

## SOLAR 2003 CONFERENCE

### CIGARETTES TO SOAPS LEARNING HOW TO MARKET CLEAN ENERGY TO PRIME TIME

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#### ABSTRACT

Media is a powerful and pervasive force in American society. Numerous examples, from cigarettes to soap operas have shown how the power of the media can be used to change lifestyles; important lessons for the solar industry.

The authors show how movies associated beauty and fashion with a smoking lifestyle and shaped behavior to adopt these products. Soap operas were an evolution of this in radio and television, where household cleaning manufacturers provided direct support of programming.

This approach to product marketing is a long-term venture, but progress is seen in consumer awareness, first, followed by wider adoption of the products.

The Authors produced the television program *This Renewable House*. Lessons from this program and a template for utilizing the mass media are presented that pave the path toward a wider, mainstream consumer base for the solar industry. Video clips are included in this educational, thought provoking and entertaining presentation.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Almost every television show from the forties through the early-nineteen sixties had a main sponsor each week. Advertisers saw real results from their use of TV for product marketing, and formed unique partnerships with the shows.

In the early days of television, the stars of the programs were expected to be seen using or endorsing the sponsor's products. This helped increase ad/sponsor revenues for the broadcaster, compensating for relatively low audience numbers. As television expanded its reach, and proved itself effective as a marketing tool, in the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century advertisers lined up to buy spots and main sponsor's were no longer required or desired. TV executives saw they could make more money by owning and producing the shows, and selling advertising in a competitive advertising market. Likewise, advertisers saw they could be on several different programs without the risks of footing the bill for a production.

The evolution in advertising is based upon the need to best marry the needs of advertisers with the viewing interests of consumers, in an ever-changing environment. Today, due largely to the expansion of TV channels, product placements, paid media, and sponsor-paid programs are once again emerging as an industry practice.

Tactics used by the cigarette and soap industries provide some of the best examples of how sponsor-influenced television can help to create new markets and propel sales for the solar industry.

While *This Renewable House* (made possible through a grant from the California Energy Commission) didn't directly use these tactics, we saw how interviewees on the show were persuaded to adopt renewable energy, and how an audience relates to the various messages.

## 2. LIGHTEN UP & LIGHT UP

Cigarette manufacturers were one of the first industries to advertise widely on television. Ironically, in just a few short decades, they were cast away from the medium they helped sustain. Here we see that the fallacies of pleasure were short-lived by both the consumer and the advertiser. Nevertheless, cigarette maker's advertising tactics were highly effective. "Smokes" were sold to the TV audience using television personalities and cartoon characters in product endorsements.

*I Love Lucy* (1951-1957) was sponsored by a cigarette maker for a while, Phillip Morris, who promised their customers: "Smoke for pleasure today. No cigarette hangover tomorrow!" That sponsorship meant added scenes of Lucy and Desi smoking in the program's introduction and the "Call for Phillip Mooriiiiuuss" kid in commercial transitions.



Figure 1. *I Love Lucy*

Big movie stars were happy to endorse smokes, too. John Wayne appeared on TV for Camel, speaking highly of the product: "Mild and good tasting pack after pack. And I know, I've been smokin' em for twenty years."<sup>1</sup>

Marketing cigarettes to men meant creating an appeal based upon independence, self-reliance, and machoism – the free-range cowboy. Renewable energy, while promoting

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<sup>1</sup> Coincidentally, John Wayne died of lung cancer twenty years after this spot aired. Some of the last commercials he filmed were to ask people to stop smoking.

independence and self-reliance, lacks sex appeal in some respects, when viewed from the traditional images of an American man. However the tech and "gear-head" appeal of renewable energy are characteristics that are attractive to males, and can be effectively marketed.

If your product doesn't necessarily have the innate images that appeal most to the target market, then those product or lifestyle attributes can be associated with the product, through other associations, such as through the use of a particular spokesperson. For example, in our marketing campaign for the State of California, we produced public service announcements featuring Lee Iacocca, to associate smart business with renewable energy.

**WHAT IF JOHN WAYNE PROMOTED RENEWABLE ENERGY?** .... imagine John Wayne leaning up against a solar panel, "I break my back everyday russion' cows. But I leave the light stuff to Mother Nature." (PV powering home).

Remember when the government made a big stink about *Joe Camel* in the nineties? More kids could recognize Camel's cartoon carton-pusher than could identify Mickey Mouse - and Camels were flying off the shelves and (presumably) into the tiny fingers of young children. But cartoon characters had been selling cigarettes for decades, particularly on television.

The original network run of *The Flintstones* (1960-1966) was sponsored by a cigarette maker and you could watch the main characters smoking Winstons at the end of the show.



