

MORE WAYS TO WATCH TV, MORE WAYS FOR ADVERTISERS TO REACH AUDIENCES



Advertisers looking to run their ads on television now have more factors to take into account than a series' viewership. Audiences have many new ways in which to watch a show, most of which the Nielsen ratings can't add to its numbers. The CBS sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* is a prime example of a series benefitting from the various means for people to watch. The show is currently in its seventh season but has managed to raise 20 percent in ratings for viewers aged 18-49 and holds a high ranking among comedy series. Its rising popularity, in spite of its age, has been attributed to streaming opportunities on Netflix, as well as syndication on other networks. Netflix offers a service online that allows subscribers to watch movies or TV series instantly on their computers or certain HDTVs, Blu-ray players or gaming consoles. The company has numerous TV series available and usually includes a series in its entirety, or, as with *How I Met Your Mother* and currently running shows, all prior seasons excluding the last completed one. The CBS series is syndicated on more than one network but it was recently added to FX, known for its young audiences. The network broadcast a *How I Met Your Mother* marathon over the Labor Day weekend. The results were particularly rewarding when the show returned for its new season that same month. Other series that have been on the air the same number of seasons, such as *House*, *The Office* and *Desperate Housewives*, have been experiencing declining numbers. The option for viewers to watch multiple episodes – in chronological order – is especially fulfilling for a series such as *How I Met Your Mother*. The show has a serial format, such that people joining the show in later seasons may find themselves a little lost. Streaming on Netflix or a marathon is a way for viewers to “catch up” with the show and start watching the first-run season – when the advertisers are looking for a bigger audience. Most shows that are serialized haven't done well in the past – *Seinfeld* is a notable exception – but this started to change with the rising popularity of TV shows uploaded for viewing online, TV shows released on DVD and viewers getting the full use of their DVRs. Another CBS comedy, *The Big Bang Theory*, isn't available on Netflix, but it did see increased ratings after it started in syndication – and even TBS, the network that ran the show in syndication, had a jump in ratings among other cable channels. *How I Met Your Mother* had a rocky start when it premiered during the 2005-06 season. Its concept – a man in 2030 tells his children the story of how he met their mother – evidently didn't appeal to viewers who would have to tune in every week and may not learn the mother's identity until the end. But shows featuring a serial format, including previous series like FOX' *24* and ABC's *Lost*, can earn an audience who has the opportunity to watch an entire season (or three) in one sitting. And that surely sounds good to advertisers.