

Competition among area TV stations on upswing

Competition for viewers among the television stations serving this area is a three-way race with millions of dollars riding on the outcome.

In the last quarter of 1984, WNEP-16 (ABC) and WBRE-28 (NBC) came down to the wire in the all-important Nielsen ratings, while the newly-acquired WDAU-22 (CBS) was still trying to get out of the gates.

"We're taking a short-term loss for a long-term gain," says Gene Bohi, general manager of WDAU, acquired six months ago by Southeastern Capital Corp. of Atlanta.

Win, place or show, Bohi says his station has made significant gains in audience since the summer.

"In fact, there have been time periods where we have dominated the share of the audience," Bohi claims. "We've spent a tremendous amount of money on equipment so our picture would have parity."

"Plus we've spent a lot of dollars on advertising and promotion. From the results of the first rating books, it pays to advertise."

Here's the latest ratings breakdown for a typical TV day, with the stations listed first, second and third in each time slot:

7-9 a.m. - WNEP, WBRE, WDAU.

9 a.m.-noon - WBRE, WDAU, WNEP.

Noon-4 p.m. - WNEP, WDAU, WBRE.

4-6 p.m. - WBRE, WDAU, WNEP.

News (6 p.m.) - WNEP, WBRE, WDAU.

Prime-Time - WNEP, WBRE, WDAU.

Late Night - WBRE, WNEP, WDAU.

Saturday Morning - WBRE, WDAU, WNEP.

News continues to be WNEP's primary business, says Elden Hale, vice president and general manager. The station devotes more than two hours of its programming day to news. That's because its local, something Hale believes area viewers can't get anywhere else.

"News here is a multi-million dollar business in terms of what we spend," says Hale, the former news director of the Avoca-based station. "It's worth every penny of it."

"We're interested in the vitality of the whole region," says Terry Baltimore, vice president and general manager of WBRE, which has stepped up its share of public service announcements. "We're all tied together economically."

"We try to offer entertainment for the broadest possible audience. We have a pretty good feel for the shows that are popular and those that aren't. Our greatest strength is in our young adults and families."

Some things in life still free

Travel agencies may well be the only service industry that's still free, say local travel agents.

A customer seeking an airline reservation and ticket to visit grandma and grandpa on the West Coast doesn't pay one cent to a travel agent to make the arrangements. Nor does the consumer have to pay a travel agent to book hotel accommodations, car rentals, cruise ship vacations.

The services provided by travel agencies are so important to the industry that the carriers and hotels don't mind picking up the tab.

For the airlines, it's a matter of convenience.

Travel agents can also use their expertise and computerized equipment to save the traveler money.

What's in it for the travel agents themselves.

The pay is low, but it's an opportunity to "work the world," travel cheaply and help people.

But those problems are the travel agent's, whose job it is to make traveling problem free for the consumer.

Though the airline problem is out of the

travel agent's hands, they agree it's hard to tell that to a customer who just sat 12 hours in an airport because an airline suddenly decided to file for bankruptcy. All the agent can do is pass the complaint on to the airline.

However, if too many complaints come in about a particular airline's service or lack thereof, travel agents will refuse to book reservations with the carrier, opting for more reliable service.

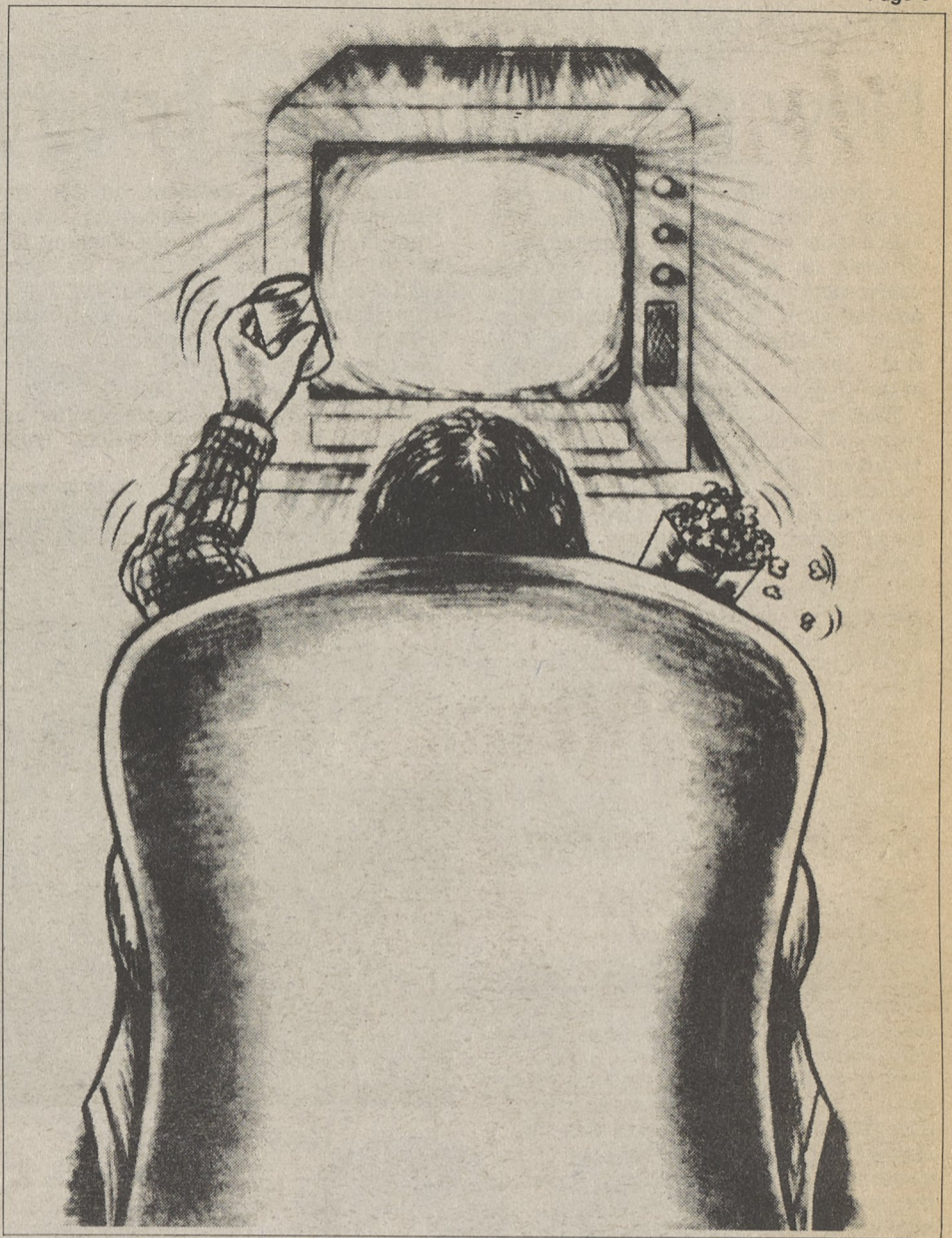
Knowledge gained through experience about wholesalers and places, good and bad, is free.

Such information is obtained by travel agents through brochures and "I've-been-there" experience.

Charter companies frequently offer travel agents familiarization trips to vacation hot spots to inspect their hotel rooms, cruise lines and services.

And travel agents know what to look for when helping clients pick out a particular package trip - fine print.

Travel agents, will do their best to make sure their clients are not duped into falling for bad deals. After all, the agents are right here in the community and depend on return business.



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