

ABC cuts Oscar ad rates

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This year, Oscar is a little less golden.

The ABC network, in a move that reverses years of escalating prices and underscores the worsening economy, has shaved the cost of a commercial for Sunday's annual Academy Awards show, one of TV's most-watched programs.

The telecast should generate about \$68 million in revenue for ABC, according to TNS Media. The board decreed that this year studios could promote films -- as long as they were set for release two months later to avoid the perception that advertising influenced the outcome of the awards...

"Unfortunately, they limited it too much," said Dean DeBiase, chief executive of TNS Media. Initially, he said, only a couple of studios took advantage of the new rule.

That prompted the academy last month to again tweak its policy, this time allowing advertisements for movies that premiered any time after Sunday night's show. It was unclear Thursday whether ABC had ad time left to sell.

"You might see some last-minute advertisers pop in," DeBiase said. "Even with the lower ratings, the Oscars are still a massive premium event for advertisers."

Several advertisers agreed, saying the Oscars still provide an aura of ritz and glamour, and the show attracts millions of fashion-conscious women. "It's a great value for the money," said Ruby Anik, J.C. Penney Co. senior vice president for brand marketing.