

Where to advertise

Which media is best suited for your advertisements? Should you choose one medium such as the local newspaper or a mixture of several, such as radio, TV, cinema or outdoor advertising? Choosing the media means basically finding out how to spend your money to the best advantage. You must go back again to your initial thoughts and consider what you are trying to do. Do you want to:

- Start a new business?
- Launch a new product or service?
- Expand your market?
- Maintain your existing market share against competitors?

For example, if you are starting a retail business or launching a new service then you may find that print media such as the newspaper or local magazine will be the first choice. You can show and explain a lot in a printed advertisement and details such as your name, address and contact number and even a coupon can be included. There are many factors that must be considered when looking at where to spend your advertising dollars to give you maximum benefit.

If you are launching a new product or service in a wide area, or expanding your market, you will probably use radio, television and other advertising to back up any printed ads. If you are trying to maintain your position against competitors, then you will need to give serious consideration to using a different combination of media or increasing the amount of advertising, in order to respond to changing conditions.

Advertising options

Newspapers

There are two sorts of ads of interest - display ads that are scattered throughout the paper; and classified ads which are grouped together under subject headings for the convenience of the reader.

Classified ads are sold by the line. Display ads are sold by the number of columns across and the number of centimetres down the page. All papers have a sliding scale of rates for display ads with discounts for frequency, and extra charges or what they call loadings for placement in preferred positions. Prices vary widely and will depend a lot on the paper used and the circulation it has.

If your market is the same as the newspaper's coverage area, then you can look at circulation figures to judge how much it will cost you to reach potential customers. Look for audited circulation figures or figures which have been verified by some reputable independent body. When they talk about readership of a paper, this means the number of people who read the circulated copies. Readership is more than circulation figures, since one copy may be read by a number of people. Ensure the readership figures in your calculations have been independently verified.



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Magazines

If you distribute your products or services to a special group of customers, then magazines offer a number of advantages such as:

- Readership - a specialist magazine can pinpoint your market with low wastage.
- Long Life - magazines tend to be kept longer and read at leisure by potential customers.
- The reproduction standards - Photos and drawings are usually of good quality and this is essential for some products where colour is an advantage.

The limitations of magazines include - timetables that are very strict in regard bookings etc and area (magazines do not usually serve a small area like a specific town so if you're just a small business, there is a waste factor in that circulation outside of your area is not really required)

Radio

Most households in Australia own at least one radio and this media is often a good alternative to the others because it can neatly pinpoint your market. Broadcasting, skilfully used, can be a hotline to the listener's imagination and feelings. Radio time can work out reasonably expensive and, as well, sound has its limitations. Listeners find it difficult to remember what they have heard and sometimes the impact of advertising is lost due to this. Getting the most for your money on radio doesn't necessarily mean getting the cheapest time. You must sit down and plan a campaign that will suit your pocket as well as reach your audience. The radio station's sales representatives will possibly be of assistance to you in that regard.

Since a sound message is soon forgotten, you need to repeat it frequently. This multiplies the cost, but if you cannot afford to build up frequency, you may be wasting your money. Recommended exposure for results is 20 spots aired over no more than five days, or 30 spots aired over seven days. You can, of course, achieve results with less if ads are carefully placed to reach your prospective customer market.

Tips for effective radio advertising include:

- Keep it simple - do not attempt to communicate too many ideas in a 30 second time slot. A central idea will be better remembered.
- Repeat the message - benefits of a product, the price and the name of the store should be repeated over and over again.
- Phone numbers - do not put your telephone number at the end of an ad where it will not register with listeners. It is best to say: "Our number is in the phone book".
- Take advice from the radio station. You will need to assume that the radio station knows what they are talking about and that their advice is worth taking.

Assessing the results of radio advertising is difficult because the advertising is usually backed up with other media. One way to find out what brought the customers in is to ask them; another is to vary your combination of media continuously and watch the changes in sales.



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Television

If you cater to a large market in a large area then television will have a lot to offer, but at a high cost. No other media reaches so many people in such a short time and has such an impact on an audience. TV ads have the advantage of sight, sound, movement and colour to capture attention and make them persuasive. But your ads must be carefully produced to ensure those advantages are fully exploited.

TV advertising is also very expensive as TV spots are sold in units of 20,30,60 seconds etc and the costs vary according to the time zones on which these spots will be shown. Television is a specialised area that really requires expertise from people such as advertising agencies etc.

You also need to determine the size and location of your target audience. If you cater to a large market in a large area, television may have a lot to offer you. If, on the other hand, you cater to a small neighbourhood, or if the audiences are a specialised interest group thinly disbursed through the community then you may get better advertising value from leaflets and local newspapers.

Experts have provided the following hints for successful television ads:

- Television works well in combination with other media. Show the idea on the screen and back it up with more information in the press, or a brochure delivered directly to people's homes.
- Use the language of your target audience.
- Keep it simple with few words and facts and aim for something memorable.
- Consider how slides are going to look in black and white as well as colour.
- Avoid appearing on television yourself and use actors or models rather than family members and friends. (There are exceptions, of course, because if the family members or friends are stupid enough or look funny enough that may get the attention of your buying public.)

Yellow Pages/directories

Most small businesses advertise in directories - the most common being the "Yellow Pages" of the telephone directory. Other directories list products and services, and some cover members of a particular industry or trade.

The advantages of directories include:

- People who consult directories have already made up their mind to buy. The only question remaining is where?
- Directories may be retained for reference for many years.

The disadvantages of directories include:

- If you change your name, address and telephone number during the life of a directory, then the old information remains out of date.
- Some directories have a very rigid format, so you cannot really set out your ad, as you would like.



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Before deciding to advertise in any particular directory, find out answers to the following two questions:

- Usage - Is a directory complete and respected enough to encourage frequent use by potential buyers? Are listings easy to find and are they indexed and cross-referenced?
- Circulation - Are audited circulation figures available, and are they reputable and can they be relied on?

Outdoor advertising

This includes signs, posters, hoardings, and ads on buses, taxis, railway stations and subways. Outdoor advertising is seen frequently by its audience and is a major source of information for tourists. The amount of information that can be conveyed on a hoarding is limited and its size and position are often restricted by local council regulations. Outdoor advertising can be arranged through a number of specialist firms and this can be found in the "Yellow Pages" of the telephone directory. Charges reflect sign production costs, as well as the number of people who will see the ad.

Direct mail

As the term suggests, direct mail means writing to customers by name or sending them circulars, postcards or catalogues. Any product can be sold this way, and the more precise your mailing list or target distribution area, then the better the sales will be. The success of a direct mail campaign can be measured at once, and although careful preparation is essential, you need experience to judge all the factors, such as timing, price, style etc.

One way to reduce any risk is to pre-test the campaign by first mailing out only a small section at a time before continuing on with the rest. You can also use mailing lists, which are available for purchase from various companies. The best sort of lists are those which you compile yourself from records of your customers, and charge accounts and associates etc.

If you are using mailing lists, make sure that you do the following:

- Keep your mailing lists up to date.
- Tailor your message, style and format to suit your target.
- Post them so that they arrive midweek.
- Key your reply coupons to show where they were sent and then analyse returns.

Other media

Other effective methods of reaching your audience include:

- Internet advertising – which will allow you to reach a global audience at low cost.
- Printing catalogues, brochures or leaflets – which will enable you to include ample information and target audiences in your market.



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Further information

The following fact sheets provide further information on these issues:

- Advertising – introduction
- How to advertise
- Why advertise