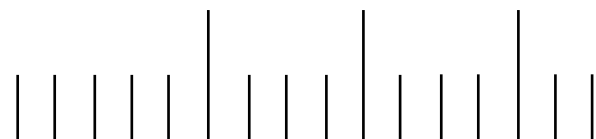


DRASTIC MEASURES



GAUGING THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING

As you read this, someone, somewhere, probably knows it. When you opened up your laptop today, someone, somewhere, was tracking you. When you clicked on that banner ad on MySpace, someone, somewhere, was trying to learn everything about you. You are being stalked — we all are.

But, not to worry, these “stalkers” aren’t dangerous; they’re just doing their jobs. They’re tracking the effectiveness of any number of companies’ advertising campaigns.

Think this sounds a bit overdramatic? A bit too much like *1984*? Well, it seems George Orwell wasn’t as far off as some thought. These days, determining advertising effectiveness has gone from the mundane to hooking people up to monitors to measure their brain activity when viewing certain images. A far cry from the simple question-and-answer sessions of a focus group, huh?

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I ALWAYS FEEL LIKE SOMEBODY'S WATCHING ME

Why this new boom in technological tracking? Carl Winans, managing partner of strategic development at Elemental in Troy, MI, says it's in response to major technological advances in the way consumers view entertainment. When TiVo was released for viewers to devour, it changed the landscape of advertising forever. Suddenly, the advertiser was no longer in control of what the viewer saw or when the viewer saw it.

"Traditionally, media would typically just blast out information and hope that someone would hear it and react," Winans says. "The whole movement toward new media, in my mind, all started with TiVo and the way it was such a disruptive technology. The consumer is in the driver's seat. It's not up to me as a

listener is difficult to track.

Enter Podbridge, a company located in Mountain View, CA, that was created by Navar with the sole purpose of helping advertisers track people who listen to podcasts and figure out where to best place their advertisements. Podbridge delivers measurements of podcast listens, audience profiles with demographics, listening habits and locations and connections between podcast content providers and advertisers.

Listeners can download podcasts for free by simply filling out a short survey prior to listening to the podcast. The survey [which is still evolving] gives the advertiser some basic information about who is downloading what. Eventually, Navar says, the survey will be used to tailor ads to certain consumers. For example, a male listener would probably not

and puts it in a computer with an Internet connection, Echo can tell what the user looked at, how long they looked at it, and in what order they clicked any links or chapters. Advertisers can use this real-time information to adjust future marketing materials.

While Echo doesn't give the client exact personal data [age, name, etc.], it can give them "technographics," information about your technological capabilities, which still says quite a bit about you. Therefore, Echo can tell what operating system you're running, what your screen resolution is, if you have a microphone or camera connected to your computer and so on.

"We'll know who looked at it, when they looked at it, how many times they looked at it, which links in the email they clicked. And when they click a link, it allows us to track them on a website," Winans says. "You learn about your message. You learn about your delivery. Then you try to make changes to the way you're marketing something or putting something out there."

"WE'RE ABLE TO PUT AN AD IN FRONT OF A FOCUS GROUP AND, AS WE DO THAT, WE MEASURE EVERYTHING THEY LOOK AT."

company to just throw my message out there and let everyone consume it. You have control over your message and what you want to say, but whether they're going to listen and where they're going to hear it, you don't have control."

Suddenly, with television becoming an uncontrollable medium, advertisers are looking to new media to find better places for their campaigns. But, new media isn't as easy to track as television or print. It's infinitely more complicated than placing a radio ad, and easily as expensive.

"Advertisers are scared because they know that their consumers are not watching traditional channels anymore," says Murgesh Navar, CEO of Podbridge Inc., a podcast-tracking company. "They are looking for new solutions that prove effectiveness."

I LIKE TO WATCH

So, who is watching you? For every new way there is to advertise, there's a new way to track it.

PODBRIDGE

One of the hippest markets that advertisers are trying to break into is podcasting. But, because podcasts can be downloaded and listened to almost anywhere [not just when the consumer is on the Internet], what the consumer is listening to and when they are

want to hear an ad for pantyhose — it would be a waste of the consumer's time and a waste of the company's money. At some point, the goal is to actually put the choice of advertisements into the listener's hands by allowing them to subscribe to advertisements about products they're interested in.

Podbridge can also measure what happened after the podcast was heard. The company can tell if the consumer went to their website, purchased something in their store, or picked up the phone and called.

"We know that consumers gravitate toward content that is high-quality and free of cost," says Navar. "The beauty of podcasting is a little bit of a throwback to radio and television because they are using them passively. Podcasts come to you. I think it's going to be a huge convenience for consumers. It's all about the consumer — anyone who forgets that is deluding themselves."

