OFF-NETWORK TELEVISION PROGRAMS IN SYNDICATION: CAN SUCCESS BE PREDICTED?

by

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Without the continuing moral, financial, and emotional support of my parents, Gary and Joy Shandy, I would not have been able to fulfill the many goals of my scholastic career. They have provided the unquestioning guidance that has enabled me to travel around the world, experiencing the many cultures and the people that compose them. The encouragement from my parents enabled me to continue my studies at K-State, realizing my goal of a higher degree. No matter what endeavors my sister, brother, and myself attempted, our parents were there to support our successes and our failures.

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CHAPTER 1

Purpose of the Study

The television industry has made major advancements in technology and in production of television programs over the last twenty years. But the methods used to select syndicated off-network programming for viewing have failed to advance with the rest of the industry.

> "Some programmers contend they pick shows they themselves would want to watch. Programmers should stop guessing what 'the public' wants," argues, Martin Starger, "and start focusing on what truly excites them creatively, what they themselves feel is excellent. The surest path to mediocrity in a network's television schedule is for the program director to sit in his office, stare out of the window, and think, "Now what do "they" want to see Wednesday at 8:30?" (Steinberg, p. 6).

Other station programmers claim to rely on gut instincts as well as their own personal tastes. With buyers spending millions of dollars each year on syndicated programming, it is vital to discover a set "formula" that can be used to select successful off-network syndicated programs. The purpose of this study was to test the possibility of developing such a formula comprised of variables that could be easily determined to assist station programmers in selecting successful off-network syndicated television programming. An off-network program is one that was

originally aired on one of the three major networks and is currently offered only in syndication.

Introduction

> Scattered among the forty-one American television seasons to date are a handful, that, for one reason or another, are outstanding. It might have been a season with a program or a series that dominated all other programming for that year and perhaps many that followed. The year 1947 gave America Milton Berle, who, in the role of "Mr. Television," is often credited with selling enough television sets to turn a novelty into an ongoing form of entertainment. The classic thirty-nine episodes of "The Honeymooners" appeared in 1956, elevating and refining the art of situation comedy. In 1952 Jack Webb produced and starred in the iconographic "Dragnet," introducing a style of television drama still popular today: quick cuts, heavy theme music, close-ups, cliff-hangers. The year 1962 brought an end to the urbane Jack Paar and the beginning of the rural, loveable Johnny Carson on "The Tonight Show"; 1971 changed the collective sit-com smile to a cynical smirk with "All in the Family"; and 1977 gave America "Roots" (Eliot, 1983, p. 1).

As the quote shows, it is relatively easy to spot turning points in the television business after they have occurred, but is it possible to spot them ahead of time, and can network success really be interpreted to also mean syndication success? In 1988, station managers bet that network success and syndication success were the same. During that year, "The Cosby Show" auctioned off three and a half years of reruns setting the highest amount ever paid for a syndicated off-network program with total sales of over $500 million.

Obviously television syndication has become "big business" and the pressure is on programmers from both station owners and advertisers to make the right decisions. If programs place high in the ratings, the results are more advertising money and larger audiences which means more pressure to select programs that will keep the station's place in the market.

In the past, the use of syndicated off-network television programs has been a profitable and economical way to supply viewers with a steady stream of programming and supplement the regular line-up of network shows. The dependency on reruns has increased steadily over the last 39 years. In 1960, a typical prime-time series aired 36-39 episodes through the Fall-Spring season and followed with 10-13 repeats during the summer months. Today, most shows feature only 22 first-run episodes and an equal number of reruns (Media Matters, Aug. 1986, pp. 1,3). At the same time, the average numbers of hours a day the station must fill have increased steadily, with the majority of stations now broadcasting 24 hours a day (Eastman, 1989). As a result, station programmers must find additional programs to fill programming hours yet maintain ratings. To do this they are turning to more and more syndication.

But while there is little overhead cost (actually covering the cost of producing the shows) in using syndicated television programs, syndicated programming is rapidly

increasing in purchasing price. In 1983, domestic syndication revenues amounted to $800 million a year (Colvin, May 2, 1987, p. 116). Buyers of "The Cosby Show" spent approximately $500 million for reruns to begin the fall of 1988 (Vamos, Nov. 10, 1986, p. 42). That is only $300 million less than spent by the whole industry in 1983.

Spending six figures per episode for new off-network series is routine in today's syndication market but is devastating to station accounts. To counter this, programmers have returned to using programming termed "classic," "vintage," "perennial," or "evergreen", in short older series (Broadcasting, 1986, p. 54). The older programs such as "Cisco Kid," "The Twilight Zone," and "Car 54" are available at low cost to programmers and are being used as fillers in station programming.

"The reason for a lot of this product coming back is twofold," said Sid Cohen, senior vice president, national sales, King World. "First, is the scarcity of off-network product. The second is this product will play and rate on stations. People will watch it. "Topper's legacy is 'Ghostbusters'" (Broadcasting, 1985, p. 58).

Before one can understand the facts influencing a station programmer's syndicated selections, it is important to understand exactly what syndication is and how the syndication of programs occurs in the television industry.

Syndication

The use of syndication has been scattered across television history but is considered by many as a relatively new idea. The syndication concept was first used by newspaper columnists who applied the term when they sold a column (series of articles) to more than one newspaper (Kostyra, Jan. 13, 1986, p. 180). Television has followed a similar model by offering to sell episodes of series on a station by station basis. During the 1970's, the number of buyers has increased steadily, as have the number of "series" available for sale and the number of ways to purchase the product.

