

Beat: News

ATV, The Death of Television?

Oldest Hong Kong TV channel closes!

Hong Kong, 07.04.2016, 04:04 Time

USPA NEWS - The recently “deceased” Asia Television Limited (ATV) in Hong Kong was the first television studio in the city. Being able to witness the death of a television channel may be an once-in-a-lifetime event, but this brings up the interesting discussion of the role of television in the modern world.

The recently “deceased” Asia Television Limited (ATV) in Hong Kong was the first television studio in the city. Known as Rediffusion when it was formed just after the war, it initially only provided a radio service for four hours a day. In 1957, it became the world’s first Chinese television channel and the first indigenous television channel in the entire British Empire. A decade after its first broadcast, it was renamed ATV and formed a duopoly with TVB (Television Broadcasts Limited), the city’s other free-to-air channel.

It is unmistakable that ATV has a résumé that’s hard to match, but what caused it fail after all these years? Over the many decades of its operations, ATV has changed hands several times, each time into a more pro-Beijing business. Many analysts on newspapers and other television studios alike have agreed that gross mismanagement was to blame; this included anything from introducing incompatible management techniques to airing some of the most unpopular shows in the history of the company. Some programs ATV offered were so unpopular that polls showed they only had a 1% viewership rate.

Being able to witness the death of a television channel may be an once-in-a-lifetime event, but this brings up the interesting discussion of the role of television in the modern world. The Pew Research Center conducted a biannual survey of the market share of different media channels since 1994. The data shows that while television consumption has decreased from over 70% to 55% from 1994 to 2012 with similar trends for newspapers and radio, online news consumption has jumped from nearly 0% to almost 40% in the same period.

Nowadays, large media conglomerates like CBS, CBC and the BBC are embracing YouTube news channels in order to survive. Even programs from Vice News, a channel founded entirely as an online news and documentary channel are now being commissioned into television channels. With the advent and increasing affordability to access online media and on-demand TV, free-to-air channels are quickly losing their appeal.

What is now a rare occurrence may become an increasingly frequent phenomenon. The broadcasters determined the times, but now the times determine the fate of the broadcasters.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-7611/atv-the-death-of-television.html>

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619