



## News

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# Hotel Network Captures Attentive Audience

By Mark Dominiak, Special to *TelevisionWeek*

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A hotel room, of all places, might be one of the optimal places to sell your client's new product. In a few weeks, the Hotel Networks will be launching DoNotDisturb.tv, a network offering content targeted to the traveler, business and affluent market segments. The channel will be offered in a linear format, via video-on-demand and on a Web site.

The Hotel Networks, or THN, is owned by LodgeNet, which controls over 1.9 million hotel rooms across 10,000 properties nationwide, including brand names like Marriott, Hyatt, Hilton, Starwood, Fairmont, Four Seasons and others. Through THN, media planners can take advantage of a broad range of channel options, including cable television, interactive, out-of-home and promotions.

THN properties can reach a half-billion guests each year via traditional inventory, satellite and video-on-demand. All viewing, including VOD and Internet, is tracked through set-top box data and third-party research. Programming is delivered to a core target of affluent 25- to 54-year-olds, split roughly evenly between male and female.

On the surface, it may not seem that delivering a television ad to a traveler in a hotel room has much value compared to television impressions delivered through typical avenues. However, travelers who view video offerings in their hotel rooms provide an opportunity that isn't readily available during conventional viewing. THN has compelling research to illustrate the point.

Nielsen reports that the average traveler watches the hotel TV set for 4 1/2 hours a day, with 90% of all travelers watching some television. In addition, one-third of travelers view some type of video-on-demand offering. Whether it's because they're trapped in a hotel in an unfamiliar locale or whether they're just killing time, travelers invest a significant amount of time with the hotel television.

The high number of viewing hours shouldn't be considered time spent mindlessly. In fact, travelers seem to be more intrigued with program offerings while they're in an "on-the-road" mindset. According to a Zoomerang study done in conjunction with THN, "Travelers are more open to trying new things and having new experiences while away from home," which intuitively makes sense given the non-routine nature of a travel experience.

Travelers tend to experiment with program offerings while in the hotel room, selecting shows not on their usual

roster of favorites. The study reports that more than 26% of travelers who discover a new show while on the road will search for it when they return to their regular viewing environment.

A similar pattern emerges in the viewing of new channels. Of those travelers viewing a new channel, more than 22% will become frequent viewers after the hotel experience. The sampling experience appears to be directed.

An important implication for planners is the context in which hotel viewing occurs. There are seemingly significant elements of curiosity, exploration and experimentation that either motivate or are closer to the surface for viewers during hotel stays. That could be a strong asset for a brand message.

For example, perhaps a planner is working on a brand introduction with messages attempting to convince consumers to take a chance on the new product. Hotel viewers are quite likely to be in that kind of mindset. A hotel viewing experience seems to go hand-in-hand with experimenting, trying out new, unfamiliar things. A brand wanting to get on the radar with those who can embrace it and create a positive buzz on its behalf might find messaging to hotel travelers advantageous.

DoNotDisturb.tv will play strongly to the hotel viewing experience. In many hotels across the THN network, DoNotDisturb.tv will be positioned as one of the first channels seen when the television is turned on.

Where DoNotDisturb.tv will differentiate itself is in content. The main offering will be high-quality, short-form programming representing the best of what is available on the Web. This may include vignettes from up-and-coming comedians, unique musical acts, short-form series, edgy spec commercials from innovative directors and more. All content will be in high definition; it can be carried in each HD-capable hotel and will come from a variety of sources.

The two predominant content sources are partnerships with professional Web development companies and portals that distribute user-created content. DoNotDisturb.tv has a number of deals with Web entertainment producers such as Strike TV and My Damn Channel. They also have a number of deals with user-generated content sites like Break.com. Initial plans call for about two-thirds user-generated content and about one-third professional or blended content.

Content categories will include Best in Show, Hot Topics, Short Shorts, Sweet Shots (pets and kids), What The! (outrageous) and Sports & Pranks. On the linear channel, obscenities will be dropped or bleeped. Most programming will fall into PG or PG-13 territory, with the more adult-oriented content available on-demand.

Features might be as short as one minute or as long as five. The program loop might range from an hour and a half four hours. And the loop might remain intact for a month, although DoNotDisturb.tv can use satellite capability to change content quickly.

While refreshing content is not as critical as it might seem on the surface given the high turnover rate of travelers, DoNotDisturb.tv will be monitoring viewer reception to the programming. Because of the set-top-box delivery mechanism, second-by-second viewing data will be available.

Viewers will not be limited to what is provided in the programming loop. There will be a few utilities available to viewers that will prompt engagement. A counter noting how many seconds are left in the current segment will be displayed on the right of the screen. In the bottom quarter of the screen, a queue will display what's up next

and how long that segment is. There also will be a VOD banner inviting viewers to dive in to a larger cache of content than is available in the loop.

For advertisers, there will be a banner space that can tie directly into commercial messages. Viewers can use the remote to find additional brand information or promotional offers.

DoNotDisturb.tv is scheduled to launch May 1. Expectations are that it will reach 125,000 rooms at launch up to 350,000 rooms by the end of June.

What does that mean in terms of potential viewers? Consider that 1 million rooms equates to around 25 million travelers per month. So 350,000 rooms will translate to approximately 8.75 million potential viewers per month.

DoNotDisturb.tv will not be pursuing many advertisers for the introduction. Instead, it will be angling for one advertiser that can utilize the complete environment of linear, banner, video-on-demand and Web platforms in an integrated way for the first quarter of DoNotDisturb.tv's run. The goal is to bring a sponsorship look and feel to the channel.

It may seem like a no-brainer that the best partner advertiser would come from an affluent or travel category. But because the hotel environment prompts curiosity and exploration, DoNotDisturb.tv might fit the needs of many unexpected brands.

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