

Formula One TV audience reaches 600m

By *Kevin McCullagh*

Television coverage of Formula One was watched by 600 million viewers in total in 2008, up from 597 million in 2007, according to the sport's annual broadcast report.

Italy remained the leading European television market for Formula One, with 37.5 million viewers in total throughout the season. Lewis Hamilton's championship winning season helped UK commercial broadcaster ITV gain a 7 per cent increase in total viewers, to 29.1 million. In Germany, where Formula One audiences have been in decline since the retirement of Michael Schumacher in 2006, the total audience slipped behind that of France, into third place in Europe with 29.6 million.

Outside Europe, China moved ahead of Brazil to become the territory with the biggest total audience – 119 million, compared to Brazil's 110 million.

Formula One owner Bernie Ecclestone welcomed the findings of the report, which featured eleven markets, covering 80 per cent of the sport's global audience, saying it showed the sport was in "rude health".

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