



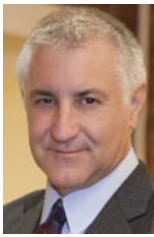
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Lifestyle choices

The lifestyle genre is booming, with a variety of dedicated television channels set to roll out globally. But is the demand for female-friendly programming strong enough to support them all, asks Adam Benzine.



"Food programming is hot," says Greg Moyer (left), Scripps Networks International's president. He has known this for some time - it's part of the reason his company is rolling out the Food Network throughout EMEA - but the point really crystallised for him in March, when a news item landed in his inbox revealing that Syfy in the US was developing a food show. "That's when you know you've really got a hot category," he laughs.

The irony of a channel devoted to the paranormal launching a cookery series (Marcel's Quantum Kitchen) belies a serious fact - that food programming is now big business. But it's not just food that is on the rise. The whole lifestyle genre - weddings, fashion, makeover, relationships, reality, cookery and travel - is booming.

The same month Syfy announced its culinary commission, Discovery unveiled ambitious plans to launch its female-skewing channel TLC into 75 markets across the globe, starting with Norway, in a bid to attract 100 million subscribers by the end of 2011.

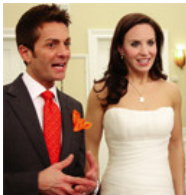


Meanwhile, Rainbow Media, riding the crest of a wave of wedding-themed programming, is expanding its increasingly popular WE TV brand throughout Asia; while AETN, which last year completed its takeover of female-friendly brand Lifetime, plans to start rolling out the channel internationally.

Couple these developments with the international roll-out of Food Network and Fine Living Network by Moyer's Scripps, and throw in Fox International Channels' plans for its Utilisima network, and suddenly you have a global TV industry awash with wall-to-wall chefs, models and brides-to-be.

"TV viewership trends are changing," says Luis Silberwasser (above), head of international content for Discovery Networks International. "We know that women watch about 20% more TV than men, so there is a very big market for these kinds of channels, and we're very optimistic about that."

Silberwasser says that TLC's global roll-out will benefit from both the existing infrastructure that Discovery has around the world and from a strong slate of US lifestyle programming - and not just from the stateside TLC channel, but from other nets in the Discovery suite, such as Discovery Health, as well. The international expansion will consist of a mixture of new channel launches and channel rebrands. In Norway, the first of the 75 targeted markets, the network replaced Discovery Travel & Living.



Initially, TLC Norway will lean heavily on programming from the US TLC channel, with shows such as LA Ink, Say Yes To The Dress (left), Cake Boss and Hoarders. However, Silberwasser says the aim will be to bring in more local programming as the channel stabilises. "Our ideal would be a 50/50 split, maybe 35% to 50% of the content being fed from ideas or productions from the US, and the rest from acquisitions or productions from the local market," he explains. "That's the direction for this channel globally."

The same sort of balance is being sought by Rainbow Media for WE TV, which targets women aged 18-29 and is best known for titles such as Bridezillas, My Fair Wedding, The Locator and Raising Sextuplets. The network has been rolling out throughout Asia, and launched on Pacific Century CyberWorks-owned Hong Kong pay-TV platform Now TV in February.

"It's up right now in Singapore, South Korea and Hong Kong, and there are several other territories where we're looking for a roll-out," says Harold Gronenthal, senior VP and general manager of Rainbow Media Global.

"About 50% to 60% is content produced by WE TV, things like Bridezillas, My Fair

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About 50% to 60% is content produced by WE TV, things like *Bridezillas*, *My Fair Wedding*, *Amazing Wedding Cakes*, *The Locator*, *Platinum Weddings* - those are all shows that are on the channel," he explains. "The other 40% or so are shows from other markets that are perfect for WE TV, like *The Cooks and the Libras* from Australia, and things like Asian versions of WE TV programmes or WE TV formats.

"WE TV has been up in Asia since December 2009, so we've not even cracked our first half-year yet, but we're already seeing that getting into localised, regionalised programming at some level is obviously going to be important for the future."

It is not just in emerging territories where networks are seeing opportunities. For some, even a mature market like the US still has spaces to fill. For Fox International Channels (FIC), which in May launched a dedicated US domestic feed for its Spanish-language lifestyle network *Utilisima*, there was a gap for a channel offering 100% in-house-produced original content in Spanish, with no dubbing or subtitling.



"We were curious about the fact that nobody had tried to compete in this space in the way that we were doing it before, and we arrived at the conclusion that it's a business where you can compete only when you own a substantial part of your content and you can produce it at scale and at reasonable economics," says Hernán López (left), FIC president and chief operating officer. "We are in a position to do that because we own a production house and we commission 100% of our content, so we actually own all our rights."

López says scheduling for *Utilisima* US will be tailored to fit the Hispanic make-up of the US, with certain programmes timed to hit certain demographics. "The US Hispanic market is about 70% Mexican, with 30% coming mostly from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Central America," he adds. "The 70% Mexican is mostly in the West Coast, so our primetime in the West Coast will have more Mexican shows, and for the East Coast we'll have more Caribbean and Central American shows."

One of the challenges facing these lifestyle nets as they roll out is that many have already licensed out their best-known US shows to other channels in the territory, raising the question of how best to launch an international version of a channel without its flagship show.



For TLC, Silberwasser says that where Discovery has licensed its original US property, it might look to create a local version of the same show for the new market - think *London Ink* or *Berlin Ink*, should the rights to tattoo parlour-set reality show *LA Ink* (left) not be available in the UK or Germany. "In those situations where we can't use the Discovery version, we can create a local adaptation of the format," he says. "We will deal with those situations. The majority of those ideas are formats that are owned by Discovery."

For Scripps, meanwhile, Moyer says the company, which recently agreed a distribution deal with London-based indie Passion, has been strategic about the shows it has held back. "It is obviously a delicate management situation," he says. "We've restricted the number of titles that we're prepared to syndicate and we have protected enough inventory that we're able to have a channel business and a syndication business that live side by side without having to share inventory."

"The truth of the matter is that there is a healthy syndication business and we're just at the beginning of our channel roll-out, so the economics suggest that we should try to develop some strong syndication revenue alongside channel revenue. But we're fortunate in that, domestically, we produce enough content that we're able to actually have our cake and eat it."

Amid all these channel launches, the key question must be whether there can be room for so much lifestyle programming. One might expect a rapidly approaching saturation point for blushing brides, family-run businesses and animated chefs, yet all of the lifestyle executives polled by C21 said that they anticipated demand would be large enough to sustain current growth.

"In the early days of cable, most advertisers and cable operators didn't think of multi-channel as a medium to reach women, because women were so well served by traditional free-to-air broadcast television," says López. "Go to any one market and you'll find a number of news, sports, documentary and entertainment channels, but few channels tailored for women."

"So there is significant room in each of these markets for one or two lifestyle players, and each of them to have one or two channels, because we compete in different segments of lifestyle. *Utilisima* competes in the 'how to' segment, which is not necessarily the kind of lifestyle that you see on *Bravo* in the US, which is more aspirational."

Moyer agrees: "The women's market globally is underserved, given its size and its importance, so there's probably room for a number of us to survive and succeed. I don't think this is a mature market yet by any means, and I don't think in the women's space you could actually point to one brand that's everywhere that has the same clout and awareness as any of the major entrants in news, sports, movies or documentary."

"That tells me there's still room to jostle for a position and put your best foot