referred to as 'Prize Seekers' in this report), while a minority of respondents enjoyed the "brain-teaser" nature of the on-screen puzzles (referred to as 'Brain teasers' in this report).
- 4.3.2 'Prize Seekers' appeared to derive little enjoyment from simple viewing of the channels. However, the language used by respondents when discussing the ritual of calling or sending SMS messages in an attempt to "get through" (i.e. to be offered the chance of guessing a correct answer) suggested that respondents were compelled to call by a sense of hope that they may get

lucky. (See Section 6.) Some expressed concern for other people in general that calling in could become addictive.

"If you had a weaker personality or an addictive personality it could really become a problem."

Female, Birmingham, Quiz Group

"You don't expect to get through, you just hope. If you don't play you don't win."

Male, London, Quiz Group

Among those interviewed, this group was more likely to be male and tended to watch the channels alone and late at night. Several respondents suggested that alcohol was often consumed prior to viewing / participating. The majority of respondents had incurred considerable phone bills through calling or sending SMS messages to Quiz TV channels. (Telephone bills are covered in more detail in Section 6.)

- 4.3.3 'Brain Teasers' was the second, smaller group of Quiz TV viewers identified in the qualitative research. This group was intrigued by the puzzles shown on screen and enjoyed attempting to solve them. They tended to see viewing as harmless fun, or as a way of relaxing or indulging in personal time. They called infrequently in order to prove to themselves or family members that they knew the answer to a particular puzzle or challenge. This group was female-dominated and tended to view during the day or late at night. They rarely incurred heavy telephone bills from calling Quiz TV channels.

"I have it on in the day and it is something to take your mind off things."

Female, Birmingham, Quiz group

"In the day I will have 10-15 minutes to myself and it keeps my mind active."

Female, Birmingham, Quiz group

4.4 Attitudes of Psychic TV viewers towards Psychic TV

- 4.4.1 Among female respondents, viewing was more likely to be alone and late at night, whereas many of the male respondents tended to watch with female partners. Respondents, particularly female viewers, felt the output could be engaging due to its focus on "real life" issues and the viewing experience was described by female viewers as "uplifting", "inspiring" or "informative".

"I'd describe them as 'insightful' channels. You get to understand people and their lives." Female, London, Psychic Group

"You feel like you have a connection with other people who feel the same."

Female, London, Psychic Group

- 4.4.2 Among those interviewed, men and women tended to have very different relationships with Psychic TV. Male viewers mostly claimed to have only a passing relationship with the genre, often because a female partner was a

regular viewer, and the majority were reluctant to admit to a real interest in the psychic world. The qualitative research suggests that men rarely ring in.

“I just think that it is hilarious when I see it...My wife takes it more seriously.”

Male, Birmingham, Psychic Group

For female respondents, Psychic TV was felt to play an important role in helping them consider their own problems and issues, although it could also simply provide vicarious entertainment. As television output, Psychic TV was felt to be trustworthy and supportive, although after questioning by the interviewers many female respondents claimed that calling such channels could be a quite different experience to simply watching. Concerns around telephone calls to Psychic TV are covered in Section 6.

“It’s fine as a form of entertainment but that all changes when you ring in.”

Female, London, Psychic Group

4.5 Motivations for calling Psychic TV

- 4.5.1 In the qualitative research respondents claimed that their calls to Psychic channels tended to be infrequent, but bursts of calling could be triggered by specific personal events or “lows”. In these circumstances, the frequency of calling could increase considerably. Respondents had been prompted to call TV ‘psychics’ by events such as family deaths, miscarriages, break-up of relationships or general depression.
- 4.5.2 The qualitative research suggested that viewers’ reasons for calling tended to be the need for support, guidance or reassurance.

