

The Media Audit

NEWS RELEASE

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Charging for Access Doesn't Slow Growth of Newspaper Web Sites

Houston - (4/9/02) - Everyone knows that if a newspaper starts charging a subscription fee for access to its online web site the immediate result will be a steep decline in site visitors.

How come they didn't know that in Tulsa and Albuquerque?

The Tulsa World initiated its subscription fee in June of 2001 and the Albuquerque Journal followed in July.

According to The Media Audit, the Journal site attracted 13.6 percent of the adults in its market "during the past 30 days" in 2000 and 15.0 percent during 2001. The Media Audit household survey was performed during October/November of 2001, four months after the initiation of the subscription fee.

In Tulsa the story is the same, but the numbers are much more impressive. In The Media Audit for 2000, the Tulsa World site attracted 16.8 percent of adults to its site. That survey was conducted seven months prior to the initiation of the subscription fee. Four months after the fee was imposed The Media Audit surveyed the market again and found that 18.2 percent of adults in the Tulsa market had accessed the World site during the past 30 days.

"We were surprised by the research findings," says Bob Jordan, co-chairman of the 31-year-old research firm that produces The Media Audit in 85 metro markets. "The research makes it pretty clear that the switch to paid access can be made - at least in some markets -- without damaging the long term prospects of the site," he added.

The Journal and the World are among sixteen daily newspapers with fee-for-access web sites that are being tracked by the Newspaper Association of America. The last report on the NAA web site was in October. The two newspapers were the only ones among the sixteen that were in markets served by The Media Audit.

The audience for both newspaper and web sites, as reported by The Media Audit, include non-paid as well as paid visitors to the site. According to the NAA report the non-paid visitors to the Journal are permitted access to the front page, index pages and classifieds. The World permits free access to classifieds, weather, stock ticker, calendars and recipes.

According to a spokesman, the Tulsaworld.com now has more than 27,000 online members that include 24,500 print subscribers who registered for online access. The remaining 2500 are web-only subscribers. The World charges \$5 a week and \$45 per year for access to its site and archives.

Abqjournal.com reported 728 online-only subscribers. Of those 493 are yearly, the others are month-by-month. In addition, 7,604 print subscribers have registered for site access. The Journal also reported to NAA that 293 print subscribers came through the web site between August and October of 2001.

The Media Audit, a syndicated media ratings service currently covering 85 markets, provides both quantitative and qualitative data for media web sites as well as for traditional media.

Traditional media - print, broadcast and outdoor - have used The Media Audit data in sales, marketing and management for more than 30 years. In 1998, the surveys started providing data on local media websites. The surveys now contain more than 400 fields of qualitative information in addition to quantitative measurements of local web audiences.

The Media Audit has more than 1700 clients that include radio and television stations, cable television networks, cable television operators, daily newspapers, alternative weekly newspapers, city and regional magazines, shopper publications, outdoor billboard companies, and direct mail houses. In addition, The Media Audit clients include local Internet web sites for daily newspapers, television and radio stations, alternative newspapers, shoppers, and city guides. The client base also includes more than 500 advertising agencies, media buying services, and advertisers.

The Media Audit is a product of International Demographics, Inc., a 31-year-old Houston firm that is engaged exclusively in syndicated, multimedia surveys conducted at the local market level.

Note: If you would like to periodically receive market survey data from The Media Audit, please contact Bob Jordan by email (bjordan@themediiaudit.com) and leave your name, title, company affiliation and your mailing and/or email address.

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