

Choosing Media Options

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The types of media chosen for the plan will depend on several factors. The four main factors are listed below.

1. **Ability to reach the target** – The exercise “A Typical Day in the Life” is an intuitive way of identifying what media reaches your target. If you work in a country that has media measurement (e.g., AC Nielsen which measures TV), then you can also identify media vehicles quantifiably. In these markets, advertising agencies usually have access to such data.

Regardless, you should consider two main elements of a medium’s ability to reach the target.

- A. **The size of the audience (i.e., ratings)** – If a medium has large ratings, then its main contribution to a media plan is the fact that it will build reach more quickly than it builds frequency. If a medium has small ratings, then it will build frequency more quickly.
- B. **The concentration of the audience** – Some media are more targeted than others, meaning that the majority of the audience is of one specific group. This is described as the medium’s audience concentration; the higher the concentration, the more targeted it is. Media with smaller ratings are often more targeted, such as a radio station that only appeals to young people of a certain ethnic group. Media with large ratings are often less targeted because their audience is more representative of the entire population.

In many markets, ratings and concentration measurements will not exist. However, in many situations, common sense will dictate if a program or medium appeals to your target or if a program or medium has significant ratings. This will impact how the program or medium will be used in the media plan and is discussed in detail below. The following descriptions are true regardless of whether the medium is national or local in nature.

- **Television** – In some countries, television reaches large audiences that include the less economically advantaged. In other countries, it is a luxury that only a small affluent portion of the population can afford. In the former countries, TV will have large ratings and can build reach quickly. In the latter countries, it will have small ratings and build frequency faster.

In countries where TV ownership is widespread, different times of the television schedule day (sometimes called TV *dayparts*) often deliver different target groups. For example, daytime television might reach more women who do not work outside the home, and late night television might deliver more young adults (e.g., aged 15 to 24). Primetime (generally considered to start around 19:00 or 20:00 and last until 22:00 or 23:00) will usually have the highest ratings with the lowest concentration of any specific group because the entire family is home watching.

Sometimes these *dayparts* are not specific to times of the day, but instead to specific programming. For example, sports programming has the highest concentration of men, but it can air at anytime during the week.

- **Radio** – In some countries, radio audiences are large, at least for the less affluent sectors of society, and can quickly build reach against your target. In other countries, usually where TV ownership is widespread, radio ratings can be very small and build frequency faster than reach.

Sometimes radio stations are formatted to appeal to very specific groups, such as young people, ethnic groups of different languages, or people who like a specific style of music. This can help target the plan as well as influence the creative execution of the radio ad itself.

- **Newspaper (paid ads, not PR)** – The readership dynamics of newspapers will vary greatly depending on the country and even the region/city. In some places, it is a good way to reach both adult men and women. In others, it will skew to more affluent males. Sometimes, the newspaper will have implemented some type of readership survey to understand who their customers are and can provide you with this information for planning purposes. Of course, literacy rates of the target group need to be considered as well as the geographic distribution of the paper (i.e., national or city/regional).

A general rule of thumb, at least in the more developed media markets, is that the people who read a lot of newspapers do not watch a lot of television. This means that by adding newspaper to your plan, you can reach people you would not have reached had you only used TV.

- **Magazines** – Some magazines have mass appeal and as a result will have large ratings and deliver broad audiences, such as adults 25-54. Other magazines will have lower ratings and be more targeted to various groups, such as young people from a specific ethnic group. As with newspapers, magazines often know a lot of information about their readers, and this can be used in planning.

Unlike newspapers that are generally read the day or week they are published, magazines have a longer life. They often sit around for weeks or are passed along to friends and family before being thrown away. The result is that it takes more time for a magazine to build its audience. This is not a bad thing, but it should be considered if your message is time sensitive (e.g., there is only one month left in a sweepstake promotion for your product).

- **Outdoor/Transit (e.g., billboards and ads on buses or taxis)** – This medium targets by geography not demography. If the billboard is in the middle of town or on a major road, the audience will be very broad because it will consist of everyone who passes by it. If the billboard is in an ethnic neighborhood or a hot zone where high risk activity occurs, then it can be very targeted.

These tend to build frequency faster than reach because the same people pass by it each day/week.

2. Creative Considerations – Obviously, the type of message you want to deliver greatly impacts your choice of media. Sometimes, brand awareness is the goal, and all this requires is that the target see the product and read a short slogan. Other times, the message will be complex and require that the target spend considerable time with the ad. These requirements impact the media selection as each has its own advantages and disadvantages in terms of communication.

3. Cost Considerations – Your available budget for mass media will also impact your choice of media. There are two types of costs to consider.

- **Production Costs** – Some media can be quite expensive to produce (e.g., TV commercials) while others can be quite inexpensive (e.g., newspaper ads).

- **Media Placement Costs** – This is the cost of buying the media space such as radio or TV time and magazine pages. There are two ways to think about this cost.
 - *Total Cost* – This is sometimes called out-of-pocket and represents the total amount of money spent on the media placement.
 - *Efficiency* – This is measured in cost per thousands (CPM) and is useful for comparing the cost of reaching 1,000 people from your target group through different media.

$$CPM = Total\ Cost \div Total\ Impressions\ (as\ expressed\ in\ 1,000s)$$

4. **Other Considerations** – There are always other considerations that come into play when choosing media. Capacity is an important one. It might be difficult, for example, to produce high quality TV commercials due to weak advertising agencies or production houses.

Another common consideration is when a donor or other important stakeholder insists on using a particular medium that would otherwise not be chosen. This seems to happen most often with television; a donor insists on using TV even though it may not efficiently reach the target. In these cases, PSI should try to make the media argument against such a choice and educate the donor in the process.