NewMediaMetrics: Tracking Attachment to Brands, Shows

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When determining where to spend their TV ad dollars to get the most bang for their buck, advertisers have gone from considering just pure TV ratings to also looking at viewer-engagement data and even monitoring online buzz to determine the hottest shows for marketing their products. Now they've begun to consider viewers' emotional attachment to brands and match those warm-and-fuzzy feelings to particular TV shows.

The concept is the brainchild of NewMediaMetrics, whose clients include Procter & Gamble and Kraft, along with networks including ABC, NBC, Fox, Turner and Discovery.

Founders Gary Reisman and Denise Larson based the model on research methods developed by Jonathan Bowlby, who in the 1930s came up with a way to measure the emotional bond of mothers and children.

After gathering data over the past three years and following a soft rollout, NMM now has 120 brands in its database, linked to 14 TV and online outlets and more than 100 prime-time broadcast and cable programs. Advertisers or networks that buy the company's syndicated research can get data for 40 different consumer groups based on age and income, and tie in a group's emotional attachment to a brand, network or show.

Beth Rockwood, senior vp, market resources at Discovery Networks, said the NMM data "has proven to be predictive in viewer behavior…It has enabled us to link viewers who love a particular brand with our programming." Rockwood said Discovery has used NMM data in its presentations to advertisers and agencies.

NMM found that consumers highly attached to Discovery are 47 percent more likely to buy the Coca-Cola Co.'s Dasani bottled water than the typical Dasani customer.

Among the researcher's other findings: Consumers highly attached to cable net TNT are more than two times as drawn to Citibank than the average Citibank customer; consumers highly attached to NBC are approximately 50 percent more likely than the average Kentucky Fried Chicken customer to frequent the chain; and consumers highly attached to Yahoo are 45 percent more likely to buy Motorola products than the average Motorola devotee.

In addition to tying brands to networks and their programs, NMM data can be used to predict the success or failure of TV shows. In its first study, prior to the start of the fall 2005 season, NMM correctly predicted that Fox's Prison Break and Bones, CBS' Criminal Minds and UPN's Everybody Hates Chris would make it. Consequently, it accurately predicted the WB's Reunion and Just Legal, Fox's Head Cases and NBC's Inconceivable would fail. Last season, it pegged NBC's Heroes and ABC's Brothers & Sisters as hits and NBC's Kidnapped and Fox's Vanished as misses.

This season, the firm ID'ed ABC's successful newcomer Pushing Daisies as a hit and Fox's Nashville and K-Ville as shows that weren't likely to work.

Simply pushing out promotional messages to consumers no longer works, Reisman said. NMM data, he added, "enables advertisers and the media outlets to target and pull in their most important customers by applying a person's emotional attachment to a product and then tie that product into a network and then to a particular show."