

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Fragmented: Political Advertising World Changing Alongside TV

Advertising and politics are two constantly evolving areas that go hand in hand every year when election season arrives. But with a third prong of television consumption going through its own transformation, the melting pot of factors for political campaigns to consider when trying to reach their target audience becomes even more convoluted as a presidential election year looms large.

Traditional TV is still king when it comes to reaching voters. For last year's midterm election, **Comcast's** advertising division **Effectv** found that 81% of reach was [unique to traditional TV](#) among the top-reach political campaigns it studied. Just 6% of reach was for streaming only, while reach to a combination of both platforms came in at 13%.

That doesn't mean streaming is out of the equation. Multiscreen TV campaigns recorded 20% more frequency than TV alone, and impressions delivered to light- and no-TV households came in at 45% for streaming and 8% for only TV. While a new tool that previously saw advertisers split when deciding where to put their budget, the use of multiscreen campaigns is set to ramp up for the 2024 election, following a similar trend in the non-political advertising world.

"Back in the day, [it] was 'We need to make sure we're targeting people who are on mobile' as if that's somebody different than the person who's going to be watching on TV," *Chris Vail*, Effectv's recently appointed VP, Political Sales, told **CFX**. "I think

thinking outside of that and saying, 'We've identified audience segment X, we need to make sure that if they're watching it on mobile, on large glass, on their phone or on a tablet, how can we reach them at any stage of the election cycle funnel?'"

The 2023 election was an opportunity to analyze the effectiveness of certain campaigns despite a down election cycle. Vail said one of the primary trends he saw was campaigns were more focused on meeting where their target audience was because of that fragmentation in media, serving as an indicator of how 2024 could pan out.

"They need to be granular with the level of targeting that they get from 'Is this person a voter? Is this person going to vote for the candidate that I want them to? Do I need to make sure I get a message for them either to convince them to vote for my candidate or to just show up at the polls,'" Vail said. "They have to take a much more scattershot approach to ensure that they're getting the reach that they once had that was much easier because they only had three or four different places to go."

Similar to how younger demographics have driven the evolution of content consumption (and the subsequent fragmentation), they've also been a deciding factor in recent elections. Vail noted some campaigns leaned heavily on targeting those younger groups in 2022 and 2023. However, the overarching dilemma is those voters—even those who aren't yet eligible to vote—can be in several different places for campaigns to meet, putting added pressure to find the right balance of where



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to place advertisements.

Whether that fragmentation will lessen remains to be seen, but in the meantime, Vail pointed to using the metric of what the customers demand and how can campaigns fill that role from an audience delivery standpoint. **Nielsen's** monthly "The Gauge" report showed streaming accounted for 36.6% of all TV usage P2+ in October. Broadcast and cable combined for 54.1%, but it was only in July when the two combined for less than 50% of usage for the first time.

Political advertisements have already started to roll in with 2024 in sight. **GroupM** projects political ad revenue will be \$15.9 billion in 2024, a 31.2% spike compared to the last presidential election in 2020. GroupM's research also forecasts the U.S. political advertising space becoming the 10th largest market in the world, ahead of places like Australia and Spain.

"One of the biggest talking points that you hear in almost all mainstream media is that the political ad budgets are growing. It's this escalating massive amount of revenue every single election cycle. But the challenge with that is you still have to spend that money wisely. Advertisers still need to be very prescriptive and not have waste. There's no chance to make it up at the end," Vail said.

