

PPMs REVEAL SIGNIFICANT VARIATIONS IN COMMERCIAL AVOIDANCE BY NETWORK TYPE & PROGRAM GENRES

As more and more research becomes available, the need for commercial ratings—rather than the current all-content (program and promotional matter) average minute ratings—becomes evident. In 2003, Arbitron's Roberta McConochie and industry colleagues Leslie Wood, Beth Uyenco and Chris Heider, under the auspices of the Advertising Research Foundation's ESOMAR weighed in on this subject. The researchers selected 1,000 portable peplemeter (PPM) panelists aged 6+ from Arbitron's Philadelphia PPM test bed, and determined average commercial minute avoidance rates for six on-air TV channels and 26 cable channels for a full week (October 20-26) in 2003. Avoidance was defined as the percentage of viewers leaving a channel's audience as measured by the PPM's pager-like devices worn or carried by respondents, which captured encoded signals emitted electronically by the participating channel.

Overall, Arbitron found an average commercial minute avoidance rate of 7.3% across all dayparts and channel types. Of this, 56% was accounted for by channel switching and 44% by other causes (leaving the room, for example). Like previous research on avoidance, Arbitron's PPMs reported a significant difference in commercial audience loss between broadcast and cable outlets, with the latter displaying 44% higher avoidance rates in the all-daypart averages. As shown in the first table that follows, commercial avoidance for both on-air and cable channels peaked in primetime, implying that as viewers settle in for an evening with the tube, they are more inclined to dial-switch when commercials appear (to see what else is on) than is the case with daytime television fare, which garners more habitual and less selective audience constituencies.

Consistent with other studies on commercial avoidance, Arbitron's PPM analysis notes that males are 25-30% more likely than females to take such actions and that persons aged 12-17 and adults under 44 are the most restless avoiders, whereas those aged 65+ seem more tolerant of ad clutter (see second table).

Of particular importance are the PPM's findings that commercial minute avoidance is not a constant by network type or program genre. Again, confirming Nielsen's peplemeter panel tallies made by various parties in the past 15 years, the PPMs note that, on average, ABC/CBS/NBC outlets perform the best, garnering the lowest all-daypart avoidance rates (about 6%). In contrast, Fox/UPN/WB programming generated 25-30% more avoidance—perhaps a result of drawing younger viewers. When broadcast program genres were analyzed, still greater differences emerged. As indicated in the third table, sports events had the highest ad avoidance rates (8.9%), whereas news programs and daytime serials had the lowest, with 5.5% and 4.2% of their respective viewers missing their commercial minutes.

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A similar analysis of cable yielded more noteworthy distinctions. As show in the fourth table, music, weather and news channels displayed significantly higher commercial minute avoidance than channels like A&E and Lifetime, which favor more involving documentary, movie and drama fare. The holding power discrepancies between specific cable program genres is highlighted in the fifth table, which shows that cable talk shows lose 2.5 times more viewers than regular dramas when commercials come on the screen.

Defenders of the status-quo often decry the need for commercial ratings, claiming that the time honored practice of tallying all minutes, regardless of content, produces about the same result as commercial-only ratings. Tabulations of Nielsen data and now Arbitron's PPM analysis make it clear that this assumption is flawed. Arbitron's PPM analysis is yet another wake up call for return on investment conscious advertisers who, more than they realize, are paying for phantom viewers: people who avoid their commercials.

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PPMs Reveal Significant Variations In Commercial Avoidance By Network Type & Program Genres Continued

AVERAGE COMMERCIAL MINUTE AVOIDANCE RATE BY DAYPART: BROADCAST VS. CABLE

Persons 6+

	BROADCAST	CABLE	DIFFERENCE
7-9am	5.6%	9.4%	68%
9am-Noon	5.7	8.4	47
Noon-4pm	5.8	8.6	48
4-6pm	6.4	9.3	45
6-8pm	6.9	10.3	49
8-11pm	7.5	10.8	44
11pm-1am	6.7	8.1	21
All Daypart Average	6.6	9.5	44

Note: NA=Not Available.