To understand the use of syndicated off-network programming, one must first understand the process of getting a program into syndication. A television program is designed and produced by a studio. It is then released as a first-run program by one of the three major networks: ABC, NBC, or CBS; or by an independent producer. How the program places in the ratings determines whether it is renewed for the next television season. Ideally, a program should stay in first-run status for three to five years to allow a sufficient number of programs to be available for sale in syndication.

In the past, programs were not sold into syndication until they were taken off-network. Today a program such as "The Cosby Show" is sold on "futures" even several years in

advance and can be sold into syndication while it is still in first-run status. If a show is being aired first-run and in syndication, the show in syndication may have a different name. For example, "Happy Days" in syndication was renamed "Happy Days Again."

Once a program is off-network, it is peddled to the various stations across the U.S. and abroad. Shows such as "I Love Lucy," "M*A*S*H," "Hogan's Heros," and "The Brady Bunch" crop up not only on unaffiliated stations but also on stations affiliated with rival networks, pay-cable, and even on affiliates that first ran the shows as networks' originals (Eastman, 1981, p. 15).

Syndicated off-network programs usually cost anywhere from $50 to $50,000 per program. The price for an off-network rerun depends on two factors: how popular the show is in other markets and how big the station's own market is (DeLuca, 1980, p. 114).

Syndicated programs are purchased by stations in several ways. Cash is the oldest but not necessarily the most favorable choice. Many stations are turning to "bartering" for syndicated programming. Barter syndication is the sales form which allows syndicating properties on a national basis with the distributor or syndicator providing local stations with free programming in exchange for several minutes of commercial airtime (Kostyra, Jan. 13, 1986, p. 180). Stations that wish to retain more of their advertising

potential often use the cash-and-barter method which requires them to pay some cash, less than the original cost, and provide the distributor or syndicator one minute to sell nationally.

For independent producers and studios, syndication revenues have been the "brass ring" on the merry-go-round and the principal financial impetus of television production (Blum, 1987, p. 139). Programs are produced at a deficit that cannot be regained while a show is in first-run status. When a program is sold in syndication it is expected to recoup all losses and make a profit. "Magnum, P.I." sold into syndication at approximately one million dollars per episode . . . With more than six year's worth of negatives, the earnings from a show like "Magnum, P.I." can make a television operation very profitable and compensate for the losses sustained by aborted series and unsold pilots (Blum, 1987, p. 140). Most syndicated contracts call for a minimum of two plays per year per episode, and many stations "strip" their syndicated off-network series, running the same program five days a week and repeating the whole series two or more times per year (DeLuca, 1980, p. 130).

CHAPTER 2

Literary Review

Little academic research has been done to provide the station programmer with a "formula" or "method" designed to help select successful syndicated programs. Research has been conducted in the following three areas: predicting the success of network-prime-time spinoff programs, a pilot study to predict the success of off-network television program series in syndication in Peoria, IL, television market (Shapiro and Schofield, 1983), and several studies on how a programmer actually selects syndicated programs and makes programming choices.

Other studies on syndication have been conducted by the various marketing and syndicating companies that distribute syndicated programs to stations. Other sources of research information on television programs include Nielson, Marketron, and Arbitron. Many stations belong to trade associations such as the Television Bureau of Advertising which provides them with research data about syndicated programming (Marcus, 1986, p. 78). Although these studies cover the ratings, audience appeal, markets, lead-in programming, demographics, program type, and shares, none of them actually lists the specific variables a program director can use to identify a successful syndicated program.

Programming

"Statistics indicate that most nonnews station level programming decisions concern the purchase of syndicated material, including feature films . . . The task of negotiating syndicated buys therefore looms as a major duty of television station programmers" (Eastman, 1981, p. 25).

> On first look, it would appear that a program director's job in buying off-network programs would be easy as shooting the proverbial ducks in a barrel since these former network programs are already history and have established their popularity. In theory, this is true; in practice, no. First of all, because the more successful a network series is (meaning it has survived at least two seasons and shows promise for continuing for at least another three or four years) the more competitive is the bidding for the syndication rights within each market.
>
> Second, the bidding is often done "blind." This is when the syndicator meets with each of the stations in the market informing them about the availability of the series . . . gives them a deadline and indicates the lowest price acceptable.
>
> It is at this point that the program director becomes one part fortune-teller and two parts river-boat gambler. In many cases, regardless of the series' past or current success on the network, the syndicated package under consideration will not be available for several months and in some instances, several years. The program director thus has to predetermine whether a series that is popular now will sustain its attractiveness and popularity (1) in the future, (2) on a different channel from where it was originally shown, and (3) in a different time period. Given the fact that the cost of off-network programming can run anywhere between $10,000 to $50,000 per episode, the investment is awesome and the risk of losing money considerable (Marcus, 1986, p. 74).

Katzman (1976), in a study of program decision making in public television stations, concluded that--after money and program availability--"personal preferences and attitudes of

station managers and program managers are the third key to understanding programming policy . . . One tends to feel a surprisingly large impact of top-level personalities on the overall mood of a station" (Katzman, 1976, p. 34; Eastman, 1981, p. 40).

A more recent study conducted by Virts (1979) focused on testing whether different types of programmers could be identified on the basis of their decisions regarding the use of syndicated programming. The following constraints were given: (1) audience shares the series had earned the previous runs; (2) cost of the series; (3) scheduling considerations; (4) feedback from local audiences; and (5) the opinion of the programmer's general manager (Eastman, 1981, p. 43). After asking the programmers two questions, whether to buy a series and whether to retain a series based on the constraints given, Virts concluded that the twenty-eight programmers fell into two groups: High Risk and Low Risk (Eastman, 1981, p. 43).

