

Editorial:

What We Know About TV Today (and Tomorrow)

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WITH ALL THE ATTENTION paid to social media, mobile engagement, and the tabletization of a global population, we often overlook the elephant in the marketing-research room. Whether the discussion is broad-based reach or micro examinations of particular audiences, television remains the most powerful way for advertisers to reach audiences.

Talk, if you will, of user-generated content and a blogosphere that can target left-handed hanggliders on the coast of Nova Scotia, but for the last half-century, nothing has outperformed television in bringing consumers to market. And, as this issue of the *Journal of Advertising Research* demonstrates, the medium has even more tools that will help replicate that success in the years to come.

For instance, “Second-by-Second Analysis of Advertising Exposure in TV Pods: The Dynamics of Position, Length, and Timing” (please see page 91) demonstrates not just the potential of television metrics to drill down to detailed efficacy analysis but also to use that data to ensure maximum viewer engagement.

According to authors Srinivasan Swaminathan (Drexel University) and Robert Kent (University of Delaware), “Advertising practice is moving from the use of program-audience ratings to the use of commercial-audience ratings in television media planning and buying. Because the gap between program and commercial audiences varies across specific shows and can be substantial, the switch to commercial audience measures is an important upgrade.”

But with that change come certain challenges: “Use of a commercial audience estimate for all the advertisements in a program may still mask important variance between the advertising units of any one show.... Differences in advertising exposure levels for a program’s specific advertising units may result at least in part from pod position, pod length, and pod timing effects.”

Even as marketers develop more granular information about who watches television, when,

and why, they often ignore evidence that would suggest a more intelligent use of the tools of the medium. In “Understanding the Invisibility of the Asian-American Television Audience: Why Marketers Often Overlook an Audience of ‘Model’ Consumers” (please see page 101), Amy Jo Coffey (University of Florida) makes a powerful argument that the undervaluation of an over-indexing Asian-American demographic makes little economic sense.

“Despite all the conventional reasons known to attract advertiser investment in a demographic group,” Dr. Coffey writes, “advertisers have paid comparatively little attention to the growing and affluent U.S. Asian demographic, with some Asian advertising agencies and television executives even referring to the demographic as ‘invisible.’” And, she concludes, “The small number of television advertisers targeting Asians perhaps is the best evidence that Asian-Americans are not well recognized—or given considerable attention—by the television advertising industry.”

Of course, television is not what it was just five years ago. A public that enjoys and seeks out video-driven content now has a variety of options outside a big box in the living room or a movie theater down the street. “Do Online Video Platforms Cannibalize Television? How Viewers are Moving from Old Screens to New Ones” (please see page 71) examines whether (and how) online video platforms may displace traditional television with respect to time investment and viewership.

The paper begins with an articulation of recent history: “Young generations—namely Generations Y and X—spend more time online than they do watching television. A slightly older profile—younger ‘baby boomers’—spend almost equal amounts of time on television and online. But, as Jiyoung Cha (George Mason University) discovered, these new pockets of viewers do not fit into comfortably defined segments with sharply configured habits. For instance, on one hand, “The time

consumers spent using video-sharing sites decreased the time they spent watching television." And on the other hand: "The time spent using television-network Web sites to watch video content did not affect the amount of time spent watching television."

"Cannibalization" may still be a theoretical problem for broadcasters, as evidenced by the finding "in the current study, only 1.5 percent of Internet users employed online video platforms alone to watch video content." But it is the future: "It seems inevitable that television would share its role as a video platform with the Internet. It is noteworthy that the proportion of people who use both television and the Internet to watch video content (55.4 percent) is larger than the proportion of people who solely rely on television (42.3 percent)."

Finally, in "The Good News About Television: Attitudes Aren't Getting Worse. Tracking Public Attitudes toward TV Advertising" (please see page 83), Michael T. Ewing (Monash University) judges the efficacy of television advertising from the perspective of the people who matter most—the viewers for whom the messages are intended. Comparing Australian attitudes across four points in time (2002, 2005, 2008, and 2010), Dr. Ewing discovered that, in fact, consumers didn't think highly of television advertising. The upside was that their dissatisfaction did not seem to be increasing.

And, he adds, "... given that television remains the medium with the highest penetration into Australian households, continued investment and focus on ways to

effectively and ethically advertise through this medium appear warranted. Failure to take heed of this cautionary note could result in further community disapproval regarding the role of the advertising industry."

We trust that you'll continue to look to these pages to track the development of new techniques to make the smartest use of any number of new tools of consumer engagement and advertising research. But even as the universe of marketing possibilities expands, be confident that we'll keep an eye on the elephants in the room... and never underestimate their power and influence.

As always, we thank you for your interest in the *Journal* and welcome your insights at geoffrey.precourt@warc.com. 