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Posted: Tue., Mar. 16, 1999

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Star claiming twice reach of MTV Asia

Channel V figures in 24-hour distrib'n numbers

By MAUREEN SULLIVAN

HONG KONG – In the latest skirmish between the top Asian music channels, Star TV's Channel V has released previously unconfirmed distribution figures that show it with more than twice the reach of archrival MTV Asia.

Channel V managing director Steve Smith said 24-hour distribution has reached 40.4 million compared with 19.6 million for MTV. In syndication, Channel V reaches 126.6 million homes compared with 85 million for MTV, according to Channel V research.

The 40 million vs. 20 million that Channel V refers to concerns places where the channels are available 24 hours a day via satellite, cable or direct-to-home dishes.

Syndication refers to places where the channels are available only part time, such as when they sell a program or two to a terrestrial.

"These figures give rise to concrete evidence that Channel V is Asia's leading and most-watched music channel," Smith said.

For its part, MTV claims distribution of more than 100 million, including 24 million in syndication and 77 million in daily availability of at least six-hour blocks, primarily on cable.

Smith argued that Channel V spent months trying "to nail down the numbers in all the markets." He said they used publicly available numbers for MTV.

Smith said the most important figure to compare was the 40 million vs. 20 million in 24-hour distribution because that's 98% of the revenue. "(Twenty-four) hours is what we're building the business on," he added.

Undoubtedly the most controversial numbers are those from China, which strictly regulates foreign broadcasters. Channel V claims 24-hour distribution of 21 million and zero for MTV. In syndication, Channel V gives itself credit for 100 million compared with 37.7 million for MTV.

A personal vow is not unusual in China, where both television and ratings services are in their infancy. Satecaster Robert Chua of CETV is known to display an album filled with positive letters from Chinese viewers as proof of his channel's popularity.

Channel V is a joint venture between Star TV, BMG, EMI Music, Sony Pictures Entertainment and Turner Broadcasting. MTV Asia is a joint venture of MTV Networks, a division of Viacom, and Polygram.

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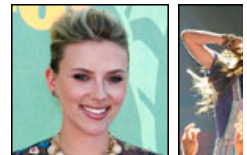
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