[GB] Call TV Quiz Shows Subject to Scrutiny and New Rules

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Nine shows on four channels (BBC, ITV, C4 and C5) have recently been the subject of concern. The shows include both dedicated TV quiz shows and those involving premium rate phone calls within the programme. Viewers who called in to vote, or take part in competitions, had been misled.

The House of Commons Culture Media and Sport Select Committee had already initiated an inquiry (October 2006) into this issue and, on 25 January 2007, the Committee published its Third Report, on Call TV Quiz Shows. It concluded that stronger consumer protection is required.

Ofcom published a consultation on “participation TV” on 15 December 2006 (it closed on 31 January 2007). Such services are defined as “television services (including but not limited to dedicated channels) that rely wholly or mainly on viewers paying for an opportunity to participate in the service. These services tend to be dominated by repeated messages to viewers - verbal or in on-screen graphics (usually both) - to call a premium rate number. This content may take a number of forms, including quiz services, adult chat, psychic readings and dating”.

The UK Government’s Department for Culture, Media and Sport published a response to the Select Committee on 26 March 2007 detailing “the Government's position, the latest action taken by the regulators (Ofcom, ICSTIS and the Gambling Commission) on this issue, and the legislative and regulatory background to the Select Committee's inquiry”.

Subsequently, the Select Committee received a joint response from Ofcom and the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Telephone Information Services (published as its Fourth Report).

ICSTIS has now issued what it calls “tough new rules” which come into effect on 5 May 2007.

The rules aim to “boost consumer trust and confidence in Quiz TV shows [and] will give viewers a better understanding of their chances of getting through to programmes and clearer information on the cost of each call they make to participate”.

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Specifically, the ICSTIS (revised) Statement of Expectations containing the new rules deals with transparency concerning the chances of getting through to air, pricing information and call cost warnings.

Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Third Report Call TV Quiz Shows, 25 January 2007

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmcumeds/72/7202.htm

Government Response to the Culture Media and Sport Select Committee Inquiry into Call TV Quiz Shows (Cm 7072)

http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Publications/archive_2007/calltvquizshow_Cm7072.htm

Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Fourth Report: Call TV quiz shows: Joint response from Ofcom and ICSTIS to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2006-2007

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmcumeds/428/428802.htm

Consultation, "Participation TV: How should it be regulated?"

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/participation/

ICSTIS: Revised Statement of Expectations for Call TV Services

http://www.icstis.org.uk/pdfs_consult/Calltvquiz_SoE.pdf

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