Oprah’s show is ending, but her effect on people’s saving and spending won’t

Oprah Winfrey’s impact on your finances won’t end with her show.

For 25 years, “The Oprah Winfrey Show” held enormous sway over how its audience chose to spend and save.

When Winfrey featured a charity, viewers reached for their wallets. Her stamp of approval could turn a little-known product into a craze. Her power over book sales is legendary.

“Nobody else has that kind of influence,” says Susan Harrow, author of a guide on how to land an appearance on “Oprah.” Winfrey will continue connecting with audiences through her five-month-old cable channel, OWN: The Oprah Winfrey Network. Here are four ways Winfrey and her show will continue to affect finances:

**Money matters**

Regular viewers tuned in for guidance on the major issues they struggle with day to day, says Suze Orman, the financial guru. “They are watching… not to be entertained, but to be transformed,” she says. Orman’s own success speaks to Oprah’s influence. The show gave Orman a platform to talk about money issues that clearly struck a chord with women. Before her first appearance on the show, Orman’s book “The 9 Steps to Financial Freedom” sold about 300,000 copies. It sold another 3 million after the episode aired. Orman will get her own prime-time show on OWN this fall.

**Charitable giving**

Winfrey’s charity, Oprah’s Angel Network, evolved from an episode in 1997 in which she called on viewers to use their lives to give back. The charity went on to raise in excess of $40 million.

The “Oprah” show also helped launch the Pajama Program, a New York City charity that provides pajamas and books to children. Before a taping in April 2007, the audience was asked to collect donations; they drummed up 33,000 pairs of pajamas. Pajama Program is still thriving. The charity aims to give away 260,000 pajamas this year.

**Spending decisions**

When Winfrey crowns a product, her audience takes note. Spanx is one of the better known examples. The body-slimming undergarments became a household name after they were featured on “Oprah’s Favorite Things” list in 2000.

More recently, Winfrey last year counted a small pie shop in Cape Cod as among her “favorite things.” Centerville Pie Co., founded in 2009, now ships thousands of pies a month.

“Not able to say you were on Oprah is the gold standard for retail,” Harrow says.

**Book sales**

Since the debut of Oprah’s Book Club in 1996, Winfrey has become a reliable hitmaker. Over the years, there were 65 book club selections. Twenty-seven titles alone accounted for more than 22 million books sold.

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