

TV DEMOGRAPHIC TARGETING: PAST & PRESENT

Over the years, the demographic criteria for network TV buys have steadily shifted away from narrow, youth-oriented targeting to broader age spectrums. As shown in the table below, advertisers who sponsored their own shows in the 1950s neither cared about nor understood demographic targeting. In this bygone and much simpler era, household ratings were the end-all and be-all, which was fine with the networks who, of course, offered no audience guarantees anyway. Demographic targeting was introduced in the 1960s and gained ascendancy in the 1970s, when 18-49s became the prime agency buyer target. And, as the table illustrates, as recently as the mid-1980s the 18-49 criterion continued to be preeminent, accounting for about 50% of adult buys. We estimate that currently 50% of all adult-oriented TV buys use the 25-54-year-old age group as the basis for audience delivery and CPM guarantees, while 40-45% employ the 18-49 grouping.

Needless to say, conglomerate demographics like 18-49 or 25-54 aren't really targets since they are far too broad. In theory a corporate multi-brand TV buy focusing on 18-49 or 25-54 delivery allows the advertiser to allocate time among various brands based on their narrower targeting or media environmental needs, however, often this is not the case. Rather, they represent an accommodation between buyer and seller that allows the former to gain the security of audience guarantees, while the latter limits his/her risk, promising viewer delivery against a wide spectrum of viewing impressions. □

NETWORK TV DEMO ADULT BUYING CRITERIA

	NO TARGET	18-34	18-39	18-49	25-54	35+
Mid-1950s	92%	5%	2%	1%	--	--
Mid-1960s	55	8	18	19	--	--
Mid-1970s	15	7	--	55	20	3
Mid-1980s	--	3	--	50	43	4
Mid-1990s	--	3	--	43	50	4
Mid-2000s	--	3	--	42	50	5

Source: Media Dynamics, Inc.