
television didn't become widely viewed until 1950.

Much to the chagrin of those who had invested large sums of money into making it viable, theatre television enjoyed only modest success at best. It fell into disuse by 1955 save for some special sporting spectacles — its forte from the beginning being the presentation of sporting events.

The technology used to implement theatre television isn't being elaborated on here because it's not important for the purposes of this discussion. What is important is the principle, or philosophy, behind the implementation of theatre television. Namely, to protect market share.

The motion picture industry had adopted a defensive stance, their aims were twofold: to try to protect their market share or, failing that, to profit from the onslaught of television if they couldn't prevent it from reducing their market share.

This *raison d'être* failed as the engine for theatre television because of the political and economic climate of the times. The regulatory agencies were concerned about anti-trust suits that might arise from the concentration of the industry in the hands of a few powerful owners.

Ground Work For HD

But what theatre television did do was develop the idea of a network of theatres equipped to present theatre television productions, with AT&T long lines used to facilitate the transfer of material throughout the chain.

One of the main advantages of a network was the cost sharing of the acquisition, distribution and marketing expenses. Cost sharing would allow the theatre chain to maintain a low per unit cost, thus keeping prices low to maximize profits and further stimulate the growth of the medium.

Even though theatre television eventually failed, it laid the groundwork for future endeavors. It wasn't until recently with the advent of HD imaging systems that the concept, albeit in a very revised form and with a decidedly different intent, could once again surface.

I started composing this article shortly after returning from the Ottawa conference. At that time I didn't know an HD imaging network was in the planning stages. →