> High Risk programmers wanted programs which offered high shares and were willing to overlook high costs, negative feedback and negative opinions from the general manager . . . On the other hand, Low Risk programmers were more conservative. They wanted programs with high shares, but they were less willing to pay high costs and were more concerned about negative feedback and general manager's opinions (Virts, "Television Entertainment Gatekeeping," p. 86; Eastman, 1981, p. 44).

According to George A. Koehler, President Gateway Communications, Inc., while reruns are not original

programming, it is true they are a vital part of programming a station, and in this respect programming has changed mightily in the last several years. The risks have become enormous (Eastman, 1981, p. 117).

Syndication

In comparison to the number of studies done on station programmers, there are fewer studies on syndication use, and actual studies on off-network syndication are extremely limited.

TV/Radio Age's annual survey conducted in 1986 of program directors queried the use of syndication on television stations and projected use in the future. The survey showed that TV stations spent $1,200 million on syndicated programming in 1985 and programmers were predicting syndication costs to rise 14.4 percent (Television/Radio Age, Jan. 13, 1986, p. 182). Program directors were asked in which category they felt it was most difficult to find the programs needed to fill programming hours and 28.5 percent cited successful sitcoms as the most difficult programs to find for programming (Television/Radio Age, Jan. 13, 1986, p. 396).

A Broadcast Educational Association/NATPE program seminar held in conjunction with the NATPE annual meeting addressed the issues relating to research concerning programming and

syndication. Phil Howort, LBS Communications, suggests that certain research improved the ultimate quality of the product while David Salzman, Lorimar-Telepictures, maintained that research will doubtless increase in volume and use since it applies not simply to ratings and share . . . it was admitted that much research was shot-in-the-dark stuff and as applied to programming "a mystery" ("Local Identity: News & More News: Syndicators Offer Life After Net," p. 4). It was suggested that syndicated programming was a major strength in a station's programming line-up. When asked if syndicators were just digging in the graveyard of network failures, Howort answered, "We offer life after net" ("Local Identity: News & More News: Syndicators Offer Life After Net," p. 4).

In predicting the success of off-network syndicated programs, Shapiro and Schofield claim to have identified the variables necessary for success in a pilot study in Peoria, IL. Their study used off-network syndicated programs broadcast between 9 a.m. and sign-off, Monday through Friday, but did not include weekend broadcasts. Programs were classified as successful or not successful based on being first or being tied for first in their time period (Shapiro and Schonfield, 1983, p. 3).

Using a total of 34 variables, Shapiro and Schofield performed a discriminant analysis using the classification of program success or non-success as the dependent measure

and all other variables as independent (Shapiro and Schofield, 1983, p. 4).

The formula produced by this study correctly classified 13 of the 14 successes (93%) and 35 of the 36 unsuccessful programs (97%); in all 48 of the 50 program cases (96%) were correctly classified (Shapiro and Schofield, 1983 p. 4). The study indicates the number of episodes available, a high lead-in share greater than 18, a 30-minute format, and not off-network longer than 152 months or less than 45 months are critical to a show's success. However, in contradiction to these results, one recent release that has been off-network for less than 12 months and is still placing extremely high in the ratings is "The Cosby Show".

Shapiro and Schofield suggest that with the passage of time programs simply lost their appeal to audiences; many are dated in content and style; and often the stars of those series are no longer in the spotlight (Shapiro and Schonfield, 1983, p. 10). If this is the case, 1977 would be the maximum length of time to retrieve successful off-network programs. But what about shows such as "I Love Lucy," "Gunsmoke," "Leave It to Beaver," "I Dream of Jeannie," "The Brady Bunch," and many others that are in syndication and drawing reasonable ratings in many markets?

Shapiro and Schonfield also claim that longer-running shows do not produce successful syndicated series. This can be disputed by considering the success of "M*A*S*H," which

was on the air 11 years and is running five and six times a day in some markets.

In their conclusion Shapiro and Schofield suggest that a study be done to determine whether similar formulae can be applied to other markets; are formulae possible which will predict a program's rating rather than simply its success; and should studies use definitions of success other than winning the time period (Shapiro and Schofield, 1983, p. 14).

The following study addresses several of these concerns.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

A discriminant analysis was conducted on 42 off-network syndicated television programs being shown in the Kansas City, Topeka, and Wichita television markets.

Selections of the programs was based upon the following criteria: (1) the programs were currently not running on the network; (2) the programs were available in the Kansas City, Topeka, or Wichita television markets between January 1, 1988, and July 1, 1988; and (3) the programs had first run on one of the tree major networks, i.e. it was not original syndication such as "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

An off-network program is one that was originally aired on one of the three major networks and is currently offered only in syndication. These three criteria were used to distinguish shows selected for the study from shows currently produced specifically for syndication such as "Donahue," "Geraldo," Oprah," "Wheel of Fortune," and "Small Wonder."

Sixty programs were originally selected from the syndicated programs offered in the study area. Eighteen programs were discarded from the study because they were still appearing as first-run programs on network television. The information on the remaining 42 programs was gathered from the 1987 National Syndication Index, TV Facts, and The

Complete Directory to Prime Time Shows-1946 to The Present. (See Appendix A). The information on the programs was gathered and compiled into a tabulation sheet for easy computer entry. The sheet was divided into columns listing each variable being considered for computer analysis.

