



Latest trends, news, and opportunities in the world of outdoor media.

The **ORION** Report

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Many are beginning to wonder as the media revolution intensifies.

BY CHRIS DORSEY



“When it comes to media gatekeepers, more and more manufacturers and retailers are just saying ‘no.’”

Get ready to say goodbye to traditional media—if you haven’t already. Gone are the days when information gatekeepers—like newspaper and magazine editors—controlled the flow of information to consumers. Welcome to the age of consumer empowerment. Now you can find and consume media when, how, and where you want it.

This new empowerment is being fueled by two undeniable market forces—brands wanting to speak directly to consumers and consumers craving instant and unfiltered access to information of all kinds. Today, there are no road blocks to the flow of information and no media company has control of information anymore. News isn’t what the editor says is news, but rather news is what the consumer says is news. This is a frightening prospect to media companies who have built their business on the sale of information. The bottom line is that consumers no longer need to wait for a magazine or newspaper to show up to find out what’s happening in almost any market sector or hobby interest.

Today, manufacturers are becoming their own media companies by launching branded television series that are providing the video content for fully loaded websites with sophisticated streaming video, video-on-demand, continuity and retail DVD franchises, and even custom published branded magazines and books. Bottom line, why buy someone else’s media when you can create your own and don’t have to be subjected to the whims of an editor or share the real estate with a competitor? Besides, fundamentally wouldn’t you rather attract and retain *your* consumers—not a media company’s consumers?

“Whose consumers are they anyway—yours or a media company’s? If they’re not yours, why buy someone else’s consumers when you can capture and cultivate your own.”

Today, there are many outdoor manufacturers and retailers who have a vastly larger media footprint and database of consumer names than even the largest outdoor media companies. For instance, a marketing executive for a prominent gun maker was recently approached by an outdoor media company with many magazines, websites, and small TV shows. The advertising salesman for the media company set forth his suggested package of magazine ads, websites, and TV sponsorships that he thought the gun company executive should buy. The gun company executive listened to the pitch and then asked these amazingly poignant and telling questions: “Why would I buy this package when we are already reaching more people through our own TV series (on much larger networks than the media company’s series), on our website (which has triple the traffic of the media company’s sites), through our video-on-demand mini-series that archives shortened versions of our shows on a 40-million distribution V.O.D. platform, on our proprietary blogs, and in our consumer catalog? And, I don’t have to share this space with competitors or endure unqualified writers’ commentary about my guns.” He wasn’t finished yet, however. “Tell you what, I’ll make you a good deal to buy my media to try and sell your magazines subscriptions?”

“The average American watched 151 hours of television per month in 2008, up from 146 hours a year earlier. People are watching more TV than ever before and the availability of content on online and on mobile screens is only serving to increase cable TV viewing.”
—Cable Guide

It’s one of the most telling and frank exchanges that I’ve ever heard to define our new media reality. And it’s the kind of exchange that sends chills down the spine of old line media companies as they watch their page counts dwindle along with their influence. The transformation now underway is one where old line engineering, manufacturing, and retail companies are building significant media bridges directly to consumers. The key way that they’re doing it is through cable TV as it continues to outperform all media because it remains the leading platform through which a consumer can experience a brand and its products. Cable creators saw early on that their platform was the perfect conduit through which brands could reach consumers directly, hence it was cable that created the revolution in branded TV content that major networks are now struggling to answer and that print is unable to counter. In fact, the branded entertainment business grew by 13.9 percent in 2008 to be a \$25.4 billion business. As manufacturers create their own branded television series, they are now using that content and the TV production process itself to populate a wide variety of platforms from proprietary websites to DVDs to video-on-demand and a host of emerging technologies that are, oh by the way, all powered by the video medium—which has become the universal donor of content.

What does the future hold? We’ll see more of the same only the trends are likely to intensify as an increasing number of manufacturers transform their media marketing models and bypass magazine and newspaper publishers altogether. This success is creating an avalanche of companies looking to emulate successful models. More and more newspapers and magazines will continue to fold—numerous venerable newspapers and magazines have closed their doors in the last year alone and even the *New York Times* is on the financial ropes. Consumers and consequently advertisers will continue to create stronger bridges between each other as the shift in media spending continues to drift from old line print titles. This trend, by the way, started well before the 2001 recession and has only strengthened. None of this comes as a surprise for all that you have to do to gauge the health of the sporting print world is to pick up any significant magazine today

and see the anemic page counts—dramatically less than a decade ago. Even the value of these magazines has plummeted over the last seven to ten years as you track successive sales of these titles and the shrinking dollars that they're bringing at auction.

For manufacturers and retailers, we are entering a period in which future winners and losers will be defined by how they transform their media marketing realities. While many are aggressively building meaningful media marketing platforms and securing distribution channels, some are content to continue to rely on others to reach consumers for them—even though that approach has, at best, done little more than slow their loss of market share.

The question is: which company are you?

“The current transformation has manufacturers and retailers scrambling to connect with their consumers as they redefine their own media marketing realities that increasingly don't include traditional media companies.”

COMING! LATE SUMMER 2009!



*Chris Dorsey is President and founding partner of Orion Multimedia, America's largest independent producer of outdoor adventure programming. He's helped create 30 different television series over the last decade—more than anyone in history. His latest book, **Remote Locations—Inside the meteoric rise of televised hunting and fishing**, will be released late summer and will be available from www.orionmultimedia.com.*

Orion Multimedia produces 23 series on four networks along with numerous specials on a wide range of field sports and natural history subjects. Orion's team of producers, writers, editors, animators, and cinematographers have won 12 national Emmy awards -- more than the rest of the outdoor production industry combined. Orion's state-of-the-art HD broadcast division is complemented by full-service agency and sales solutions groups that offer the industry's only fully integrated, self-contained marketing solutions organization.