

Dutch Media

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Almost every media-system is national, it has specific features that are unique compared to other media-systems; even when media are international (internet, television, music, movies), the audience prefers often national content. Formats, organization and presentation are national. In the Netherlands you can watch MTV, but the national competitor TMF (owned by MTV) is more popular. You can watch Friends with subtitles or “Who wants to be a millionaire” with Dutch candidates. You can read Cosmopolitan or a Disney magazine in Dutch, made by Dutch editors. The most popular TV programs are all Dutch.

What is so special about the media in the Netherlands? First what we *don't* have:

- We have *no party press* anymore, a lot of European countries (Italy, Scandinavia) still do. It is also unlikely that a newspaper endorses a political party or specific candidate.
- We have *no sports papers* like in France, Spain, Italy and Portugal.
- We have *no boulevard press* like in the UK (the Sun) or Germany (Bild), although some papers have the tabloid format (since 2004).
- We have *no media-tycoons* like in the UK, France or Italy.
- We have *no national* government owned television or radio station.
- We *don't have a telecommunication monopoly* anymore.

What do we have instead of this all?

- We do have *high readership of newspapers and magazines*, with Scandinavia, German speaking countries, the UK, Canada and Japan the highest in the world.
- We do have *very concentrated print media*, only three publishers of newspapers control 90% of the circulation.
- We do have two succesfull *free daily newspapers*.

- We have *two newspapers with a Sunday edition*, but only since 2004.
- We do have *many tv- and radio stations*, national, regional and local.
- We do have a very high rate of *cable-penetration*, one of the highest in Europe.
- We do have *high internet use*, with many people connected through broadband (almost 50% of the Dutch households), the highest in Europe.

Media-ownership, media-use and the media themselves are in many respects very different from other countries. But then again: almost every European country seems to be very different from any other country when it comes to the media. The media reflect the unique social, political and economic history of any country. In some ways, however, there are developments that can be seen in almost every other country: the media become more and more concentrated, they are becoming more and more international while commercialism is growing rapidly.

Newspapers

Newspaper readership in the Netherlands is going down, but still high compared to other countries. For every 100 households 59 copies of daily newspapers are printed in 2004. Twenty years ago however, there were 90 copies for every 100 households. For 2004 this means that there is a daily circulation of almost 4 million copies. Almost half of this can be contributed to the national daily press. There are seven national daily newspapers. (table 1)

Table 1 Circulation (x 1000) national daily newspapers 1996 - 2004

	1996	2000	2004
De Telegraaf	760	808	727
Algemeen Dagblad (AD)	401	360	283
de Volkskrant	368	346	306
NRC Handelsblad	272	272	254
Trouw	122	126	108
Reformatorisch Dagblad	57	58	59
Nederlands Dagblad	30	32	35
total	2.010	2.002	1.772

The five biggest national dailies are based in Amsterdam (Telegraaf, Volkskrant, Trouw) and Rotterdam (Algemeen Dagblad, NRC Handelsblad). Telegraaf and AD are considered ‘popular’ newspapers while the others are called (by their own readers) ‘quality papers’. The popular papers use more color, bigger headlines than the so-called quality papers and devote more space to crime and show business but they have little in common with papers like Bild Zeitung or The Sun. De Telegraaf and AD can be

considered as (political) to the right, NRC Handelsblad is a liberal paper (the only evening newspaper of the five) while Volkskrant and Trouw are more to the left. Nederlands Dagblad and Reformatorisch Dagblad are right wing Christian newspapers. Numbers 2 to 5 belong to the same company: Perscombinatie. Subscription is high: almost 90% of the total circulation. There are also two free dailies in the Netherlands: Spits (by de Telegraaf) and Metro (Metro International), both have a circulation of ± 300.000 .

Regional newspapers are not as big as the biggest national papers but 9 of them have a circulation of more than 100.000 in 2004 (table 2). One paper circulates in several cities in the Netherlands. This has to do with heavy concentration in the daily press. Only eight independent publishers exist (in 1970 there were 35 independent publishers, in 1980: 24). The three biggest firms control 90% of the total circulation.

