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Spotlight on... **Direct Mail**

Direct marketing is the selling of goods and services without the aid of a wholesaler or retailer. It remains one of the fastest growing segments in marketing. With working women, two-income households, individuals working more than one job, Americans have disposable income but little time for shopping. In addition to changing societal factors, the computer (permitting very detailed audience segmentation), credit cards for safe and simple payment and toll-free telephone numbers have all contributed to the growth of direct marketing.

Although direct marketing uses many media to communicate, direct mail continues to play a major role.

Advantages

Selectivity. Advertisers can target the market they want to reach by any number of demographic and psychographic criteria. Precise audience segmentation affords minimum waste and maximum efficiency.

Response oriented. Ready-to-use, postage-paid reply cards, envelopes and 800 numbers can effectively promote maximum and immediate response.

Personal impact. There is a personal "one-of-a-kind" quality to direct mail. Messages can be tailored to individual consumers. Plus, a recipient must do something with a mailing even if it's just throwing it away.

Flexibility of format and timing. A mailing requires only a minimum of standardization. The advertiser can use special inks, add fragrances, insert swatches of materials, coins, vinyl, games or other attention-getting devices.

Measurability. The advertiser knows who received the mailing and who responded. They can study how a prospect was converted into a sale. And the results of different mailings can be analyzed to compare different variables (each list, each copy approach, each offer, etc.).

Limitations

Reliance on quality mailing lists. Finding the right person is critical to the success of direct mail. In fact, the list itself is as important as all other

elements of the program combined including message elements, offer, and frequency of mailings. Great care must be taken to avoid outdated or incorrect lists.

Clutter. Many recipients view mailings as "junk mail." The huge volume the average person receives can become an irritant.

High cost. When you add production and printing costs for an envelope, letter, brochure and reply card; list rental costs; outgoing and incoming postage; direct mail carries a relatively high cost per prospect.



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