4.6 Attitudes of ‘Babe’ TV viewers towards ‘Babe’ TV

- 4.6.1 Although respondents were not recruited based on gender, all six respondents for the depth interviews on ‘Babe’ TV were male. Respondents tended to watch ‘Babe’ TV alone and late at night, although a minority also watched ‘Babe’ channels for entertainment with friends after a night out. They had pragmatic views about the channels and expressed very few concerns about content or practices. Respondents recognised that viewer interaction was frequently encouraged by presenters, but the majority were happy to watch the channels as entertainment in their own right.
- 4.6.2 Respondents tended not to exhibit loyalty to particular channels, but instead “flicked” between channels looking for content that particularly appealed.
- 4.6.3 There was strong support for “soft” adult content on television from respondents. This was felt to be safely located within the ‘Adult’ category of the EPG and therefore, as they saw it, not readily accessible to children.

4.7 Motivations for calling ‘Babe’ TV

- 4.7.1 The channels were felt to provide a dual benefit through telephone interaction with “girls” and through engaging on-screen content, although some respondents expressed a preference for either calling or viewing. All respondents implied that the purpose of watching or calling ‘Babe’ channels

was normally sexual gratification, although the channels were also seen as entertaining or amusing.

- 4.7.2 Respondents did not raise concerns about excessive telephone bills or addictive behaviour, and appeared to feel that they were getting what they paid for.

Section 5

Viewer perceptions of content

5.1 Perceptions of content

5.1.1 In the qualitative research respondents were asked to place a series of cards along an axis of 'entertainment' and 'advertising or sales'. Cards showed a range of television programmes, channels or advertisements, as well as magazine and press advertising as appropriate to the particular genres in question. During this exercise, individuals' attitudes and those of the group as a whole, where appropriate, have been captured and analysed. This exercise focused respondents on the purpose of different types of channels and prompted much discussion. The outcomes were rarely black or white as this was a complex and sometimes polarising area of discussion.

5.2 Editorial or advertising?

5.2.1 During group discussions some channels, shows or genres were almost unanimously placed at one end or the other of the 'entertainment' and 'advertising or sales' axes. For example, TV Games Shows and TV shows without phone-ins were placed at the 'entertainment' end of the scale, while television advertising and product promotions on Teleshopping channels were placed at the 'advertising or sales' end. The dedicated PTV genres of Quiz TV, Psychic TV and 'Babe' TV and their associated channels were often placed at the centre of the axis by respondents for one of two reasons. In some cases, views in the group were polarised, with respondents unable to agree whether a particular genre or channel was designed to entertain or simply to make money by encouraging viewer interaction. In other cases certain channels or genres were felt to have a dual purpose of entertainment *and* revenue generation and were therefore placed in the centre of the axis.

5.2.2 Respondents tended to treat their preferred dedicated PTV genre differently to other genres that they did not watch, or watched less frequently. For example most male Quiz TV viewers classed Psychic TV and 'Babe' TV as advertising, whereas regular viewers of Psychic and 'Babe' described these genres as entertainment first and foremost.

Figure 8: Attitudes to classification - by genre

Psychic TV	Regarded with scepticism by non-viewers who see it as primarily advertising. Firmly believed by viewers (especially female respondents) to provide engaging or entertaining programmes.
'Babe' TV	Regarded as 'advertising' by non-viewers. Among viewers, encouragements to call in are acknowledged but channels are felt to provide engaging editorial content.
Quiz TV	Generally described by non-viewers and by many viewers as 'advertising'. A minority believes these channels to contain entertaining editorial content – normally those who value the 'brain teaser' aspect.

5.2.3 Respondents who watched Psychic TV, particularly female respondents, claimed it provides insight into real lives, an acceptable voyeurism or

vicarious pleasure, the opportunity to empathise with callers or to relate to their problems and the advice dispensed, and the chance to listen for problems or issues which are similar to those being experienced by the viewer.

"It's quite voyeuristic to watch. It's like the female version of porn."

Female, London, Psychic TV Group

"It's something that you can watch for entertainment because you can hear stuff that might relate to you or your friends."

Female, London, Psychic TV Group

- 5.2.4 Meanwhile, 'Babe' TV was seen by its viewers as titillating or indeed arousing, whether there was telephone participation or not, and was also felt to offer entertainment, humour or company. A minority of viewers enjoyed watching the channels with friends, particularly after a night out.

