

The World Cup on La Sexta

Traditionally the Spanish national squad has never built up passion among its fellow citizens, mainly because it has never obtained good results in important international competitions. And in this country, if a Spaniard does not win, the event itself does not inspire much passionate interest. Having said this, the truth of the matter is that Spanish audiences in this World Cup are especially low compared to previous years and this is because of the broadcasting arrangements.

The La Sexta channel came on the scene at the beginning of this year with a license for both analogue and digital broadcasts, but with a very low coverage in homes. On the one hand, DTT is a relatively new phenomenon and on the other hand, household antennae were not prepared to receive the analogue signal of the new channel. In short, the big challenge faced by La Sexta was to make the Spanish population take them seriously, adapt their antennae and have their TV sets pick up the signal, with the subsequent effort from an economical and personal standpoint for the viewer. This could have been done in many ways. They could have spent an enormous outlay in advertising campaigns to gain channel awareness and make their attributes known, or they could have implemented campaigns for adapting free of cost antennae. The common denominator behind all these actions would have taken up much time and in business, time is money.

La Sexta thought of another idea - to buy the broadcasting rights of the 2006 World Cup. No better way to move people than to place a juicy carrot before their noses! They paid what no other channel was prepared to pay, because no other channel was going to pay more than the revenue to be obtained from the sale of publicity. In the end, they were allotted the World Cup in the midst of heated debate, because many Spaniards were not going to be able to see Spain's matches, and that is protected by law. Finally, agreement was reached with Cuatro, another newly created channel, but with almost universal coverage as it has inherited the coverage from Canal +. In this way, matches of general interest and those in which Spain played would be on the screens of almost all Spanish households. That was sufficient to comply with the law, but not the best solution to maximize audience in Spain.

What has been the outcome of all this? La Sexta sees it as an investment that is giving them a lot of visibility and, at the same time, speeding up the process of spreading their signal. By using such a unique event as the World Cup, they will most likely speed up to the maximum their presence in the Spanish home, which will allow them, after the World Cup, to compete on equal terms with the rest of the channels and obtain a slice of the advertising pie.

It seems that things are going well for them. Spain won 4-0 in its first match against Ukraine and the original scepticism has turned into unleashed passion. With almost ten million spectators, the opening match of the Spanish national squad has surpassed figures for the same match in the World Cup of 2002, in spite of the low audience data obtained up to now in the championship. We could well win the World Cup. If Fernando Alonso wins the F1 races, Barcelona, the Champions League, Nadal, the Roland Garros Tournament, why can't such young players as Torres, Alonso, Fábregas and company win the World Cup? And in the meantime, La Sexta sees the number of Spaniards tuning onto their channel increasing day by day.

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