AIB

Association for International Broadcasting

Thought leadership from the AIB and its members
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# FREEVIEW IS NO LONGER JUST BROADCAST **AND THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING**

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# AIB INTRODUCTION

**The transition from traditional broadcast distribution to hybrid and IP-delivered services is accelerating across multiple markets.**

While policy debates continue around the future of digital terrestrial television (DTT), new models are already emerging that combine the reach and trust of broadcast platforms with the flexibility and data capabilities of digital delivery.

In this contribution, AIB Member **Global Distribution Services** outlines how its work on the UK's Freeview platform reflects this shift in practice. The model described raises important questions for broadcasters, regulators and platform operators alike — particularly around discoverability, monetisation, and the future role of broadcast infrastructure in an IP-first environment.

As the industry navigates these changes, understanding how hybrid models are being deployed in real markets

# THE UK'S LARGEST TV PLATFORM — AND EVOLVING

The UK's Freeview platform remains the largest TV platform in the country, reaching over 18 million households. For international broadcasters, it offers a unique opportunity to access mass audiences on a highly credible platform alongside BBC and ITV.

At **Global Distribution Services (GDS)**, our role on Freeview is often associated with Channelbox. In reality, Channelbox is just one part of a much broader operation.

Today, Global Distribution Services delivers and operates more than 25 services on Freeview, the majority as standalone channels with their own dedicated logical channel numbers (LCNs). These include leading international brands such as CNA, Al Jazeera, France 24, Euronews and NHK, among many others.

These services are seamlessly integrated into the Freeview EPG, sitting alongside major broadcasters and delivering a true broadcast-grade experience. For viewers, there is no distinction: channels launch instantly, are easily discoverable, and are experienced in exactly the same way as traditional linear TV.

# BEYOND BROADCAST: A HYBRID MODEL IN PRACTICE

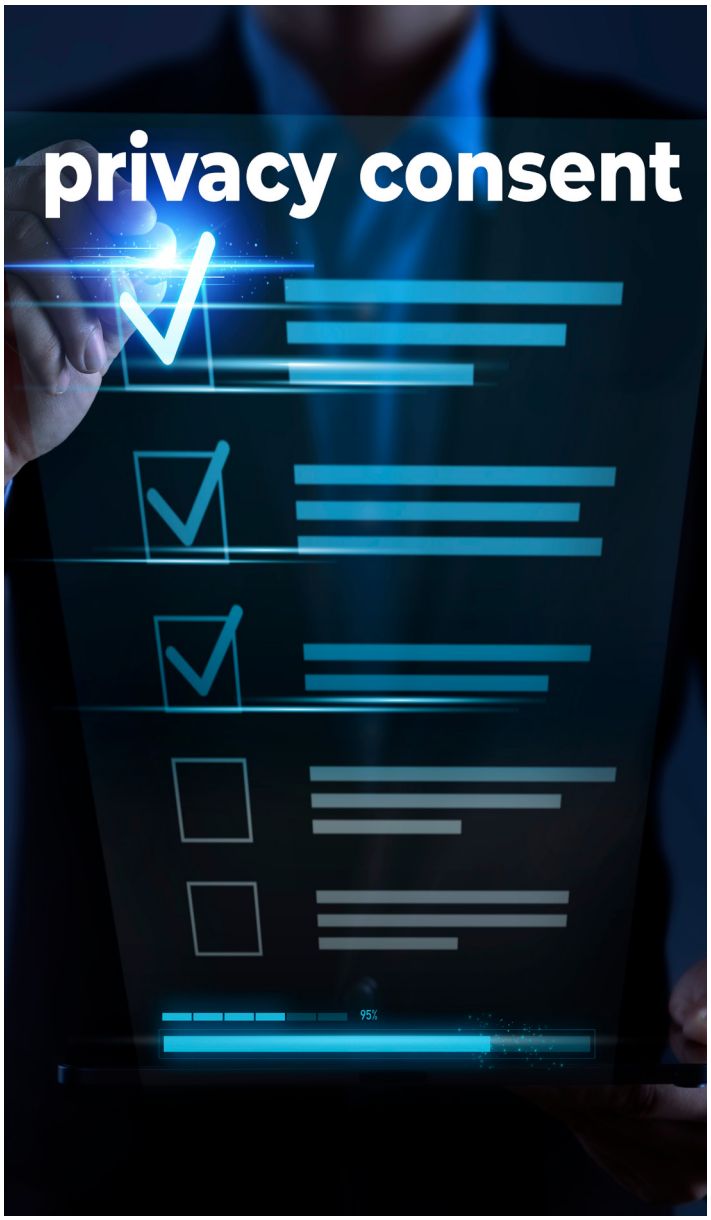
What is emerging is not simply an extension of traditional broadcast, but a hybrid distribution model that combines broadcast-scale reach with IP-enabled delivery and monetisation.

Our model combines the scale of broadcast with the economics of digital. Channels are monetised via server-side ad insertion (SSAI), in the same way as on OTT platforms, without the need for traditional panel-based measurement systems such as BARB in the UK. Instead, broadcasters benefit from accurate, real-time data, showing exactly how many viewers are watching, for how long, and how inventory performs.

**In today's landscape, data is power.**

This is complemented by a Consent Management Platform (CMP) fully compliant with IAB Europe's TCF v2.3, enabling scalable and privacy-compliant monetisation.

This reflects a wider industry transition from spectrum-constrained broadcast environments to IP-enabled distribution ecosystems, where data, flexibility and performance transparency are becoming central to commercial strategy.



# A NEW ROUTE TO MARKET

Importantly, this model represents a **powerful route** to entering the UK market.

It combines:

- National reach through a trusted platform
- Premium positioning within the Freeview environment
- Advanced, data-driven monetisation
- Reduced barriers compared to traditional broadcast distribution

For international broadcasters, this lowers the threshold for market entry while maintaining visibility and credibility.

# LOOKING AHEAD: FROM HYBRID TO IP-FIRST

This evolution continues with **Freely**. GDS launched its first channel on Freely on 29 April, extending this hybrid broadcast-IP model into a fully IP-delivered environment.

The direction of travel is clear: distribution models are becoming increasingly IP-centric, while retaining the user experience and prominence associated with traditional television platforms.

# WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BROADCASTERS

This shift has wider implications for the global media industry:

- Market entry is changing

Broadcasters can access major markets without the traditional cost and complexity of spectrum-based distribution.

- Measurement models are evolving

Panel-based systems are being complemented — and in some cases challenged — by real-time, granular data.

- Platform strategy must adapt

Hybrid distribution models are becoming an essential component of international distribution strategies.

- Commercial models are becoming data-driven

Monetisation is increasingly tied to performance transparency, targeting and programmatic delivery.

# CONCLUSION: CONVERGENCE, NOT REPLACEMENT

**For international broadcasters, the opportunity is clear: reach millions of UK households on a trusted platform, with the flexibility, transparency, and performance of digital built in.**

**Rather than replacing broadcast, hybrid models such as those emerging on Freeview demonstrate how broadcast and IP can converge — combining scale, credibility and accessibility with the precision and accountability of digital delivery.**

# INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

**Tanya Kronfli**, CEO of Global Distribution Services, comments: "Freeview offers something no other platform can match in the UK today — scale, credibility, and accessibility. What we've done at GDS is combine that reach with the precision of digital: SSAI monetisation, real-time data, and full transparency on performance. Broadcasters no longer have to choose between traditional TV and digital video — we bring the best of both worlds together in one solution."

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