

MEDIA

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MEDIA

From an economic standpoint, media is the most important stage in your infomercial project because it involves the largest chunk of your budget. How you buy your TV airtime dictates the profitability of your direct response campaign. If you buy wisely, you can make a fortune. Buy poorly, and you can lose a fortune.

Our discussion of media buying will be based on half-hour infomercials. Unless specified otherwise, figures, stats, and examples used in this chapter will be for half-hour, sales generation infomercials.

Besides actual media buying, product fulfillment and other activities generally associated with the media stage of your infomercial campaign will be considered.

STATE OF TELEVISION

When the American TV viewing market was being served by only three or four stations - ABC, CBS, NBC, and in some cities, an independent station - behavioural and social patterns were mainstream and demographic diversity was not an issue. Viewing patterns were, therefore, quite similar everywhere. Back then, media buying was relatively easy.

Now the reverse is true. With cable service, satellite programming, low-power and full-power broadcasting, the route to today's TV audiences is more complicated and difficult to follow. Today, the U.S. TV viewing public is divided into over 200 markets, each with 20 to 30 channels to choose from.

Fortunately, television retailing pioneers have paved part of the way for us, making it possible to identify certain media-buying styles that work well for infomercials.

For example, those who cultivated DRTV have proven to us that buying late-night TV time is cost effective. Since late-night airtime costs less, it delivers one of the lowest cost per order, or CPO, figures obtained, enabling marketers to break even with fewer orders.

There are three types of commercial TV stations, distinguished by how their programming is delivered to the public.

BROADCAST

These TV stations use the airwaves to transmit their programs over a specific geographic area. By design, all broadcast stations are local, to the extent the power of their antennas transmit their signals to TV viewers. Some broadcast TV channels are also carried by the local cable service in the station's primarily broadcast area.

Based on their transmitting power, there are two types of broadcast TV stations: (1) low power, usually operating on UHF frequencies, and (2) full power, those you usually get as channels 2 through 13 if you don't have cable. These depend on your antenna to pick up the TV signals.

Based on how they are owned, managed, or operated, TV stations can be either independent or network affiliates - more often called network channels.

The four recognized broadcast TV networks in the U.S. are ABC, CBS, NBC, and FOX. It is difficult, if not impossible to acquire TV airtime on any of these networks. With the possible exception of Ross Perot's half-hour paid announcements during his '92 presidential election bid, no half-hour paid programs are aired on the broadcast network level. On a local level, however, network affiliates have different policies regarding paid programming.

CABLE

These are TV stations whose programming is delivered exclusively through a cable system, meaning homes without cable service have no way of watching these channels. Since these stations send their signals to different cable service companies across the country, they are also referred to as networks. The extent of the coverage of any cable network depends entirely on the number of local cable service companies carrying its programming.

The following are the 10 most widely distributed basic cable networks. Figures are as of March, 1993, represented in total million households.

| | | |
|-----------------------|------|----|
| Cable News Network | CNN | 66 |
| Cable News & Business | CNBC | 65 |
| USA Network | USA | 65 |
| Video Hits | VH1 | 64 |
| Nickelodeon | NIK | 63 |
| Lifetime | LIFE | 61 |
| Headline News | HLN | 61 |
| Entertainment Sports | ESPN | 61 |
| Discovery | DSC | 61 |
| Music Television | MTV | 61 |

SUPERSTATIONS

A superstation is a local broadcast station whose programming is being received by cable markets outside its primary broadcast area. Without the cable aspect of their coverage, they are nothing more than local broadcast TV stations. Without the broadcast aspect of their coverage, they are strictly a cable channel.

Superstations are either regional or national in their coverage.

A regional superstation has its programming carried by cable companies within the same state or region where the superstation operates. Examples include WPIX in Florida and KTVT in Texas.

A national superstation has its programming carried by cable companies in more than one state. The three major national superstations are TNT, WOR, and WGN.

Georgia-based TNT, part of the Turner Broadcasting Group, is known for programming dominated by its extensive collection of old movies. TBS also has strict guidelines on direct response programming and rarely accepts paid programs. WOR and WGN have a more enterprising position with regards to their airtime. They have extensive market coverage and their rates are extremely competitive.

| SUPERSTATIONS | SUBSCRIBERS |
|---------------|-------------|
| WWOR | 35 million |
| WWGN | 42 million |
| WPIX | 12 million |
| KTVT | 4 million |

TOP TV MARKETS

Television, both broadcast and cable, reaches over 93 million homes in over 200 major U.S. markets. 63 million have cable service. The 10 largest TV markets in the U.S., with a total of 26.6 million homes (28% of all viewing homes), are:

| TV MARKET | TV HH | %HOMES W/CABLE |
|-------------|-------|----------------|
| New York | 7.0 | 58 |
| Los Angeles | 5.0 | 57 |
| Chicago | 3.1 | 77 |

| | | |
|------------------|-----|----|
| Philadelphia | 2.7 | 70 |
| San Francisco | 2.2 | 64 |
| Boston | 2.1 | 71 |
| Washington, D.C. | 1.7 | 57 |
| Dallas-Ft. Worth | 1.7 | 47 |
| Detroit | 1.7 | 59 |
| Houston | 1.5 | 50 |