

And Now, More Than a Word from Our Sponsor



In **1991** the major terrestrial television channels battered you, the viewing audience, during prime time, for over **thirteen** minutes per hour, advertising commercial products and their own upcoming shows.

By the beginning of **2000**, ABC, CBS, NBC, and FOX all reported more than **16 1/2** minutes of commercials per hour.

By **2009** the same channels bombarded their viewers for **24** minutes each hour.



The assault continues in other areas as well. In July of 2010 the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals stripped the Federal Communications Commission of authority to enforce certain broadcast decency laws, specifically, those dealing with "fleeting expletives."

According to a recently released study by the Parents Television Council, we are being assaulted by increased use of both the f-bomb and the s- bomb as well.

The study compares the broadcast networks' first two weeks of prime time programming from the autumn of 2005 with that in 2010.

It cites a significant increase in both the instances and the harshness of the profanity used.



The use of the bleeped or muted f-word increased from 11 instances to 276 comparing 2005 and 2010. That is a 2,409% increase. The s-word increased 763%.

Fox, commonly considered the most conservative of the major networks, showed the greatest per-hour increase in use of vulgarity.



Chuck Lorre, the producer of the sitcoms *Two and a Half Men* and *The Big Bang Theory* finishes each show with a "vanity card" – a personal, on-screen note intended to be humorous and often a bit cutting. The vanity card at the end of the 2010 autumn premiere of *Two and a Half Men* (Sept. 20th at 9:00 p.m. EDT) was a pointed slam at those who had sued FOX about the use of expletives. Tongue in cheek, he wrote...

Please know that I am committed to making season eight of Two and a Half Men as easy for you as

possible. I have vowed to eliminate all [the kinds of jokes] that have caused you and your colleagues at broadcast standards so much distress.

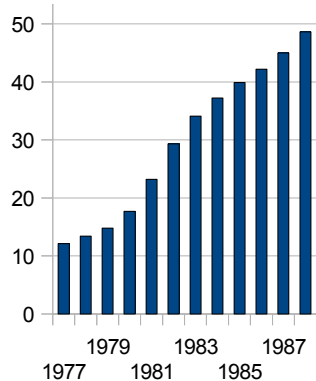
His joke types, listed on screen, included most reproductive organs, bodily fluids and forms of sexual impurity. He finishes his sarcasm by asking for their comments on the night's show. It was about Jake having a ménage a trois, Charlie drinking himself to death and Alan having a one night stand with the drug-addled mother of his best friend.

The History of Youth Culture: MTV

MTV was born August 1, 1981 with the words, "Ladies and Gentleman...rock and roll," and the video clip, *Video Killed the Radio Star*, by the Buggles. MTV streamed free promo videos – given to them by music companies.

The total number of cable subscriptions tripled between 1980 and 1987. The growing audience made niche programming possible. Food, history, golf, sci-fi, weather, sports and movie channels proliferated. MTV was the first to target teenagers and gained 2.1 million subscribing households by the end of the year. The channel became a youth market goldmine.

Cable Television Subscriptions in Millions



MTV began by playing music videos 24 hours per day. Today, it plays less than three hours of them per day.

Other rock music channels have died but MTV keeps on keeping on. How do they do it?

MTV has had an incredible knack for knowing what teens find fascinating. For example, when cell phone prices dropped and became affordable for teens, MTV was there with a nationwide, call in, request show, *TRL* (Total Request Live). The show had thousands calling and texting, asking to see their favorite music videos. MTV also began the *Video Music Awards* in 1984 – ensuring their control of the medium.

As music migrated to the palm of teens' hands (iPods, MP3 players and cell phones) MTV changed its focus to shows like *Beavis and Butthead*, *Jackass*, *Pimp My Ride*, *The Osbournes*, and *America's Next Top Model*. These shows have shaped the lives of teens over MTV's nearly 30-year history. MTV saw it had the power to impact every part of teenagers' lives, not just their music habits. Today's reality series are carefully edited to show youth what they should be thinking and how they should be acting in every situation they encounter.

MTV's hold on youth reached new heights in 2010 with their annual *VMA* (Video Music Awards). The *VMA*'s drew nearly 11 million viewers, which is almost half the number of teens living in the US.

As noted in previous articles, major shifts in the power of youth culture often come with new or more affordable technology. MTV is one organization that has ridden the wave of change better than most. It anticipated the huge upturn in cable subscriptions. It read the shift to cell phones and texting before everyone else. It understood how youth social networking has changed from "live" to "assisted by technology" and it continues to ride the wave.

To predict what will happen next in the youth world you could keep an eye on what adult technology will soon become inexpensive enough to make its way into the hands of youth or you could ask MTV. That's what youth marketers do.

~ Patrick Quillan
Kairos Staff

WRITE TO US AT:
KAIROS.EDITOR@GMAIL.COM



MTV's year-to-date ratings are up [14%](#) from a year earlier. Its third-quarter ratings for the 12-34 age group jumped [30%](#) from a year earlier. The jump is at least partly due to MTV's wildly popular

Jersey Shore and *Teen Mom*.

Jersey Shore is another fake-reality television series that follows eight vodka-soaked housemates and their summer, sexual hook-ups. Last year it averaged 6.7 million viewers and out-ranked NBC. It begins season three in January.



Teen Mom is also a reality show, in this case with real teen moms. It premiered on December 8, 2009, and chronicles the

lives of four teen moms as they navigate their first year of motherhood. Although the show does not advocate teenage motherhood, its impact is predictable. Teens will imitate what they see, not what they are told.

MTV has become the first and only network to receive an "excellent" rating on the [Network Responsibility Index](#) published by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. Of MTV's original prime time programming, 42% included Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered characters.

MTV is the number one rated cable channel among teenagers in the U.S.