"I can watch them ('Babe' channels) and not call ... they don't entice me to call ... it doesn't appeal to me."

Male, London, 'Babe' TV depth interview

"Most of the time I watch it ('Babe' TV) more than ringing in. Just for a laugh."

Male, London, 'Babe' TV depth interview

- 5.2.5 Quiz TV was generally acknowledged by both viewers and non-viewers to be 'advertising'. Among viewers, for 'Prize Seekers', there was little entertainment value in the channels. Most enjoyment was derived from the thrill of calling, trying to win, or to "beat the odds". They saw their relationship with Quiz TV to be purely transactional. For 'Brain Teasers', the mental challenges were enjoyed, and these respondents generally claimed to feel no compulsion to call, but they admitted to feeling embarrassed about watching Quiz TV, since they believed its primary purpose was revenue generation.

"It can be entertainment but you know that they want you to text in."

Female, Birmingham, Quiz Group

- 5.2.6 Quiz channels without presenters generally polarised opinion. For some these were seen as blatant solicitations to spend money with no entertainment value, whereas others saw them as a "less pushy" alternative to presenter-led Quiz TV channels.

5.3 Advertising, editorial ... or gambling?

- 5.3.1 For the majority of Quiz TV viewers interviewed, the purpose of participation with this genre was ultimately to "get through", i.e. to gain an *opportunity* to guess the answer to a puzzle or quiz. This was seen primarily as an exercise in beating the odds, rather than one using skill or judgement to answer the questions. In the eyes of many of the callers interviewed, this was more akin to gambling than game-playing. Many of these viewers attempted to calculate

or rationalise the odds of successfully getting through, leading to behaviours such as calling at the most unsociable hours.

“It’s disguised as a quiz, but the gambling is about trying to get through.”

Female, Birmingham, Quiz Group

“You don’t expect to get through, you just hope. If you don’t play you don’t win.”

Male, London, Quiz Group

“I think in a way there is a bit of gambling addiction, like going to the casino. You have your 75 pence and then you could get two grand.”

Female, Birmingham, Quiz Group

“The gambling is about getting through... to think I have actually got through.”

Male, London, Quiz Group

- 5.3.2 With this in mind, the most frequent players suggested spontaneously that any moves to publish “odds” and waiting times on-screen would lead to increased trust and therefore more regular participation.

“At the bookies you know the odds, you know exactly what you’re getting into. If you knew your chances were 50:1 you’d ring up a lot more.”

Male, London, Quiz Group

Section 6

Viewer concerns

6.1 Areas of concern

- 6.1.1 The qualitative research uncovered some issues that caused concern among viewers. These issues related to Quiz TV and Psychic TV but not to 'Babe' TV. The concerns can be classified as follows:
- Vulnerability of some callers (especially with regard to Psychic TV).
 - The size of phone bills incurred by some callers.
 - Possibility of addiction and dependency.
 - The expectation of or allegations of "scams".
- 6.1.2 These issues were not immediately declared by viewers and were uncovered after open questioning by the interviewer. Many respondents initially denied any personal concerns, claiming that individuals must assume full responsibility for their decisions. However, later in the discussions these initial assertions often gave way to concern for vulnerable viewers or admissions of personal vulnerability, addiction or impaired judgement.

6.2 Vulnerability of some callers

- 6.2.1 Some respondents hinted that their judgement, or that of other callers, may sometimes be impaired at the time of participation. Reasons for this perceived vulnerability included insomnia and heavy alcohol consumption before or during viewing. However, when talking to Psychic TV viewers, it became clear that they were particularly concerned about the emotional vulnerability of callers to TV 'psychics'. The 'psychic' is believed to provide guidance or reassurance when callers are depressed or dealing with difficult personal events. While most regular viewers of Psychic TV could happily watch for long periods without feeling compelled to call in, the decision to call in was normally triggered by a specific incident or feeling of depression, hence callers were often in an emotionally fragile state of mind. Some respondents recognised that they have been or could be emotionally vulnerable when calling in.