AMAZON EYES DIAMOND SPORTS

The latest in the ongoing **Bally Sports** saga has **Amazon** reportedly interested in making an investment in owner Diamond Sports Group. The **WSJ** [reports](#) that the two are in active talks for a deal that would eventually make Amazon Prime Video the home for Diamond games. Diamond would continue to operate its RSNs featuring **MLB**, **NBA** and **NHL** games through its existing partnerships, according to the report. Meanwhile, legal proceedings continue with the latest court filings indicating MLB and Diamond are nearing a framework for 2024 broadcasts thanks to mediation. That means MLB is dropping its attempt to get Diamond to make a decision by Dec. 31 on its legacy media rights deals. The next hearing is set for Jan 10. There are still a lot of details up in the air, including whether the framework would have Bally Sports RSNs carry telecasts for all 11 MLB teams under contract for 2024. While Cleveland and Texas are two MLB teams that Diamond has considered dropping if financial terms can't be revised, *The Athletic* [reports](#) that a Diamond lawyer mentioned "three teams" that are not currently contemplated to be in the fold. That team's identity wasn't immediately clear. Meanwhile, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge *Christopher Lopez* dismissed **Sinclair's** motion for an order compelling assumption or rejection of a management services agreement that governs its business with Diamond.

COMSCORE REVERSE STOCK SPLIT

Comscore will move forward with a 1-for-20 reverse stock split of its issued and outstanding common stock that it says is needed to comply with **Nasdaq** listing requirement of \$1.00 per share minimum bid price. The company expects its common stock to begin trading on a split-adjusted basis on the Nasdaq Global Select Market with the opening of trading on Wednesday. After the reverse stock split, the number of outstanding shares of common stock will be reduced from approximately 95.1 million to approximately 4.8 million, subject to adjustment for fractional shares. "While we are disappointed that market conditions led to this reverse split, we are encouraged by our recent performance as we continue to pursue clear financial, operational and strategic opportunities to deliver growth and value for our shareholders and clients. We expect to meet the 2023 financial guidance we published in November and see strong growth potential for 2024 and beyond," Comscore CEO *Jon Carpenter* said in a statement.

FTC, DOJ RELEASE MERGER RULES OF THE ROAD

It's finally final. The **FTC** and **DOJ** released their merger guidelines Monday, the culmination of nearly two years' worth of work that included the release of draft guidelines over the summer. "Thank you to the thousands of people who submitted public comments, ensuring we could undertake this work with a deeper understanding of the real-life stakes of merger enforcement," FTC Chair *Lina Khan* said. Like their predecessors, the guidelines don't predetermine enforcement action and aren't legally binding, but they do offer transparency into the agencies' decision-making process. *Bill Baer*, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Antitrust Division of the US Department of Justice from 2013 to 2016 and currently at **Brookings**, congratulated the agencies on a "thoughtful" rewrite, writing on X that they clarify that parties have right to offer evidence that their deal will increase—or at least not decrease competition and describe the economic and analytical tools enforcers use to assess whether a merger risks harm to competition. Not everyone is applauding the guidelines. **The Computer & Communications Industry Association** said they lower the bar for what mergers would be presumptively illegal and would protect some competitors from competition. "While the final guidelines appear to have softened some of the most bellicose language contained in the draft, and to place slightly more emphasis on market power, they still lack clarity in many areas, and particularly with respect to when merging parties can invoke pro-competitive efficiencies as a

defense. They focus on the thousand ways the agencies could bring a case and what does not count as a defense, instead of offering real guidance reflecting the state of antitrust law,” declared **International Center for Law & Economics** Chief Economist *Brian Albrech*.

FETV, COMCAST AT LOGGERHEADS

FETV is warning [Comcast](#) subscribers that they may lose access to the network featuring classic and inspirational programming. Comcast said the network has leased access deals in certain markets and it’s in renewal talks with a third party. FETV maintains that it won’t pay for carriage given its viewership numbers and the fact it’s not seeking a license fee. “FETV does not charge our affiliates a license fee to be carried, and we refuse to be the scapegoat for a struggling industry desperate to offset losses wasted on content with little to no viewership,” FETV President/CEO Drew Sumrall said in a statement that likened the dispute to Comcast’s recent [re-tiering of INSP](#), another free, family-friendly network, in certain markets. Sumrall said FETV has a top-30 **Nielsen** coverage ranking, and that when combined with INSP, they have a combined primetime audience of 600,000 households, equivalent to a top-5 audience on cable, or somewhere between **MSNBC** and **HGTV**.

