

**Appendix H .....Federal Trade Commission Guidelines  
on Audience Ratings Claims**

tailers, or others, promotional material by or through which they may deceive or mislead the purchasing and consuming public concerning any product. [Guide 8]

### [¶ 39,026] Guidelines for Audience Rating Claims

Issued July 8, 1965; reaffirmed August 27, 1969

1. A person (or firm) making a claim concerning the size, composition or other important characteristics of a listening or viewing audience is responsible for seeing to it that the claim is truthful and not deceptive. If he bases his claim on the results of an audience survey, he assumes responsibility for interpreting the data accurately. Thus, he should not engage in activities calculated to distort or inflate such data—for example, by conducting a special contest or otherwise varying his usual programming, or instituting unusual advertising or other promotional efforts, designed to increase audiences only during the survey period. Such variation from normal practices is known as "hypoing."

It is also improper to cite or quote from a survey report or survey data in such a way as to create a misleading impression of the results of the survey, as by unfairly basing audience claims on results achieved only during certain periods of the broadcast day or on a survey of only a segment of the total potential audience.

2. Audience data are based on sample surveys not derived from complete measurements of audiences. As such, they are statistical estimates, and, at best are of only limited reliability due to errors and distortions inherent in the statistical methods yielding such data. Claims as to audience coverage based on audience surveys should therefore be qualified

in recognition of the fact that survey data are inherently imperfect. Any such claim should be accompanied by a disclosure that any figures cited or quoted are estimates only or are based upon estimates, and are not accurate, to any precise mathematical degree unless based upon a true probability sample. Audience surveys are not in practice based upon true probability samples.

3. Such claims should not be based on data obtained in a survey that the person (or firm) making the claim knows or has reason to know was not designed, conducted, and analyzed in accordance with accepted statistical principles and procedures, reasonably free from avoidable bias, and based on a properly selected sample of adequate size. Such claim should not be based on survey reports or data that do not reliably reflect current audience coverage, either because the passage of time has made the data outdated, or because a later survey report encompassing essentially the same area has been published, or because of the entry or departure of a competitor, or for any other reason.

These guidelines are offered to broadcasters and others concerned for consideration in avoiding possible violation of the Federal Trade Commission Act. (FTC Releases dated July 8, 1965 and August 27, 1969.)

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