Table 2 regional newspapers with a circulation (x 1000) higher than 100.000

	2000	2004
Dagblad De Limburger (Telegraaf)	174	156
De Gelderlander (Wegener)	161	185
Brabants Dagblad (Wegener)	156	148
Noordhollands Dagblad (Telegraaf)	156	152
BN/De Stem (Wegener)	145	134
Twentsche Courant Tubantia (Wegener)	137	134
Dagblad van het Noorden (NDC)	134	168
Eindhoven's Dagblad (Wegener)	124	121
Haagsche / Goudsche Courant (Wegener)	119	98
Leeuwarder Courant (NDC)	112	112
Rotterdams Dagblad (PCM)	102	90

Magazines

Figures are guesses when it comes to magazines but there are at least 8000 different titles available for Dutch readers. These can be divided in different categories. There are small but very profitable scientific journals (often in English) and professional magazines. Elsevier, Sanoma (Finnish) and Wolters Kluwer belong to the big publishers, and not only in the Netherlands. Elsevier (part of Reed Elsevier) sold their general interest magazines and newspapers because they wanted out of that market; in scientific magazines and professional information the profits are much higher.

Magazines for the general public really do reach this public. The woman's magazines have a combined circulation of 1.4 million every week, every week 860.000 gossip-magazines are sold, TV-guides reach almost every household (4.3 million) and lots of other magazines (girls, boys, life-style etc.) are read. The figures are staggering. More than half of the circulation of the general interest magazines are published by Finnish publisher Sanoma.

Table 3 Circulation (x 1000) biggest weekly magazines (TV-guides not included)

	1996	2003
Libelle (women)	718	580
Margriet (women)	516	379
Privé (gossip)	414	303
Donald Duck (comics)	361	339
Story (gossip)	343	237
Weekend (gossip)	299	230
Voetbal International (sport)	213	200
Panorama (family)	202	123
Vriendin (women)	-	139
Yes (girls)	159	106

Radio and television

In the Dutch media-landscape the broadcast media are hard to explain to foreigners. The unique system was created around 1925. Radio was broadcast by different organizations (socialist, catholic, protestant, liberal) who rented radio-time. This system survived the war and was also introduced for television around 1955. It is not government broadcasting. The organizations are independent, and get their concession from the government who doesn't want to interfere too often (although they can). Throughout the years, there has been commercial enterprises but until 1989 without any success, except for commercial pirate stations in the sixties. In 1989 a commercial television station (RTL Veronique, later renamed as RTL4) started with television programs from Luxembourg, and it could be seen on any cable-network (90% of Holland has cable-TV) and by satellite. It was a Dutch program made in Holland but transmitted from Luxembourg. Government couldn't do anything about it. After the first, a second program followed: RTL5. In the nineties the law changed so legal commercial broadcasting was made possible for Dutch companies.

Now a Dutch television viewer can see three public national channels, two 'foreign channels' (Luxembourg-based) and four commercial Dutch channels. Apart from that there is local and regional television. A average cable-network contains apart from these 10 Dutch-language-channels, BBC 1 and BBC 2, two Belgian channels, German channels and a choice from TV5 (France), RAI uno, TVE, CNN, MTV and many more; 25 to 30 channels is normal. And there is a average of 40 radio stations, 5 of them Dutch public national. Some radio stations are only cable.

Television viewing is growing, in 1988 the average Dutch viewer spend two hours (124 minutes) in front of his TV-set, this has risen to 192 minutes in 2004. The (Luxembourg) commercial station RTL4 is the most popular station (24% market share), followed by the three national public channels (36% combined).

Table 4 Market shares TV broadcasting in the Netherlands 1990-2004

	<i>1990</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2004</i>
National public broadcasters	62	51	39	36
Commercial broadcasters	21	32	46	49
Rest: international, regional, VCR	17	17	17	14

The Dutch listen to the radio for more than 3 hours. It is divided between public broadcasting (44% market share), commercial stations (49%). The rest goes to small commercial broadcasters, local and foreign stations.

Table 5 Market shares radio in the Netherlands 1990-2004

	<i>1990</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2004</i>
National public broadcasters	70	42	32	30
Regional broadcasters	11	18	15	14
Commercial broadcasters	13	13	45	49
rest	6	10	8	7

Other media

Apart from the classical print and broadcast media the Dutch use a lot of other media. Reading books is still popular (specially among older people) while the use of new media (internet) is rising.

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