CARRIAGE

FAST channel **AccuWeather NOW** is now available on **Comcast’s** X1 platform and the Xfinity Stream app. It’s also part of the FAST lineup for NOW TV, Comcast’s new streaming offering that includes 40+ live channels, 20+ FAST channels and a subscription to **Peacock** Premium at no additional cost. – **Nexstar’s** stations in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Sioux Falls, South Dakota and Panama City, Florida will carry primetime entertainment and live sports programming from **CW Network** on one of their related digital subchannels starting January 1. CW has 15 hours of primetime entertainment programming each week and has a live sports portfolio that currently includes **LIV Golf** and **ACC** basketball and football, but is adding **WWE NXT** in fall 2024 and **NASCAR’s** Xfinity Series in 2025.

HOLIDAY STREAMERS

Streamers continue to churn out new holiday programming, but the classics continue to reign. “Elf” was the most viewed holiday title on streaming and VOD with a household viewership of 9 million from Nov. 10 to Dec. 10, according to insights from **Samba TV**. It was followed by “National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation” (7.9 million) and “Home Alone” (7.1 million). Among new fare, **Netflix’s** “Best. Christmas. Ever.” came in at #7 with 2.3 million households, followed by the streamer’s “Family Switch” (1.9 million) and **Amazon Prime Video’s** “Candy Cane Lane” (1.9 million).

PROGRAMMING

SVOD **Fox Nation** will debut “A History of the World in Six Glasses” on Jan 8. Announced earlier this year, the six-part comedic docuseries, featuring *Dan Aykroyd*, *Jim Belushi*, *Jon Lovitz*, *Kevin Nealon* and *George Wendt*, will chronicle the history of beer, wine, spirits, coffee, tea and soda and their respective impacts on the world. – **Tubi** is taking a look at the lives, careers and achievements of four **WNBA** MVP winners in its documentary “Shattered Glass: A WNBA Story.” The doc will debut Jan. 31 and feature *Jonquel Jones*, *Nneka Ogumike*, *Breanna Stewart* and *Sheryl Swoopes*. – “SportsCenter” anchor *Nicole Briscoe* is staying in the **ESPN** family after signing a new multi-year contract. She’ll continue hosting responsibilities on SportsCenter as well as on “Baseball Tonight” and with the network’s Formula 1 coverage. Briscoe has been hosting different editions of SportsCenter since 2015, having moved from SportsCenter’s daytime and weekend shows to the late-night program in 2021. She originally joined ESPN in 2008. – **Fox News** upped *Gillian Turner* to a dual role that’ll have her serve as an anchor and State Department and foreign policy correspondent. Turner joined Fox News in 2014 as a contributor before being promoted to correspondent in 2018, having also stepping in as a substitute anchor on various news programs.

TRADE WINDS

Big move by digital media company *Puck* in hiring *Sports Business Journal* (and former **Cablefax** editor) *John Ourand*. He’s spent the past 17 years at SBJ, where he’s broke several big stories, including the Big Ten media rights deal and early news on **Sinclair-Diamond Sports** before it ended up in the courts. He also co-hosts a podcast with *NY Post* sports media columnist *Andrew Marchand*. Asked on **X** if the podcast will continue, Marchand wrote, “TBD.”

DOING GOOD

Cable One associates have donated more than 10,000 pounds of food this holiday season to local communities served by the provider in 24 states. Cable One operates under the names **Sparklight**, **Fidelity**, **Hargray**, **ValuNet** and **Cable America**. Since 2018, Cable One has donated more than 51 tons of food and more than \$500,000 to address food insecurity. – **Service Electric** and **AXS TV** are teaming up to donate \$2,000 in musical instruments to a Wilkes-Barre, PA, elementary school. The guitars, drums, recorders and other instruments will be unveiled in a surprise assembly tomorrow.

EDITOR’S NOTE

Get a head start on 2024 and submit your **Cablefax 100** nominations today. April’s edition of **Cablefax: The Magazine** will rank the most influential executives who have gone above and beyond to take the media, cable and broadband industry to new heights. Enter at Cablefax100.com by Jan. 12.