

Audience data powers our industry: Stephen White

By [Twishy](#)

Tuesday, Oct 23, 2012



Without measurement technology, one cannot know who is receiving the advertising messages, communication value of television, radio, internet and mobile media, how to put a price on them and how to monetise them. Hence, audience data is the energy that powers our industry and reliable audience numbers are what “keep the lights on”, emphasised Stephen White, Founder and Chairman, EMM International.

Drawing a parallel between the development of the modern energy industry and audience measurement, White noted that just as the energy industry started with gas-lamps, then progressed to electricity grids, hydro-electric power, nuclear energy, windmills and solar power, similarly, audience measurement has moved from diaries to panels and peplemeters to online, self-measuring mobile media and new technologies such as Return Path Data (RPD). “Audience behaviour is vastly more complex and variable than before and audience measurement technology is like the quest for renewable clean energy,” he noted.

He explained that the viewing diary was the gas-lamp of its day: just like clipboards and pencil marks on paper. It was first developed when TV was analogue and there were few TV stations, sometimes only one. The paper diaries were replaced by electronic equivalents like CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing), CAPI (Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing) and peplemeters.

The second one was the viewing and listening panels. TV panels developed rather like the introduction of the electricity grid, an essential interim stage in the move to peplemeters preceded by Audience Establishment Survey, to define the viewers/ listeners/ user universe, determine size and composition of the national sample required and then dictate panel recruitment procedures and timelines and mandate quality controls. For the future, the viewer panels are now an essential and permanent feature of TV audience research and their future is now firmly tied to peplemeters.

“The peplemeter is the ‘hydro-electric power’ of audience measurement and there are over 75 countries using peple-meter panels, (including in India). For the hydro-electro power to be successful it had panel selection and the results were nationally representative. All TV sets in a home (satellite, cable, free-to-air) can be covered in the same way and detailed data for different demographic breaks and viewer can be used as a currency for campaign planning and ad sales,” White said.

“Online and social measurement referred to as the nuclear power is the first medium whose audience would measure itself – almost like limitless renewable nuclear power. Online encompasses at least four different advertising types, each with a different set of communication functions: display ads, click-through tags, search ads, social and viral,” he further said.

The benefits of online media are ‘self-measuring’ and TV and Internet media play a symbiotic and mutually-supportive role. However, counting page visits and ad hits are not straightforward – different measurement currencies are often contradictory, Internet measurement currencies are not interchangeable with TV and consumers have learned to remove the cookies from their systems. There is no overall agreement yet about Internet metrics, methodology, or how to integrate online currencies with those of TV.

Stephen White was sharing his views at the Delhi leg of the e4m Conclave on October 22, 2012. He was speaking on the topic ‘Transparency in Measurement; Courtesy technology’. The Conclave is presented by Jagran.

http://exchange4media.com/48513_audience-data-powers-our-industry-stephen-white.html