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In the beginning there was soap â€“ Soap Operaâ€™s that is. Originally a radio broadcast program, soapâ migrated to TV in October 1946 when the US TV station Du Mont began broadcasting Faraway Hill, a serial based on the eternal love triangle.

Programs like Faraway Hill were called soaps because they were either owned or sponsored by detergent companies such as Proctor & Gamble and Colgate-Palmolive, to name just two.

Soaps were aimed at family centric women, and became very popular amongst that demographic as it took them away from the drudgery of daily house chores. Soaps soon became an important marketing tool to their sponsors because it allowed them to embed product messages within their text. Furthermore, soaps targeted a specific market - the housewife and end user of detergents.

As TV audiences became more sophisticated, product placement within soaps was toned down and the entertainment value was turned up. Instead of overt product placement, program producers began selling ad space around their soap schedules, thus adding a further advertising income stream to their programming content.

This new ad format focused solely on product information. The ads lasted only a few seconds and were designed as short, sharp, clear product messages.

Although initially successful, it wasnâ€™t long before audiences became desensitized by TV ad content. In more modern times people tend to reach for the remote control and switch to another channel during TV commercial breaks.

TV ad audience penetration was and still is dependent on the ability of the TV Company to attract viewers for its programming content. Moreover, TV ads are also expensive to produce and are limited by a time constrained format.

With the advent of the Internet and the introduction of online video, advertisers, big and small, were handed a new cost effective medium through which to channel their marketing campaigns.

Unlike TV ads, online video can take on a life of their own, and can either use product placement within an entertainment format or simply be a straight forward informational text.

As an entertainment format, lasting from a few seconds to a few minutes, online video can extend the life of the advertiserâ€™s message, much in the same way as the original soaps used to. Conversely, a TV ad only runs as long as the advertiser is willing to pay for the commercial slot within the TV Companyâ€™s programming schedule.

Furthermore, a successful online video, one which balances entertainment with information, has the potential to go viral. In other words, people who have been entertained by an online video will tell their friends and relatives about it, bringing into play the most effective form of marketing known to advertisers â€“ word of mouth. Very few people talk about TV ads, but many millions of people do talk about online video, especially those online videos which have struck a chord with their audience.

While TV advertising slots have come down in price in response to competition from other marketing platforms, they still, nonetheless, remain beyond the reach of advertisers with small marketing budgets. On the other hand, online video, with its low entry costs, offers the small business or

marketer an opportunity to reach a targeted audience without actually breaking the bank.

So, in summary, the difference between TV ads and online video is:

Â· Online video is a far more cost effective marketing utility than TV advertising

Â· Unlink TV ads, online video can extend the product message of the advertiser through entertainment

Â· Online video is versatile and is not constrained by time or format in the same way as TV ads. Online video can use either an entertainment or informational format

Â· Online video has greater potential for reaching a more targeted demographic than TV ads

For further information on how online video can help your company, why not visit our case studies page at Contrast Design

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