Figure 2. *The Flintstones*

**WHAT IF FRED FLINTSTONE WAS PV POWERED?** .... We see Fred in his car and his feet scrambling to get him around. Betty Rubble greets Fred on the street. Fred has blisters and calluses. Betty tells him he's old fashion and

*should drive an electric car, which is charged by a newly installed PV system on the Ruble's home.*

Women have been extensively targeted in tobacco marketing. Such marketing is dominated by themes of an association between social desirability, independence, and smoking messages conveyed through advertisements featuring slim, attractive, and athletic models.

The tobacco industry has also targeted women through innovative promotional campaigns offering discounts on common household items unrelated to tobacco. For example, Philip Morris has offered discounts on turkeys, milk, soft drinks, and laundry detergent with the purchase of tobacco products.

Virginia Slims offered a yearly engagement calendar and the V-Wear catalog featuring clothing, jewelry, and accessories coordinated with the themes and colors of the print advertising and product packaging.

Capri Superslims used point-of-sale displays and value-added gifts featuring items such as mugs and caps bearing the Capri label in colors coordinated with the advertisement and package.

Misty Slims offered color-coordinated items in multiple-pack containers, as well as address books, cigarette lighters, T-shirts, and fashion booklets.

Once the cigarette industry understood the large potential of the female market, they developed marketing strategies tailored to that market. Evidence suggests a pattern of international tobacco advertising that associates smoking with a successful lifestyle, similar to that seen in the United States. **This development emphasizes the enormous potential of advertising to change social norms.**

*WHAT IF? .... We see a woman in her shabby house unhappy looking out the window, admiring her neighbor's well-kept home. She's caught in the drudgery of paying her bill, and awaits her husband who comes home late from a second job. That day, the phone rings and it's the neighbors. Cheerfully calling: "Another sunny day! Would you like to come over to visit and swim? You can bring the kids too." We see a solar-powered home, clean, efficient, happy.*

### 3. AS THE WORLD TURNS

The term "soap opera" was coined by the American press in the 1930s to denote the extraordinarily popular genre of serialized domestic radio dramas, which, by 1940, represented some 90% of all commercially-sponsored daytime broadcast hours. The "soap" in soap opera alluded to show sponsorship by manufacturers of household cleaning products. In the United States, the term continues to be applied primarily to the approximately fifty hours each week of daytime serial television drama broadcast by ABC, NBC, and CBS, but the meanings of the term, both in the U.S. and elsewhere, exceed this generic designation<sup>2</sup>.

What most Americans have known as soap opera for more than half a century began as one of the hundreds of new programming forms tried out by commercial radio broadcasters in the late 1920s and early 1930s, as both local stations and the newly-formed networks attempted to marry the needs of advertisers with the listening interests of consumers. Specifically, broadcasters hoped to interest manufacturers of household cleaners, food products, and toiletries in the possibility of using daytime radio to reach their prime consumer market: women between the ages of eighteen and forty-nine.

In 1930, the manager of Chicago radio station WGN approached first a detergent company and then a margarine manufacturer with a proposal for a new type of program: a daily, fifteen-minute serialized drama set in the home of an Irish-American widow and her young unmarried daughter.

In the absence of systematic audience measurement, it took several years for broadcasters and advertisers to realize the potential of the new soap opera genre. By 1937, however, the soap opera dominated the daytime commercial radio schedule and had become a crucial network programming strategy for attracting such large corporate sponsors as Procter and Gamble, Pillsbury, American Home Products, and General Foods. **Most network soap operas were produced by advertising agencies, and some were owned by the sponsoring client.**

On the eve of World War II, listeners could choose from among sixty-four daytime serials broadcast each week. During the war, so important had soap operas become in maintaining product recognition among consumers that Procter and Gamble continued to advertise Dreft detergent

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<sup>2</sup> [www.museum.tv/archives/etv/](http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/)

on its soap operas--despite the fact that the sale of it and other synthetic laundry detergents had been suspended for the duration. Soap operas continued to dominate daytime ratings and schedules in the immediate post-war period. In 1948 the ten highest-rated daytime programs were all soap operas, and of the top thirty daytime shows all but five were soaps. The most popular non-serial daytime program, *Arthur Godfrey*, could manage only twelfth place<sup>3</sup>.

#### 4 LIFE-STYLE MARKETING

The United Nations Environment Program is enlisting psychologists and human behaviorists in a pioneering new initiative to save the planet<sup>4</sup>.

Experts believe that the traditional messages from governments and green groups, urging the public to adopt environmentally friendly life-styles and purchasing habits, need to be overhauled.

There is concern that many of these messages are too "guilt-laden" and disapproving and instead of "turning people on" to the environment are switching them off.

Said Klaus Toepfer, executive director of UNEP, "Messages from governments, exhorting people to drive their cars less or admonishing them for buying products that cause environmental damage, appear not to be working. People are simply not listening. Making people feel guilty about their lifestyles and purchasing habits is achieving only limited success."

Studies indicate that only 5% of the public in northern countries is embracing so-called sustainable lifestyles and sustainable consumerism.