"A while back I lost my mum and dad and I started to feel addicted (to Psychic channels) to try to make some sense of my loss."

Female, London, Psychic Group

"I spent a hell of a lot of money on it (Psychic Interactive). I was going through a dark patch. I get so down about... (several miscarriages and husband's disability) ... and they were telling me what I wanted to hear, so I'm not sure if it was a waste of money. They were telling me what was going to happen."

Female, Sussex, Psychic depth interview

6.2.2 Female Psychic TV viewers believed that conversations with TV ‘psychics’ should be based on trust and should provide an appropriate beginning and end to a conversation. Respondents mentioned that some Psychic TV services tended to set a limit of twenty minutes on an individual conversation with a caller. This was perceived by some respondents as a technique to maximise revenue from callers. Respondents claimed to feel betrayed when their calls to TV ‘psychics’ had been abruptly terminated after twenty minutes, leaving them feeling the need to call back and start over again. Respondents felt the use of perceived revenue maximisation techniques during such intimate conversations was wrong.

6.3 The size of telephone bills incurred by some callers

6.3.1 A number of respondents claimed that they had experienced very high telephone bills after heavy use of PRS to call Quiz or Psychic channels or through repeated sending of premium rate SMS messages to Quiz channels. Other respondents also hinted at this, but this was a topic of some embarrassment for many. Since the size of telephone bills was only discussed qualitatively, this research cannot quantify the average monthly bill incurred by callers to PTV channels, nor how many callers are experiencing serious problems. However, the following quotes are typical among those who were willing to discuss their own experiences.

“My bill was between £300 and £400 from calling Psychic Interactive. I also had a bill of £40 from calling The Mint, but that wasn’t too bad.”

Female, Sussex, Psychic depth interview

“I got a bill for £500 from phoning The Mint, just trying to win when the prize money was big. My phone’s been cut off and now I just have to text in.”

Female, London, Quiz depth interview

“My last one was £120. About £80 of this was from calling it (Quiz TV).”

Male, London, Quiz group

6.3.2 Callers to ‘Babe’ TV channels did not express any concern about the size of phone bills incurred, perhaps because the frequency of calls was lower.

6.3.3 Respondents tended to blame themselves for any high bills incurred. Respondents who called Quiz TV or Psychic TV programmes often referred to the cost of an individual call, or the price per minute of a call, but this rational understanding of the costs was often overridden by a less rational compulsion to call. There was also some evidence in the qualitative discussions (particularly with regard to Quiz TV) that the price of participation was not always understood as clearly as respondents may have claimed. For example, some respondents expressed surprise at being charged for telephone calls which had not resulted in the caller successfully “getting through”.

- 6.3.4 Many respondents believed that more could be done to protect against serious debt, but few had any practical ideas⁶.
- 6.3.5 Respondents were asked in general terms about schemes to “cap” spend per session and most claimed that any such initiatives would be welcomed, at least on the face of it, but there was wholesale resistance to the possible use of credit cards rather than telephone bills, as a way of managing spend. This was seen as more dangerous, as the outlay would be delayed, which could encourage irresponsible behaviour. Respondents also expressed concerns about the safety of credit card transactions over the telephone.

6.4 Possibility of addiction and dependency

- 6.4.1 A minority of respondents referred directly to being “addicted” to calling Quiz TV or Psychic TV.

“I have been known to stay up all the way through the night calling it. (Quiz TV) It’s so addictive.”

Male, London, Quiz

“Psychic Interactive can be very more-ish. They say something you think is true, but you don’t know if it’s from something you’ve told them, so then you have to ring up again, so it’s quite addictive for me.”

Female, Sussex, Psychic depth interview

- 6.4.2 Other respondents hinted at a degree of dependency or the risk of addiction, through their behaviours and language.

“I might have lost £500 but I don’t mind. It’s like going to the casino; you lose this time but next time you could really win.”

