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Glossary of Cable TV Terms

Ad-supported Network

A national or regional cable TV channel, such as MTV or ESPN, which makes available a certain amount of time per hour for local commercials.

Alternate Delivery System (ADS)

Refers to reception of TV programming via satellite (DBS or large dish).

Analog

The most commonly used frequency for transmitting video content. Commercials stored on videotape, for instance, use an analog format. A more recent technology involves the conversion of analog content to a digital, or computerbased, format.

Average Audiences (AA)

The number of coverage households tuned to the reported cable network during the average minute of the program.

Avail (Availability)

A break within normal network programming allotted to a local cable system for insertion of local commercials.

Basic Cable

Cable TV channels that are typically packaged and made available to a wide number of subscribing households. Basic channels usually are advertiser supported.

Cable Original

A program, such as a movie or series, that is originally produced and premiered by a cable network. The quality of cable originals has led to a dramatic shift in audience to cable.

Cable System

The local operation that distributes cable TV channels, usually over a combination of fiber optic and coaxial wires, to subscribing households.

Cost Per Person (CPP)

This number describes the relationship between the cost of a television commercial and the estimated number of people or households who view it.

Cost Per Thousand (CPM)

The cost of advertising per thousand potential customers reached by a given broadcast advertisement.

Coverage Area

The geographic territory in which a cable system distributes commercials.

Cumulative Audience

A research term describing the unduplicated audience for a television program or commercial over multiple airings. In cumulative audience figures, an individual is counted only once.

Digital Cable

A collection of channels, typically distributed to subscribers as an add-on package, which is transmitted initially in the form of binary code and used to enhance cable TV service and/or two-way high-speed Internet.

Digital Television (DTV)

Encompasses HDTV, or high-definition television, which is a set of standards for video and audio-signal quality.

DMA

Acronym for Designated Market Area. DMAs are a way of designating particular geographic markets, and are often ranked by size of population. New York City is the nation's largest DMA, so its DMA ranking is 1.

Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)

EDI is the computer-to-computer transmission of information in a predetermined, structured and standardized format. In cable advertising, EDI is currently being used to transmit contracts and invoices between cable networks and advertising agencies. The CAB is intimately involved in the continuing evolution of EDI for the cable advertising industry.

Frequency

The number of times the same viewer sees your commercial. Often used in tandem with Reach.

Gross Rating Points (GRP)

The sum of the ratings to each message on a schedule, including duplication.

HDTV (High-Definition Television)

HDTV provides five channels of CD-quality digital surround sound and about five

times more picture information (picture elements, or pixels) than conventional, analog television.

Household (HH)

The core measure of circulation for a cable TV system. Typically, cable companies collect a monthly subscription fee from each household served. In addition to detached homes, apartment units are usually counted as individual households.

Household Penetration

The percentage of households within a cable TV service area that elects to subscribe to cable television. If 7,500 homes within a 10,000-household service area subscribe, the household penetration level would be expressed as 75 percent.

HUT (Homes Using TV)

The percentage of TV households viewing TV during a specific time period.

Interactive Cable

Cable systems that have the technical ability to let subscribers communicate directly with a computer from their television sets, using special converters and regular cable lines. Video on demand is a form of interactive cable.

Interconnect

A collection of two or more cable TV systems that work together to distribute commercials to a wider geographic area than either system, individually, would otherwise reach.

Multiple System Operator (MSO)

A company that operates more than one cable TV system.

On Demand

An entertainment service that allows viewers instant access to content, such as movies, cable series, original programs, educational programs, premium channels, news, sports, etc. Programming from content providers is delivered by the consumer's cable company and may be free, subscription-based, or paid for on a transactional basis. With On Demand service, consumers can control what they watch and when, with features such as play, pause, fast-forward, rewind and stop.

Pay Cable

Also known as Premium Cable. Refers to channels, such as HBO, available for an extra fee at the discretion of cable TV subscribers.

Pay-Per-View

Usually movies or special events that a cable subscriber specially requests to

receive for a single fee added to the monthly cable bill.

Per-Inquiry Advertising

Direct-response advertising for which the cable network or system running the commercial is paid based on the number of responses received rather than the commercial time used.

PUT (People Using Television)

PVT (Persons Viewing Television) at a particular time, is expressed as a percent of all people in TV homes. PUT combines all persons viewing, rather than reporting specific program viewing. Note that PUT and PVT (Persons Viewing Television) are interchangeable terms in common usage.

Rating

The audience of a particular program or station at a specific period of time expressed as a percent of the audience population. The percent sign is not shown, and the rating may represent household viewing or a specific demographic audience segment's listening or viewing.

Reach

The number of different people or households exposed to your television commercial. Often used in tandem with Frequency.

Regional Networks

Refers to cable TV channels distributed in a regional area that carry a mix of area sports teams, news, plus some national programming.

Rep Firm

An outside sales agent contracted by a cable system to manage relationships with certain advertisers, typically those outside of the local system service area.

Run of Schedule (ROS)

Commercials bought to be run at any available time at the network's discretion.

Share

The audience of a particular television program or time period expressed as a percent of the population viewing TV at that particular time. Share, then, is a percent allocation of the viewing audience and differs from the rating, which is a percent of the potential audience. Share is usually reported on a household basis.

Spot Cable

Usually refers to commercial schedules placed on local cable systems by national or regional advertisers who often advertise in multiple cable TV markets.

Subscriber

A household or business that legally receives cable and/or pay television service for its own use.

Superstation

A generic term used to describe any broadcast television station that has its station distributed nationally by satellite.

Tiers

Programming services beyond the basic offerings at an additional price increment.

Universe

All homes in a market, also known as "households", or a demographically defined group, such as 25- to 54-year-old adults.

VoD

Short for "Video on Demand", an umbrella term for a wide set of technologies and companies whose common goal is to enable individuals to select videos from a central server for viewing on a television.

Wired HH's

Term to describe those households that subscribe to a cable service.

Source: Cabletelevision Advertising Bureau (CAB)