



IT'S A NEW RACE FOR THE MARKET SHARE

International news channel **France 24** launched on the web before its satellite distribution began – a well conceived and executed campaign that was recently recognised with the AIB Award for "Most creative marketing concept". With CEO **Alain de Pouzilhac** at the helm, the channel has been breaking all records in achieving carriage worldwide

Opinion leaders are watching more and more international news on the internet and TV, but at the same time they are more sceptical about what they watch. People are also increasingly watching international news channels because security is a top priority for all who travel. Previously, there were only two international channels delivering news in English, BBC and CNN, giving their vision of the world. We decided to launch France 24 broadcasting international news with

a French perspective, to look at the world with diversity.

Do your news items differ from the BBC or CNN?

Our analysis of international news promotes diversity of opinion, thought and approach. The BBC looks at the world with diversity like us but we are totally different from the BBC and CNN in that we also convey the French tradition of 'culture' and the art of living - we consider 'culture' important for the development of civilisation, not just economy. And in contrast to CNN we start a debate – we try to provide a

spirit of confrontation and contradiction with regard to international news. We try to explain all different points of view, and in this we differ from the other channels.

So you think there is more balance on France 24?

More balance than on CNN – yes, more balance than on the BBC – no, I'd say we are equally balanced. I think that objectivity does not exist in international news. You report with honesty, independence and impartiality about the facts and what you have seen. But we are influenced by our religion, our education, our country, by our environment. We try to develop a French point of view. To have all these different points of view is good for objectivity.

Is an organisation that puts a particular perspective onto news going to struggle for a mass audience?

No, I think internet has changed totally the basis of our audience. Basically we have two target audiences. The first is traditional opinion-formers, in industrial countries approximately 15% of the population – everybody is trying to reach them. Then we have the new opinion leaders which represent roughly 30%. New opinion leaders are not necessarily senior executives or people who travel a lot – they utilise technology to influence the community. If you combine these two target groups, you reach about one third of the world population who are interested in international news. That's the reason why we decided to launch France 24 first on the internet before starting broadcasts.

What about feedback from the audience?

Audience feedback for us is crucial. For the internet, we have put in place measurement of monthly user figures – in October 2007 it was 4.3 million. We are waiting for the results of the EMS research

which will be available in early 2008. So far we know from EOLS 2007 (European Opinion Leaders Survey) that France 24 reached a 9% market share weekly in Europe. Every two months we get the figures for the evolution of our market share, and that for me is the key driver in our future strategy.

What has been your impact in the Middle East?

It was very important that France 24 launched in English – because 80-85% of opinion formers around the world do not speak or understand French. Then we realized that 60-80% of the population in the Middle East don't speak English or French. We believe that the main challenge in the 21st century is to prevent a conflict between Muslim and Western countries. And to do that we have to put our point of view in this part of the world, and to do that we have to speak Arabic. We are soon going to Arabic 24 hours. After that, in 2009, we must launch in Spanish, and then in 2010 we must decide whether we want to broadcast in German or Mandarin – this will depend on what happens in the Chinese market.

There is talk of a merger between France 24 and RFI and TV5.

The French government is right that we have to see how we can be more efficient worldwide and how we can develop more synergy between these three channels. TV5 is French of course but also serving the international French speaking community, in Canada-Quebec, Belgium, Switzerland – which means that it is impossible for TV5 to have a French perspective. TV5 is a generalist network with country-specific channels while we are specialists for international news. It would be very difficult to merge a network with a specialist but trying to develop synergies makes sense, e.g. in distribution or in advertising. We at France 24 are confident because we believe that

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we are successful, we have developed our own personality. Our own journalists are totally different from TV5 or RFI – they are more multi-media, they speak several languages, they have a new journalistic approach so perhaps the new brand of international broadcasting will reflect the evolution of France 24.

What are the key global marketing strategies?

The internet technology has changed the behaviour of the consumer. For me the key to the marketing success of France 24 is the correct analysis of consumer habits and using the right means to attract them. We don't have a lot of money so we have to be creative and that's why we think a restructuring of French international broadcasting will be an advantage. For example we need to intensify cooperation with Agence France Presse, we have to develop further the relationship with RFI correspondents, we have to make more use of Reseau France Outre-mer correspondents. But what's most important in France 24's development strategy is to develop the concept of anywhere, any device!

What's your aim?

To be a real challenger of the leaders. I don't think in five years we will be a leader ourselves – even if I am sometimes dreaming about this. But technological evolution makes international broadcasting a new race, and if we make full use of these new possibilities we may be pleasantly surprised in five years' time.

Alain de Pouzilhac, merci. ■

Launched 6 December 2006

Key personnel Alain de Pouzilhac (CEO), Jean-Yves Bonsargent (COO: distribution, technologies & support), Gérard Saint-Paul (COO: news & programming)

Budget 86m euros

Staff 520 + 1,000 correspondents worldwide

Viewers (households): 80 million

Where available: 120 countries worldwide – see www.france24.com for details

Mission To cover international news from a French perspective 24 hours/day, 7 days/week