Source: Progress Towards Media Mix Accountability: Portable People Meters' (PPMTM) Preview of Commercial Audience Results, by Roberta M. McConochie, Leslie Wood, Beth Uyenco, Chris Heider. ©copyright by ESOMAR®/The ARF.

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AVERAGE COMMERCIAL MINUTE AVOIDANCE RATE BY AGE: BROADCAST VS. CABLE¹

Persons 6+

	BROADCAST	CABLE
6-11	7.4%	9.8%
12-17	9.2	11.0
18-24	6.5	7.9
25-34	7.1	10.1
35-44	7.2	11.6
45-54	6.3	8.9
55-64	5.9	9.6
65+	5.1	7.6
6+ Average	6.6	9.5

¹All daypart average.

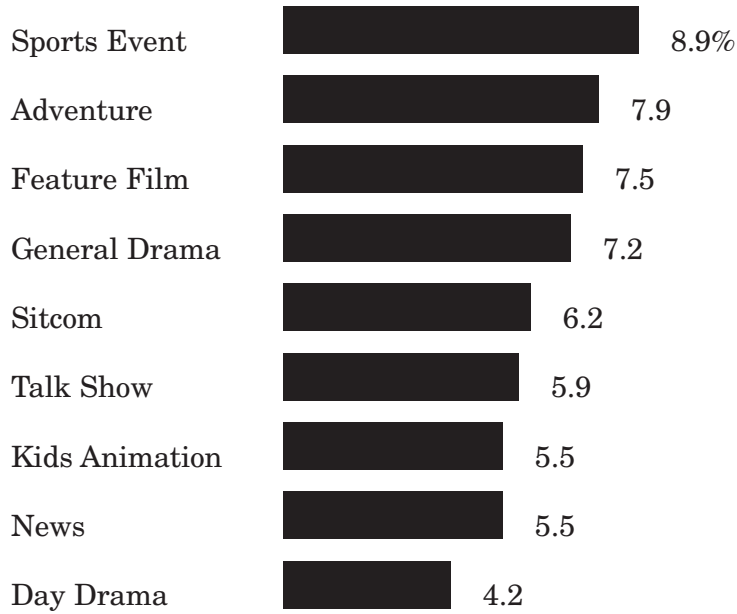
Source: Progress Towards Media Mix Accountability: Portable People Meters' (PPMTM) Preview of Commercial Audience Results, by Roberta M. McConochie, Leslie Wood, Beth Uyenco, Chris Heider.
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AVERAGE COMMERCIAL MINUTE AVOIDANCE RATE FOR BROADCAST TV PROGRAM GENRES¹

Persons 6+



¹All daypart average.

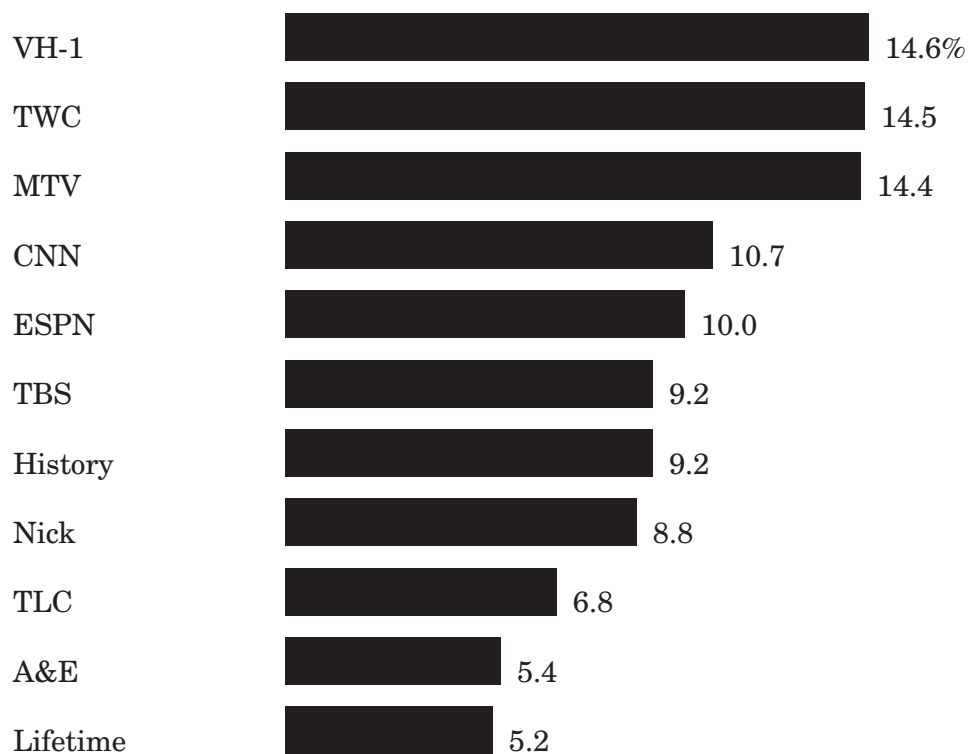
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AVERAGE COMMERCIAL MINUTE AVOIDANCE RATE FOR SELECTED CABLE CHANNELS¹

Persons 6+



¹All daypart average.

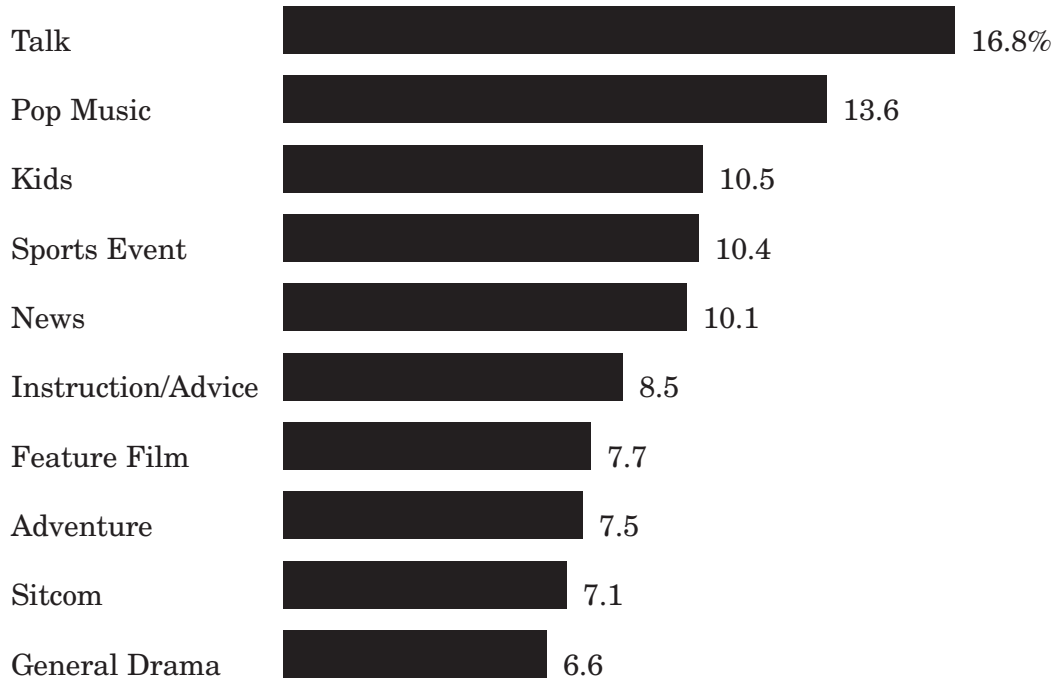
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AVERAGE COMMERCIAL MINUTE AVOIDANCE RATE FOR CABLE PROGRAM GENRES¹

Persons 6+



¹All daypart average.

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