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October 21, 2009

Cablevision's Interactive TV Ads Pay Off for Gillette

By Zachary Rodgers

After deploying Cablevision's new interactive TV ads, Gillette is sending 30,000 samples of a body wash product to New York-area cable subscribers who requested them using their remote controls. The campaign was scheduled to run for two weeks beginning October 6, but Gillette pulled it a week early after maxing out its promotion.

Gillette is one of several advertisers offering on-demand product samples and gift certificates through the boob tube, courtesy of Cablevision's Optimum Select ad products. Others include Benjamin Moore, which is mailing out coupons for 2 ounce color samples; Century 21, which is offering \$10 gift cards; and Unilever's Degree fragrance brand, which is sending samples of a women's body mist.

Cablevision's iO TV digital cable service reaches approximately 2.9 million households in the greater New York area. The company announced the Optimum Select program last month.

The Optimum Select ads begin with a :30 spot. During the ad, a bar at the bottom of the screen invites viewers to press the "Select" button on their remotes. They then choose from content and offers that are pre-selected by advertisers. These may include free product samples, brand channels, and video showcases.

Advertisers such as Mattel Barbie and the U.S. Navy have set up branded channels on the iO service. In an early test last year, a Disney Travel channel allowed subscribers to browse information about Disney theme parks and then request to receive a call from an agent. Cablevision said the booking rate for people who made that request was 25 percent.

Cablevision is also letting advertisers serve multiple creative versions of an ad in the same avail. For instance, an advertiser can determine whether an iO subscriber is an existing customer by matching his or her address through large data companies such as Axiom. It can then serve different ad messages to customers and non-customers.

The interactive Gillette spots appeared on more than 25 of Cablevision's cable networks, said David Kline, president of Rainbow Advertising Sales Corp., Cablevision's ad sales subsidiary. That helped guarantee high exposure rates, since Cablevision's contracts with network partners allow it to sell only about two minutes of commercial airtime per hour of programming.