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Family Guy #1 Sunday, February 11th, 9:00 - 9:30pm M18-34 AVAILABLE FOR FALL 2007

Family Guy	FOX	6.5
Grammy Awards	CBS	6.0
Desperate Housewives	ABC	3.7
Apprentice 6	NBC	1.4
Beauty and the Geek	CW	0.5

Source: NTL, Galaxy Explorer, pp+RD Rpts, 2/11/07 9-9:30p, Broad. Company

20th TELEVISION

Media Planner

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Taking the Next Step to Gain Insight

Digging Below Surface of Statistics Offers New Route to Understanding

By Mark Dominiak

Special to TelevisionWeek

Story continues below...



The Feb. 21 episode of "Lost" sparked an interesting thought for me relating to media planning and target audiences.

The episode revolved in part around how Jack acquired his tattoos. The sheriff, Isabel, says to Jack, "He walks amongst us, but he is not one of us. Your tattoos. That's what they say."

Jack replies, "That's what they say. It's not what they mean."

How far do media planners really go to get into the shoes of our target consumers? Every planning group seems to have its target-immersion protocol, which digs into data with the end goal of getting a handle on target-audience media consumption behaviors or activities.

Planners are very adept at re-creating what a day or a week in that target consumer's life is like. We gain quite a bit of understanding of the media our target consumes and the types of activities in which he or she participates.

But in the end, most of us inadvertently stop short of deeper knowledge. After having engaged in a fairly intense data dive to account for the broad scope of behaviors, we look at that depth of information and believe we have gained insight. We are wrong: Knowing what the behaviors are, where they occur and to what extent they occur does not constitute insight.

As in the "Lost" example, we do a great job of understanding "what they say." But do we take the time to understand the "what they really mean" part of the equation? In order to understand what they mean and gain deeper insight, we must ask one additional question. Why does the target engage in particular behaviors and activities?

Getting to 'Why'

Here's a good example. If you invest some time digging into the media behaviors of older adults, a number of patterns become evident. Among the behaviors, strong media skews to newspapers, news programming, cable news networks and other news-related vehicles show up with high indices. Most planners will be content to conclude that the target has a high propensity to consume news in a variety of media forms.

But that really doesn't constitute an insight. Why so much news? What does it mean? Is there a reason older adults are drawn to news? And if there is, can the media plan in some way take advantage of that knowledge to help the brand better communicate its message?

Within data sources such as MRI, when you look at activities beyond media consumption you also will see that among older demos, participation in civic-oriented and community activities is higher in general than with younger demos. That corresponds with many of the observations made by Robert D. Putnam in his book "Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community."

Putnam notes that adults over 50 volunteer quite a bit more than do younger demos. While participation in community projects in general is down, older adults still are far more involved in community than younger adults.

So what does this have to do with news? If people are involved in their local community, they will keep abreast of the issues that affect their community, hence an affinity for seeking information from news resources. The best source of local community information is the local newspaper, especially if you weren't born into digital technology. But that affinity extends to broadcast news as well.

The real insight flows from connectedness and community. Older adults invest a lot of energy in maintaining connections to their community and keeping lines of information and communication open. In that way, they can be tapped in to what's going on and are well positioned to dive in when an area of concern to them requires their involvement.

To older adults, then, news properties are not just media to be consumed. News properties are facilitators and catalysts for community involvement.

Media planners who achieve insights like these can apply that knowledge on behalf of their brand. It is not enough to simply place messages in local news sources. The challenge is to make message placements more effective. Linking broadcast or display messages to Web content or local events in order to weave the brand into the fabric of the community should be the goal. Planners should even look to more unconventional opportunities such as local cable, high school or college sports, local retail placements or maybe even church bulletins.

The link between news and older adults is far from the only example that can be cited. In picking apart the behaviors of families on a tight budget, you'll start to find an eclectic mix of activities tied together by the "why" of families making do with or entertaining themselves on a tight budget: things like Wal-Mart trips, DVD rentals, board games, camping or vacations in the

family car.

Many of those activities might seem mundane, with little associated media opportunity, but taking a step back one realizes those activities are where many families connect with each other and make happy memories. As such, media present during those moments can be powerful, providing big opportunities for brand messages. In that light, properties like Wal-Mart's in-store network or KOA Campground media become more attractive than planners might initially think.

Why 'Why' matters

For a media person, asking "why" can open the door to creation of a more meaningful, powerful media plan. