

AD RECEPTIVITY: MANY APPROACHES, VARYING INTERPRETATIONS

There are lots of ways to measure and interpret advertising receptivity. Next Generation Research, LLC's (NGR) 2003 Advertising Receptivity Index chose to define each of its 15,000+ adult respondents as a product user and/or buyer for up to 189 categories, then ask each user/buyer how likely s/he was to be attentive when an ad for that particular product or service was encountered. Those who identified themselves as "very likely" to be attentive (about 20-25%) of the average product's total user/buyer base were determined to be the most ad receptive for that category's ads and subsequent brand ad awareness measurements confirmed this. On average, product users who rated themselves as "ad receptive" per NGR's scale, were 40% more likely to be aware of brand ad campaigns (claimed past 30 days ad exposure). NGR contended that by selecting TV shows, showtypes or daypart/network type mixes with the highest concentration of product-specific ad receptives, a marketer could increase his/her advertising awareness, without increasing his/her total GRPs or ad spending.

Others prefer a more general approach, attempting to define people as more or less chronic ad avoiders or enthusiasts. A study conducted in March/April 1999 for Western International Media (now Initiative Media) interviewed 1600 adults who had watched TV the previous day. The researchers divided their sample into six distinct segments based on the way each respondent described his or her customary dial switching, program selection behavior and normal attitudes toward advertising. As shown in the first table, the six segments were "channel surfers" (16%), "TV junkies" (16%), "ad saturated" (13%), "ad resistant" (18%), "background noise" (15%) and "information seekers" (22%). Of these, the ad resistant, ad saturated and background noise group were least interested in commercials, often zapping or ignoring them.

Western's survey also explored the degree of attention that viewers claimed to give the shows (and most importantly, the commercials in them) they reported watching the day before. As shown in the second table, while 63% of all viewers said they were mostly or fully attentive during program content, only 11% gave commercials the same degree of exposure. Although attentiveness to program content was fairly consistent among the various mindset segments, this was not true for commercials. Whereas 18% of the information seekers claimed to be fully or mostly attentive during commercials, only 4% of the ad resistants acknowledged this level of interest.

Another approach utilized by some of the major TV networks is even more general in nature. Exploiting Nielsen's Quad Analysis option to categorize viewers by frequency and duration of viewing, network tallies strongly favor on-air TV network primetime fare over rival forms of television and cable in particular. If 48% of an on-air network's primetime audience falls into the most loyal viewing Quad, but only 21% of a cable channel's viewers are equally

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Ad Receptivity: Many Approaches, Varying Interpretations Continued

“involved” with its shows, we are expected to believe that the latter’s audience is significantly less likely to be exposed to an advertiser’s commercial.

Unfortunately for the major TV networks, the cable services, via the Cabletelevision Advertising Bureau (CAB) were able to refute the core assumption behind the Quad analysis with a massive Nielsen telephone study that found no difference between on-air and cable primetime viewers in unaided commercial (brand name/product class) recall.

The one thing that is lacking in each of the designs described above is a definitive cause-and-effect validation. A massive measurement of numerous TV shows and ad campaigns, with commercial recall and motivation indicators and, ultimately, sales tracking correlations, would be an ideal, but extremely expensive project. We suspect that such a study, even if scaled down in size, would probably favor the more specific barometer, namely NGR’s product-by-product ad receptivity approach, rather than Western’s general mindset segmentation. But to what extent, nobody knows. Of one thing we are reasonably certain: simple demographic profiling does not even come close to telling the marketer how likely a given TV show’s audience is to pay attention to his/her commercials. If advertisers were really as serious about developing newer and more ROI-relevant benchmarks for evaluating TV shows, program genres, dayparts and network types as they claim they are, they should be jumping on the ad receptivity idea and funding research to mine the best applications of this concept. Yet amazingly, this has not happened, even though the concept has been out there, and fairly well publicized, for at least five or six years. One wonders why.

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Ad Receptivity: Many Approaches, Varying Interpretations Continued

A PROFILE OF SIX SEGMENTS OF THE TV AUDIENCE

	CHANNEL SURFERS	TV JUNKIES	AD SATURATED	AD RESISTANT	BACK- GROUND NOISE	INFOR- MATION SEEKERS
% Of Adult Viewers	16%	16%	13%	18%	15%	22%
Demo Profile						
Total By Sex	100	100	100	100	100	100
Male	49	39	44	48	40	42
Female	51	61	56	52	60	58
Age						
18-34	25	40	28	36	33	29
35-54	39	38	43	43	37	39
55+	36	22	29	22	29	31
Education						
College Grad.	35	27	33	43	29	29
1-3 Yrs. College	32	24	21	33	27	33
H.S. Grad Or Less	33	48	45	25	45	39
Race/Ethnicity						
White	75	77	76	87	77	74
Black	7	10	11	5	10	15
Hispanic	11	8	5	6	6	7
Other	7	5	8	2	7	4

☐ *Source: Western International Media, Advertising Receptivity Study.*

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Ad Receptivity: Many Approaches, Varying Interpretations Continued

VIEWERS CLAIMING MOST OR FULL ATTENTION DURING PROGRAMS AND COMMERCIALS BY MINDSET SEGMENT

	VIEWERS	DURING PROGRAMS	DURING COMM'L'S
All Viewers	100%	63%	11%
Mindset Segment			
Channel Surfers	16	60	9
TV Junkies	16	65	13
Ad Saturated	13	59	8
Ad Resistant	18	62	4
Background Noise	15	58	8
Information Seekers	22	67	18

☐ *Source: Western International Media, Advertising Receptivity Study.*