Variables

There were 17 variables selected for this study. The variables were arbitrarily selected after reviewing suggested significant factors in syndication programming in Shapiro and Schofield's pilot study, and reviewing information available to station programmers from syndication sellers. Variables were given abbreviated names for analysis (See Appendix B). A program was listed within three levels of success under the variable Comparison. The variables were defined as follows: (1) Share--in the Kansas City, Topeka, or Wichita market; (2) City--Kansas City, Topeka, or Wichita; (3) Station--station(s) in the study area currently airing the program; (4) Current Ranking--based on the program's ranking listed in the National Syndication Index; (5) Average Ranking--cummulation of rankings when program was in the top 20 listing of programs divided by the number of years in the top 20's; (6) Average Number of Times in a 4 Week Period--average number of times the show was on the air in the four week test period; (7) Time of Day--based on time scale

dividing the day into eight time periods; (8) Current Distributor--the distributor currently selling the program in syndication; (9) Number of Stations--number of stations that air the show nationally based on the listing from the National Syndication Index; (10) Number of Markets--number of markets in which the program is seen based on information from the National Syndication Index; (11) Type--the type of program, western, drama, situation comedy, etc.; (12) Length--length of the program, 30 or 60 minutes; (13) Network--original network on which the program aired; (14) Length Since on Original Network--length of time since the show was aired on the original network based on a year\month scale; (15) Comparison--based on the program's Current Ranking, its level of success; (16) Time on Network--the time, year\month, the program aired on the original network; and (17) Households--the percentage of households the program carries in the three study areas based on the National Syndication Index.

The Comparison variable is separated as follows: if a program's current ranking based upon the National Syndication Index was between 1 and 110, it was given a 1; if it was between 111 and 220, it was given a 2; and if it was between 221 and 368, it was given a 3. The classification of the program based upon the Comparison variable was used as the dependent measure for the analysis and all other variables as independent.

Several of the variables such as Households, City, Station, Share and Time of Day were divided into separate listings for each possible answer. For example, each program could be available in any of the three Kansas markets studied. For each market in which the program was listed, it has a Households, Station and Share value. There were 12 stations in the study area (See Appendix C). There were three cities available in the study area (See Appendix D).

Starting at midnight and ending at 11:59 p.m., the variable Time of Day was divided into eight time slots, separating the day and evening programming hours. (See Appendix E).

Time Of Day	Number Code
12 a.m. to 3:59 a.m.	Today1
4 a.m. to 6:59 a.m.	Today2
7 a.m. to 9:59 a.m.	Today3
10 a.m. to 11:59 a.m.	Today4
12 p.m. to 3:59 p.m.	Today5
4 p.m. to 6:59 p.m.	Today6
7 p.m. to 9:59 p.m.	Today7
10 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.	Today8

The Time on Network was the original length of time the program was shown on network television during first-run status. The variables Original Network on which the program was aired and Current Distributor of the program were included in the study. There were three original networks (See Appendix F) supplying the programs involved in the study and 20 current distributors of the syndicated programs (See Appendix G).

Also included was Type of show based on the "National Syndication Index" listings (See **Appendix H**) and Length of the show; 30 or 60 minutes.

Based upon program listings in TV Guide the Average Number of Times in a Four Week Period was calculated to ascertain how often the series was aired in the study area. Average Ranking was a cummulation of rankings for a program that was in the top 20 during its network run. This was figured by adding the rankings and then dividing by the number of years the program was in the top 20 shows while on the air, giving the average ranking for the program while it was one of the network's top 20 shows.

Variables that were not numerical were assigned numbers based on the number of possible answers in the category. For example, ABC was 1, CBS was 2, and NBC was 3.

The above mentioned variables were entered into the discriminant analysis portion of the SAS computer package located on the KSU mainframe.

Discriminant analysis uses known cases to analyze the power of any number of known variables to produce a model that will then predict for unknown cases. The analysis mathematically compares variables and creates a formula to produce the maximum distance between variables for the known cases. This is done on the assumption that those variables will continue to produce maximum separation even for unknown cases--thus allowing us to predict the results before they

are actually obtained. In this case, the analysis would be used to create a formula, using 17 variables measured. This would be used to predict whether an off-network series would rank naturally in the top third, the middle third, or the bottom third of syndicated programming.

This analysis will hopefully would identify the significant factors necessary for the prediction of a successful off-network syndicated program. Success of the study would be determined, based upon identifying the factors needed to select a successful syndicated television program.

CHAPTER 4

Results and Discussion

This chapter will address the results of the discriminant computer analysis involving 41 television programs and 17 selected variables.

Total Sample Correlations

Total sample correlation coefficients indicate the correlations between the 17 variables used in this study. Variables with a .5 or larger coefficient are considered significant. (See Table 1 for all variables with a significant positive coefficient.)

Variables with a positive coefficient are considered to be positive influences on each other. For example, as the Number of Stations goes up, the Number of Markets also goes up (.771). A larger number of Households 1 also showed a positive correlation with the Number of Markets (.556). The larger the coefficient, the more significant the correlation. The Original Network the series was on is highly correlated to both the Time on Network (.985) and Average Ranking (.985). The assumption is that a particular network carried currently syndicated shows longer in first-run status and had more shows in the top 20 programs over a number of years.

TABLE 1

POSITIVE TOTAL SAMPLE CORRELATIONS

Variables		Sign. F.> .5
#Of Markets	HH3	.619
Today8	Share2	.516
#Of Stations	Share1	.558
#of Stations	Share3	.575
#of Markets	Share3	.602
Share3	Station2	.522
Today8	City2	.566
#of Stations	City3	.589
#of Markets	City3	.616
Network	Time/Network	.985
Network	Average Rank	.985
Today8	Today7	.520
HH1	#of Stations	.642
HH1	#of Markets	.556
HH2	#of Markets	.525
HH3	#of Stations	.591
Share2	#of Markets	.503
Station3	#of Stations	.589
#ofStations	#of Markets	.771

Variables Share 3 and Station 2 are just barely considered significant (.522) as are Share 3 and Number of Markets (.503). Today 8 and Today 7 (.520) have a slight significance indicating that when programs are shown in the Today 7 time slot, it is possible that they will also be shown in the Today 8 time slot.

As Households 1 increases so does the Number of Stations (.642). and the Number of Markets (.556) which can be expected. The more markets and stations on which the programs are shown, the more people watch the programs.

Variables with a negative coefficient of -.4 or larger are considered to create opposite effects on each other. (See **Table 2** for all variables with a significant negative coefficient.) For example, the more programs in Today 6, the fewer programs in Today 1 (-.413). This suggests that syndicated programs that are played in the Today 6 time slot will probably not be shown in the Today 1 time slot. The most significant variable was Length Since on Network and Today 5 with a coefficient of -.625. The assumption can be made that the longer a program has been off-network, the less likely it is to be aired in the Today 5 time slot. The Length Since on Network also had a negative effect on Today 8 (-.442) but not as strong as Today 5.

Type of program had a significant negative correlation to Time on Network (-.436), Average Ranking (-.444), and Original Network (-.483). This suggests that a program type

TABLE 2

NEGATIVE TOTAL SAMPLE CORRELATIONS

Variables		Sign. F>=.4
Today6	Today1	-.413
Today8	Today3	-.403
Length/Network	Today8	-.442
Time/Network	Type	-.436
Average Rank	Type	-.444
Network	Type	-.483
Length/Network	Today5	-.625

is related to how long the series lasted as a first-run program and how it ranked. It also suggests a program type relationship exists between syndicated series and the networks, i.e. networks are concentrating their off-network syndication into specific program types. A review of the data suggests that situation comedies are a type of program being used by the networks to dominate the off-network syndication market.

Weaker negative correlations were Length Since on Network on Number of Stations (-.378), and City 1 and Current Distributor (-.386).

Significant Variables

Of the 17 variables selected for the study, 9 were selected by the analysis as significant for separating the study programs into the accurate Comparison groups. A variable was considered significant if it had a .05 or lower Pr>F number. (See Table 3 for all variables and their values.) (See Table 4 for the 9 significant values used by the discriminant analysis program to separate syndicated programs into Comparison groups.)

The Number of Markets was highly significant with .0004 indicating that wide distribution is a highly important factor in determining the success of syndicated programs. Today 8 with .0006 suggests that the time slot of 10 p.m. to

TABLE 3

VARIABLES SIGNIFICANT VALUES	
Variables	Pr>F
Name	.1139
HH1	.0001
HH2	.0621
HH3	.2776
Share1	.0018
Share2	.0556
Share3	.2827
Station1	.0031
Station2	.0431
Station3	.2759
City1	.3896
City2	.1096
City3	.2759
Time Since On Network	.2830
Average Ranking	.3253
Ave. in 4-week Period	.7052
Today1	.1354
Today2	.0159
Today3	.0736
Today4	.7413
Today5	.1270
Today6	.0588
Today7	.3047
Today8	.0006
Current Distributor	.4628
Length Since on Network	.0049
Number of Stations	.0047
Number of Markets	.0004
Network	.5165
Type	.2566
Length	.1917

TABLE 4

SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES	
Variables	Pr>F
HH1	.0001
Number of Markets	.0004
Today8	.0006
Share1	.0018
Station1	.0031
Number of Stations	.0047
Length Since on Network	.0049
Today2	.0159
Station2	.0431

midnight is a significant program slot for separating successful syndicated programs. The Length Since on Network, .0049, suggests that the shorter the amount of time since the program actually appeared on a first-run television series, the better. However, the analysis indicated this was only important for separating series in the first and second Comparison groups. It does not separate programs in Group 3 from the other two groups very well.

(See **Table** 5 for the variables that the analysis indicated significant in separating syndicated programs into their correct Comparison groups.)

Linear Discriminant Values

The discriminant analysis program used the following formulae to separate the study data:

$$\text{Constant} = -.5\ \bar{X}'_j \text{COV}^{-1} \bar{X} + \text{In PRIOR}_j$$

$$\text{Coefficient Vector} = \text{COV}^{-1} \bar{X}_j$$

Using the above formulae, the analysis predicts the rankings of the syndicated programs. The rankings are represented by the Compare groups 1,2,3. (See **Table** 6 for the variables separating by Comparison.)

Not all variables are significant in dividing syndicated

TABLE 5

NONSIGNIFICANT VARIBLES

Variables	Pr>F
Name	.1139
HH2	.0621
HH3	.2776
Share2	.0556
Share3	.2827
Station3	.2759
City1	.3896
City2	.1096
City3	.2759
Time Since On Network	.2830
Average Ranking	.3253
Ave. in 4-week Period	.7052
Today1	.1354
Today3	.0736
Today4	.7413
Today5	.1270
Today6	.0588
Today7	.3047
Current Distributor	.4628
Network	.5165
Type	.2566
Length	.1917

TABLE 6

VARIABLE SEPARATIONS BY COMPARE

	COMPARE		
VARIABLE	1	2	3
Constant	-79.36811	-70.82411	-68.94599
Name	0.07177	0.34193	0.03361
HH1	0.88978	-1.61998	-2.09885
HH2	6.12968	1.44924	2.52423
HH3	16.73461	15.67196	13.91325
Share1	-1.27693	-0.10597	0.38644
Share3	-11.73267	-11.14426	19.65126
Share2	-7.23902	-4.69720	-5.40622
Station1	-0.30257	-3.12402	-2.98735
City1	6.64989	11.33783	6.09528
Station2	7.59876	5.20937	5.47124
City2	6.14467	8.16169	9.73354
Station3	2.20948	1.99666	1.88483
City3	8.10141	7.32108	6.91102
TONETWOR	-3.05406	-0.48881	-1.94116
ARANKING	-9.34789	11.89637	-13.65084
AOTINAW	0.06033	0.35174	0.60545
Today1	6.67975	11.12887	7.12875
Today2	0.17907	3.24871	-0.07821
Today3	-22.44760	-14.13421	-24.63444
Today4	10.11599	-1.82081	7.11857
Today5	14.18090	8.23256	9.18672
Today6	13.67337	9.86949	4.87590
Today7	-14.40186	-12.68585	-12.19551
Today8	9.40186	7.85683	8.21245
CDISTRI	1.02955	1.49282	1.21297
LSONETWO	-0.12888	-0.01827	-0.02116
NOSTATION	-0.06828	0.07747	-0.02116
OMARKET	0.47022	0.17269	0.02116
Network	9.02684	1.35239	7.18218
Type	5.77300	5.97648	7.13330
Length	1.51342	1.14480	1.10432

programming into all three Comparison groups. For example, Length has similar standings in all three Comparison groups: 1.51342, 1.14480, and 1.10432, indicating that it would not be a good variable (causing a significant difference between the group standings) to use in separating programs into the three Comparison groups.

The larger the distance between the standings in each Comparison group, the better the variable is at separating the programs. Average Ranking has one of the largest spreads with -9.34789, 11.89637, and -13.65084. This indicates that the Average Ranking of the series while in first-run is good at separating between Comparison 1 and Comparison 2 groups, and between Comparison 2 and Comparison 3 groups but not between Comparison 1 and Comparison 3 groups. Another significant spread is Today 6 with 13.67337, 9.86949, and 4.87590. Because Today 6 has a significant spread, it is a strong variable for separating all three Comparison groups. The same is true for the Network variable. Network's standings are 9.02684, 1.35239, and 7.18218. (See Table 7 for significant variables.)

Classification Predictions

Forty-one syndicated programs of the 42 entered in the study were used in the discriminant analysis. Using the formulae created, the analysis classified 17 of the programs

TABLE 7

SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES BY COMPARE

	COMPARE		
VARIABLE	1	2	3
Constant	-79.36811	-70.82411	-68.94599
HH2	6.12968	1.44924	2.52423
HH3	16.73461	15.67196	13.91325
Station1	-0.30257	-3.12402	-2.98735
City1	6.64989	11.33783	6.09528
City2	6.14467	8.16169	9.73354
ARANKING	-9.34789	11.89637	-13.65084
Today1	6.67975	11.12887	7.12875
Today3	-22.44760	-14.13421	-24.63444
Today4	10.11599	-1.82081	7.11857
Today5	14.18090	8.23256	9.18672
Today6	13.67337	9.86949	4.87590
Network	9.02684	1.35239	7.18218

into group 1. This represented a correct prediction of 94.4% of the cases. The one wrong prediction (5.56%) was placed by the formula into group 2. Fifteen (93.75%) of the group 2 programs were accurately placed by the formula into group 2 with the 1 (6.35%) error being placed in group 3.

All 7 (100%) group 3 programs were accurately placed in group 3 by the formula. (See Table 8.)

Classification Summary

In the sample used, group 1 actually contained 17 (41.46%) programs with group 2 containing 16 (39.02%) programs and group 3 containing 8 (19.51%) of the programs. (See Table 9.)

The formula very closely paralleled the actual results. It produced error estimate rates for group 1 of .0556; group 2 of .0625; and group 3 of 0.0. It also set the priors, or the predictable programming breakdown, at .4390 for group 1; .3902 for group 2; and .1707 for group 3. Rate total is .0488. (See Table 9.) Comparing these predicted results to the actual percentage indicates a high degree of accuracy in this formula.

Classification Results

Group 1 had 17 (99.60%) programs that actually were

TABLE 8

Classification Summary

Compare	Number of Observations & Percent Classified into Compare 1	3	3
1	17 94.44	1 5.56	0 0.00
2	0 0.00	15 93.75	1 6.25
3	0 0.00	0 0.00	8 19.51
Total Percent	17 41.46	16 39.02	8 19.51

TABLE 9

ERROR ESTIMATES FOR COMPARE

	COMPARE		
	1	2	3
Rate	0.0556	0.0625	0.0000
Priors	0.4390	0.3902	0.1707

listed into the Comparison 1 group, and 1 in the Comparison 2 group. Compare 2 had 15 (98.64%) programs listed as Comparison 2 group and 1 program listed as Comparison 3 group. (See Table 10.)

Predictions Based on Distancing

The Linear Discriminant analysis of the program data accurately classified 39 of the 41 (95.12%) studied programs. The analysis misclassified 2 of the 41 (4.8%) studied programs. (See Table 11.)

The following formulae were used to classify the syndicated programs in the study:

Generalized Squared Distance Function

$$D^2_j(X) = (X-\bar{X}_j)' \; COV^{-1} (X-\bar{X}_j) - 2 \ln PRIOR_j$$

Posterior Probability of Membership in each COMPARE

$$Pr(j/X) = \exp(-.5 \; D^2_j(X)) \; / \; SUM_k \exp(-.5 \; D^2_k(X))$$

"Andy Griffith" was misclassified as a Comparison 2 group and was actually a Comparison 1 group program. The second program, "The Munsters", was misclassified as a Comparison 3 group and was actually a Comparison 2 group. You will note, in the cases of an error in classification, the formulae always misclassified down to the next lower Comparison group.

TABLE 10

CLASSIFICATION RESULTS

	Number of Observations & Percent Classified into Compare		
Compare	1	2	3
1	17 0.9960	1 0.8689	0 0.00
2	0 0.00	15 0.9864	1 0.7973
3	0 0.00	0 0.00	7 0.9714
Total	17	16	8
	0.9960	0.9791	0.9497
Priors	0.4390	0.3902	0.1707

TABLE 11

CLASSIFICATION RESULTS
POSTERIOR PROBABILITY OF MEMBERSHIP
IN COMPARE

Obs	From Compare	Classified Into Compare	1	2	3
1	2	2	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000
2	1	2*	0.1307	0.8689	0.0004
3	2	2	0.0009	0.9991	0.0000
4	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
5	2	2	0.0000	0.8271	0.1729
6	2	2	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000
7	3	3	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
8	2	2	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000
9	2	2	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000
10	3	3	0.0000	0.9999	1.0001
11	3	3	0.0000	0.0001	0.9999
12	2	2	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000
14	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
15	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
16	3	3	0.0000	0.0001	0.9999
17	2	2	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000
18	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
19	3	3	0.0000	0.1906	0.8094
20	2	2	0.0000	0.9994	0.0006
21	1	1	0.9990	0.0010	0.0000
22	2	2	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000
23	2	2	0.0004	0.9903	0.0002
24	1	1	0.9326	0.0234	0.0440
25	2	2	0.0186	0.9814	0.0000
26	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
27	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
28	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
29	3	3	0.0000	0.0078	0.9922
30	2	3*	0.0001	0.2026	0.7973
31	2	2	0.0000	0.9907	0.0093
32	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
33	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
34	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
35	2	2	0.0000	0.9998	0.0002
36	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
37	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
38	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
39	2	2	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000
40	3	3	0.0000	0.0014	0.9986
41	1	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000
42	1	1	1.00000	0.0000	0.0000

*Misclassification

A comparison of the two misclassified syndicated programs revealed both programs were shown in the Today 6 time slot, shown originally on Network CBS, and were 30 minute sitcoms. Of these variables only Today 6 was considered significant by the study, indicating no correction could be made in the present data that would correct the classification.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine if success of syndicated programs can be predicted by easily measured variables.

Specifically, a linear content discriminant analysis was conducted to compare 17 variables on 42 syndicated programs to determine which variables were significant when it came to separating off-network syndicated series into successful, medium, and failure categories. Programs were selected in a three-city study area in Kansas. The analysis used 41 of the 42 selected programs to identify the variables necessary to create formulae to predict successful syndication programming. The program not used in the study was dismissed by the study due to a missing variable.

Variables considered were: Share; City; Station; Current Ranking; Average Ranking; Average Number of Times in a 4-week Period; Time of day; Current Distributor; Number of Stations; Number of Markets; Length Since on Network; Type of program; Length; Network; Comparison; Time on Network; and Households.

Conclusion

Based on this study the following conclusions concerning the ability to predict successful syndicated programming can

be drawn. Significant variables to predicting syndication success in the Kansas study area are: (1) Households 1; (2) Share 1; (3) Station 1; (4) Share 2; (5) Station 2; (6) Today 2; (7) Today 6; (8) Today 8; (9) Length Since on Network; (10) Number of Stations; and (11) Number of Markets. (See Appendixes A,B, and D for coding.)

A programmer should consider the length of time the program has been off-network. The study indicates the shorter the time, the better which refutes Shapiro and Schofield's conclusion that programs less than 12 months are less likely to succeed.

Shapiro and Schofield also suggest that a program should not run on a network longer than 116 months. This study did not indicate the maximum or minimum length of time a program was on the air as significant variables to selecting successful off-network syndicated programs. It is necessary to have sufficient episodes for programming purposes but they are not considered a significant variables for programming selections.

The number of markets in which the program is currently being shown in across the U.S. is a significant factor according to the study. The study indicates the more markets the program is shown in nationally, the more successful it will be. The same can be applied to number of stations. These two variables are significant indicators for current

off-network syndicated programs but are less useful indicators for programs sold on futures.

Consideration should be given to the percentage of households and shares of the other markets nationwide.

Time of day is important in successful programming of syndicated programs. The study indicates that 4 a.m. to 7 a.m., 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., and 10 p.m. to 12 a.m. are significant indicators for syndicated programming success.

Although Shapiro and Schofield indicate that the length of the program, 30 or 60 minutes, is an important variable in an off-network syndicated program's success, this study did not find length to be significant.

This study also seems to indicate that reliable formulae for predicting the success of off-network syndication television programs in the Topeka, Kansas City, and Wichita markets can be produced using easily determined and controlled factors. When the formulae did misclassify a program, the series were always placed on a lower success level indicating that the misclassification rate would not be detrimental to the local station's ratings. In short--if the formula holds up in future testing, the programmer could always conclude that the program would do at least as well as predicted and in a few cases, even better.

The variables suggest that there is a strong connection between success and distribution. The more markets the show is sold in, the better it does in the ranking which is

logical. It could indicate that the programmers need to look for shows that are being sold in a lot of other markets as well.

These results also indicate Time of Day is a big factor in success. This suggests more research is needed to see which type of program works best during which time of day. Of the three time slots that are identified as significant, the study does not say that one time is better than another, it just indicates that times can separate success from failure.

Further Study

Before this formula can be put into general use, it should be tested on other syndicated programming in order to verify its ability to correctly classify all off-network series as opposed to just the series in this study. Application of the formulae could also be applied to programs currently running in other markets to test the formulae predictions outside of the Kansas markets used in the study. A wider range of program types are also needed. For example, do programming types (sitcom, western, etc.) in other markets have a more significant influence than in the study markets?

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APPENDIX A

PROGRAMS

Programs

Alice
Andy Griffith
Barney Miller
Benson
Beverly Hillbillies
Bewitched
Bob Newhart
Bonanza
Carol Burnett
Dennis The Menace
Dick Van Dyke
Dukes of Hazard
*Facts of Life
Fall Guy
Gimmie A Break
Green Acres
Gunsmoke
Hart To Hart
Here's Lucy
I Love Lucy
Jeffersons
Laverne & Shirley
Leave It To Beaver
Lou Grant
Love Boat
Magnum P.I.
Mama's Family
M*A*S*H
Mary Tyler Moore Show
Munsters
One Day At A Time
Rockford Files
Sanford & Son
Silver Spoons
Soap
Star Trek
Taxi
Three's Company
Twilight Zone
Wild Wild West
WKRP In Cinncinati
9 to 5

*Has no ending date.

APPENDIX B

VARIABLE LISTING

Variables	Abbreviations
Comparision	Compare
Households 1	HH1
Households 2	HH2
Households 3	HH3
Share in market 1	Share1
Share in market 2	Share2
Share in market 3	Share3
Station 1	Station1
City of station 1	City1
Station 2	Station2
City of station 2	City2
Station 3	Station3
City of station 3	City3
Current ranking	Crank
Time on network	Tonetwor
Average ranking	Aranking
Average no. of times in a 4 week period	Aotinaw
Current distributor	Cdistri
Length since on network	Lsonetwo
Number of stations	Nostatio
Number of markets	Omarket
Original network	Network
Type of program	Type
Length of program	Length

APPENDIX C

STATIONS IN STUDY AREA

Stations	Number Code
KSAS	1
KSHB	2
KTKA	3
KMBC	4
KSNT	5
KSAS	6
KZKC	7
KCTV	8
KWCH	9
WIBW	10
KSNW	11
KMBC	12

APPENDIX D

CITIES IN STUDY AREA

CITY	NUMBER CODE
Topeka	1*
Kansas City	2
Wichita	3

*Topeka market is dominated by one station and this may affect results.

APPENDIX E

TIME SLOTS

Time of Day	Number Code
12 a.m. to 3:59 a.m.	1
4 a.m. to 6:59 a.m.	2
7 a.m. to 9:59 a.m.	3
10 a.m. to 11:59 a.m.	4
12 p.m. to 3:59 p.m.	5
4 p.m. to 6:59 p.m.	6
7 p.m. to 9:59 p.m.	7
10 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.	8

APPENDIX F

ORIGINAL NETWORKS

Original Network	Number Code
ABC	1
CBS	2
NBC	3

APPENDIX G

CURRENT DISTRIBUTORS

Current Distributor	Number Code
Fox	1
Victory Television Inc.	2
Viacom	3
King World	4
Warner Bros.	5
D.L. Taffner Limited	6
Paramount TV Sales	7
LBS Communications	8
Columbia-Embassy TV	9
MCA TV	10
Lorimar-Telepictures	11
Worldvision Enterprises	12
Gaylord Syndicom	13
Orion	14
Fox TV/MPC	15
CB Distribution	16
Colex Enterprises	17
Barris Industries	18
Republic Pictures	19
DFS Dorland Program Exchange	20

APPENDIX H

TYPE OF PROGRAMS

Program Type	Number Code
Action	1
Adventure	2
Audience Participation	3
Comedy Variety	4
General Drama	5
Private Detective	6
Quiz-Give Away	7
Science Fiction	8
Situation Comedy	9
Suspense & Mystery	10
Western Drama	11
Variety Music	12

OFF-NETWORK TELELVISION PROGRAMS IN SYNDICATION: CAN SUCCESS BE PREDICTED?

by

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ABSTRACT

This study compared the significance of specific variables of selected syndicated television programs in the Kansas City, Topeka, and Wichita areas. The study was conducted using a linear discriminant analysis with 41 off-network syndicated television programs with 17 variables. The study included programs from the following program types: situation comedies; westerns; science fiction; action/adventure; and general drama. The programs were identified at levels of success based upon their current ranking across the United States by the Nielson Company. The discriminant analysis identified nine of the 17 variables as significant. Significant variables were: (1) Households; (2) Number of Markets; (3) Time of Day--late night; (4) Share of market; (5) Station on which it is shown in area; (6) Number of Stations in which it is shown across U.S.; (6) Length Since airing on Network; (7) Time of Day--early a.m.; (8) Station 1 (KSAS based in Wichita); and (9) Station 2 (KSHB based in Kansas City). The variables were used by the analysis program to create a formula to predict successful syndication programming with 95.12% accuracy in the study area. Although the study did produce a 4.87% misclassification of study programs, it misclassified towards lower success levels, indicating the misclassification rate would not be detrimental to the local station's rating. The study indicated a strong correlation between success and

distribution. The results also suggest that Time of Day is a big factor in success. Results indicate that it is possible to identify significant variables in the study area to produce a formula that can be used to predict successful off-network syndication television programming.