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Study: TV More Effective Ad Environment Than Online

By Anthony Crupi, July 1, 2009



A new research report designed to assess viewer engagement as it relates to various media platforms suggests that television presents a more effective

commercial environment than the Internet or mobile devices.

A joint initiative of the Cable & Telecommunications Association for Marketing and the research firm NeuroFocus, the study found that TV earns high marks for emotional engagement, commercial recall and intent to purchase. Small-screen media is less immersive; as such, viewers tend to find that advertising on mobile and Internet platforms is not nearly as engaging as it is on TV.

“Emotional response appears to be tied to the way people use the different media platforms,” said Clay Collier, CTAM VP of Research. “TV is particularly good at striking an emotional chord and conveying a sense of novelty. If you want to draw someone in and create an immersive environment, TV is a better fit. On the smaller screens, certain emotional triggers—facial expressions, for example—are somewhat undermined.”

Collier added that the physical demands of the mobile experience seem to help boost recall. “You certainly remember what you see on your mobile device, because the smaller screen demands that you zero in on what’s in front of you,” he said. “So as far as retention is con-

cerned, mobile holds up pretty well.”

As part of the study, NeuroFocus measured galvanic skin response, EEG activity, heart rate and eye movements, mapping a somatic profile of each panelist as they watched a pair of test ads. One was a promo for a fast-paced cable drama, while the other was a heartwarming retail spot. Both spots ran in a standard sit-com environment.

Of singular interest is how each platform performed as a “closer.” According to CTAM member and former Lifetime research guru Tim Brooks, TV and mobile were particularly effective at prompting a sale. Not so for Internet ads, which appear to require repeated exposure before eliciting a consumer response.

“On the emotional engagement scale, the Internet came in last by a fairly wide margin,” Brooks said. “It stands to reason that people who are less emotionally invested in your spot may be less likely to buy your product.”

In a bid to take the study to the next level, the physical data for each panelist was then correlated with Nielsen’s TV ratings and online/mobile usage data. This sort of fusion analysis could give marketers greater insight into how consumers use one media platform to augment their experience on another screen.

“We still know almost next to nothing about how all this stuff works, how the online environment informs the viewer’s experience with traditional TV,” said Brooks. “We need to establish some kind of baseline in terms of our understanding of how the different forms of media impact the consumer ... and each other.”