Female, London, Quiz depth interview

“Say you have a financial problem, you’ll think well that’s ten grand but this (Quiz) only costs 75 pence or a pound.”

Female, Birmingham, Quiz

“The thing that keeps us phoning up is hope.”

Male, London, Quiz

6.5 The expectation of or allegation of “scams”

- 6.5.1 The qualitative research uncovered a widespread feeling of resignation and even acceptance of practices which were often described by participants as “scams” or “cons”, with particular regard to Quiz TV. Interestingly, the recent controversy around PRS services on TV confirmed for respondents what many believed they already knew. There was little evidence that Quiz TV callers would stop or reduce their calls following the controversy, since most still believed fervently that “someone must win”.

⁶ Note this research took place before ICSTIS imposed new requirements on Quiz TV to alert callers each time they spend £10.

6.5.2 A number of respondents used language which suggested or implied inappropriate or dishonest conduct on the part of Quiz TV channels. This generally related to a perceived practice of manipulating caller queues to ensure that only those with wrong answers would be aired on television, or a more generalised assumption that Quiz TV providers may unfairly adjust a caller's chances of getting through.

"You know you're being conned."

Male, London, Quiz Group

"It does seem suspect that so many people are getting it wrong"

Male, London, Quiz Group

"They go through all the people with the wrong answers just to prolong it. It must work that way, because there couldn't be that many stupid people."

Male, London, Quiz Group

Section 7

Regulation

7.1 Attitudes towards regulation of PTV

- 7.1.1 Despite some respondents' suggestions of inappropriate conduct on the part of Quiz TV or Psychic TV operators (see Section 6), there was also a general sense that the genres were robustly regulated, since all television channels in general were felt to be subject to certain codes or regulations.
- 7.1.2 However, respondents expressed some concern if PTV were to be subjected to what they saw as "nanny-state" intervention. As discussed earlier, many felt that as adults they were responsible for their own actions and that tighter regulation was unnecessary. However, respondents were not presented with any potential regulatory options for discussion in this research,
- 7.1.3 There was very low spontaneous awareness of Ofcom or any other specific regulator, or where viewers should turn in the event of complaints or concerns.
- 7.1.4 Despite their claimed views on regulation of the industry (paragraph 7.1.2), most respondents welcomed Ofcom's sponsorship of this research, which was seen as a very positive move. This attitude was particularly apparent during discussions with female Psychic TV viewers and callers, a group that clearly saw themselves as more emotionally vulnerable than other television viewers. (See Section 6.)

Appendix

Defining the genres

Here are detailed descriptions of each PTV genre used in the online survey to minimise respondent uncertainty or misattribution of PTV genres. The genres were described to respondents as follows:

Game shows with some audience participation: TV game shows where contestants compete to win a cash prize and viewers also have the chance to phone in and win something, e.g. *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* or *Deal or No Deal*.

Shows where viewers can influence the outcome: Television programmes where viewers are invited to phone in and vote to decide what happens in the programme, e.g. *Big Brother* or *I'm a Celebrity, Get me Out of Here*.

Home shopping: TV home shopping programmes where viewers are invited to phone in to buy something that has been featured on-screen, e.g. QVC or the Shopping Channel.

Music channels with video requests: TV music programmes where viewers are invited to phone in and request a music video to be played, e.g. *Video Playlist* on Smash Hits or *Hits on Demand* on the Hits channel.

Quiz TV: Standalone TV quiz programmes where viewers are invited to solve a quiz or puzzle then phone in to win a prize, e.g. *The Mint*, *Playdate*, *This Morning Puzzle Book*, *Quiz Call*, *Big Game TV*, *The Great Big British Quiz*.

Psychic TV: TV programmes where viewers are invited to phone in to receive advice from a 'psychic' featured live on television, such as a tarot reading or a horoscope reading, e.g. *Good Morning Psychic* on Psychic TV.

'Babe' TV: TV programmes where viewers are invited to phone in and chat to girls featured live on-screen, e.g. *Day Chat* on Babeworld TV.