

TELEVISUAL

March 2006

Brand and deliver

More choice for channel
hoppers means brand-
ing is a crucial weapon
in any broadcaster's
arsenal. Jon Creamer
reports on the art and
the science of the brand

Channel branding was once a gentle process. The famous Anglia TV ident was created after the md's wife spotted a rather nice silver knight on horseback in an antique shop window. The md bought it, popped it on a rotating plinth and pointed a camera at it - job done.

But, back then, a channel's brand meant little more than its five second ident - a simple piece of graphic design.

And as other industries developed the concept of branding products, TV hung back to some extent/ "It's within living memory that TV channels didn't even consider themselves to be brands," says Kemistry's creative head Graham McCallum. "There was a lot of resistance. They felt they were above that sort of commercialism." But no longer: "People understand now that a TV channel is like any other brand, and you have to treat it that way," says BDA's design manager Mark Hobbins.

With the recent rebrand of ITV, all the UK terrestrials are now slickly-branded multi-channel machines. And the small digital channels have very much got with the programme too. With so many channels out there, grabbing and holding on to viewers takes every

trick in the branding book.

And it's not just the number of channels that makes the job tough. The way people watch TV is, of course, changing dramatically - people can already watch content on their TV, their computer and their mobile phone. Video on demand and PVRs mean when they watch is up to them too. As these changes take hold "broadcast brands will get more instead of less important," says Devilfish's creative director and founder Richard Holman. "The reason that branding began in the first place was to help people decide what to buy. The more choice you get, the more help you're going to need."

"The stall front is more crowded so channels are having to distinguish themselves more to create that preference," says Liz Dunning, director of Dunning Eley Jones. After all, just because viewers will have an infinite amount of choice, doesn't mean they'll run through a million choices each time they decide to watch. "Every time you go to the supermarket, you don't decide all over again which tin of beans to buy," says Kemistry's McCallum. "When you're confronted with huge choice, you tend to narrow it down to things that suit you."