"So we need to look again at how we enlist the public to reduce pollution and live in ways that cause minimal environmental damage. We need to make sustainable life-styles fashionable and 'cool' as young people might say. We also need to make it clear that there are real, personal, benefits to living in harmony with the planet," he said. UNEP experts cited campaigns by KIA, the Korean car manufacturer, and the European detergent industry, as two examples of selling positive, environmentally friendly consumerism and lifestyles.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.museum.tv/archives/etv/](http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/)

<sup>4</sup> [www.nytimes.com/2002/12/08/magazine/08BP.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/08/magazine/08BP.html)

KIA has a campaign in the United Kingdom that urges people not to use cars for short journeys, only long-distance ones. It provides a mountain bike with every new car purchased and helps organize "walking buses." These create networks of parents who assist in escorting children to school on foot.

The European "Wash Right" campaign extols the virtues of low-temperature washing by emphasizing the benefits to the clothes as well as the energy it saves.

Similarly, a solar energy campaign can focus on the positive lifestyle, financial and environmental benefits of using solar. In *This Renewable House* we experienced many such messages, and they are powerful.

#### 5 PRIME TIME FOR SOLAR

One approach the solar industry could adopt is to produce a weekly 30-minute magazine-style television program that reaches all major markets.

A weekly TV series is within the reach of the Solar Industry, as evidenced by the California Farm Bureau. The California Farm Bureau has been very successful in California with such an approach. The California Farm Bureau, has a long-running commitment to educating the public about the importance and incomparable bounty of food, fiber and flowers grown in California, the nation's largest food state. Farm Bureau has produced regularly scheduled television programs since 1964. Two programs produced by the California Farm Bureau include:

*California Country* is Farm Bureau's weekly television magazine program. It features stories about California's Farmers and Ranchers and people in closely related industries. You'll learn about the people who make modern agriculture work and also learn about the work they do when you watch California Country. The program airs on fourteen (14) local and regional broadcast television stations and 69 cable stations in California, and nationally on the DISH Network and DirecTV.

*California Heartland*, a public television series on California agriculture, airs in all California television markets and in Reno, Nevada. Heartland is a 52-week series which looks at the people who make California agriculture

the envy of the world. The program airs in all California television markets through PBS stations.

These programs were created to fill an industry need, and helped to build California’s agricultural business into the largest in America, and perhaps the world. This was the farm industry working together, to develop a common voice for the benefit of the whole. These programs educate and inspire consumers, while greatly enhancing the political power of the industry.

For the solar industry, a similar approach would be to build off of the program *This Renewable House*. This program generated Nielsen ratings in California (where it aired) equivalent to the popular, long-running PBS show *This Old House*. PBS stations were thrilled. This was accomplished with a skeleton marketing and public relations budget, which suggests strong consumer interest in the topic of renewable energy. It also suggests that a branded awareness can be built upon the success of *This Renewable House*.

*This Renewable House* received a warm welcome during the days of the California energy crisis. The audience was starving for energy alternatives, and freedom from the strapped power utilities. At the same time, the terrorist events brought to light the dangers of American reliance on foreign sources of oil.

*This Renewable House* serves as a benchmark, and was successful in many respects. It showed how on a very small budget, using the right approach, an effective marketing campaign based upon television works for the solar industry. We envision a new *This Renewable House* series to be part documentary and part drama; less educational and more cool.

## 5.2 Why Television?

According to research conducted by the Television Bureau of Advertising<sup>5</sup>, television reaches 48% more total adults each day than newspapers. Further, adults spend an average of 253 minutes per day watching TV, versus 30 minutes per day reading newspapers. The following figures summarize the clear advantages of television over several other media sources when trying to reach a target audience.

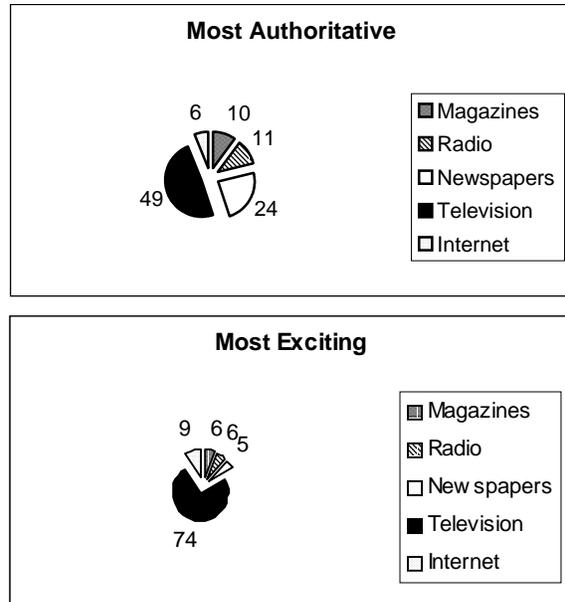


Figure 3. Television Perception Among Adults

<sup>5</sup> [www.tvb.org](http://www.tvb.org) & The Media Center (Bruskin/Audits & Surveys Worldwide, Media Comparison Study, 2000)