ELEMENTAL

More inventive strides are being made by Elemental, creators of the tracking program Echo. The program, which was originally created to help the company track promotional CD-ROMs, has also proven helpful in measuring websites. Here's how it works: The client gives out a CD-ROM at a trade show, and if the recipient of that CD takes it home

EYETOOLS

They say that the eyes are the windows to the soul ... turns out they could also be the windows to improving your sales. Or at least that's what Eyetools believes.

"Right now everybody has been focusing on if the consumer is acting on it," says Greg Edwards, chief technology officer and founder. "The gaping hole is, did people even see it?"

Eyetracking Eyetools Inc., headquartered in Sacramento, CA, is focused on automating the analysis of eyetracking data. This cutting-edge company, which holds the patent on "eyetracking heatmap" visualizations, helps companies see exactly what is catching a consumer's eye and what is being ignored. Based on the data returned from the technology, advertisers can see if they are having problems with visibility, copy or design, and make adjustments accordingly.

The client begins the process by choosing a target demographic and recruiting 10 or more subjects for the study. The participants are then asked to view a client's website on a special computer which tracks their eye movement. Clients can see if website links are seen, not seen or look uninteresting to the consumer. So, if they are experiencing a low click-through rate, the eyetracking technology can give them information as to why. It might be that the copy isn't invigorat-

ing enough, or perhaps the links are in a bad location on the page.

“We’re able to put an ad in front of a focus group and, as we do that, we measure everything they look at,” says Edwards. “Ultimately, what you want to know is what percentage of people looked at the ad. The value of this stuff is huge.”

The technology was originally created to help paraplegics and other physically challenged people communicate with others. Eventually, Edwards hopes to see the same technology used in the educational arena for teachers to see how individual children learn.

Edwards isn’t afraid that his technology is going to be used on a widespread scale like it’s shown in some science fiction movies.

“I think it makes for great movies, but I don’t think it’s possible that will ever happen,” he says. “First of all, the government would step in and regulate it. There’s just no way that 1984 stuff is ever going to happen.”

NEUROFOCUS

By far the closest thing to what you might see in a movie like *Minority Report* or *Enemy of the State* is being offered by Neurofocus. And, much like a summer Hollywood blockbuster, what they offer is thoroughly entertaining.

The technology for this company came from years of research doctors were doing with children suffering from Attention Deficit Disorder [ADD]. According to A.K. Pradeep, CEO, there isn’t much difference between children with ADD and the way consumers appear to advertisers. So, to Pradeep, it seemed only natural that the same software could be used for both.

Neurofocus looks at almost every angle of how an ad is received by a consumer. For starters, volunteers are asked to wear a cap that is covered with electrodes that map the responses of their brain to visual stimuli. Those responses are then recorded and analyzed for the client. This mapping tells an advertiser two things that are of constant concern in the advertising world. The first is advertisement recall. The brain mapping software can show if any of your ad’s information was transferred to the long-term memory portion of the brain. The second is the dreaded and unpredictable “wear-out.” The software can measure how the consumer views the ad after seeing it once or 20 times, and can tell you if the viewer became bored or more inclined to remember the information.

Aside from the brain cap, the viewer is

also hooked up to a machine similar to a lie detector to measure skin response, and their eye movement is recorded using eyetracking software.

It sounds scary, but Pradeep insists it’s really quite fun. In fact, the “lab” in Berkeley, CA, was designed to resemble a high-end spa so volunteers would feel comfortable. And volunteers are given a T-shirt with a map of their own brain on it as a “thank-you” for participating.

“They get a kick out of it,” Pradeep says. “They can see their brainwaves change. It’s a fun thing to see your brain and see what it does.”

THE FUTURE FREAKS ME OUT

It’s pretty clear that the future of measuring advertising effectiveness is going to be intricate, exciting and slightly more invisible to consumers. Does that mean the old-fash-

ioned ways of gathering information will become obsolete? Will talking to an actual human being become a waste of time? The answer, surprisingly, is probably not. Many of the proponents of these emerging technologies view their advancements as tools to augment traditional ways of measurement. Even Pradeep doesn’t think his extreme advances can replace opinions.

“I would be arrogant if I said it would,” he says. “Focus groups still have their place.”

It turns out, according to Winans, that numbers can’t quite so easily replace people. Hopefully consumers will breathe a little easier knowing that.

“You still need that personal feedback,” he says. “If you combine this type of information you can make a set of assumptions and you can analyze data, but you can use focus groups to validate it.”

“THEY CAN SEE THEIR BRAINWAVES CHANGE. IT’S A FUN THING TO SEE YOUR BRAIN AND SEE WHAT IT DOES.”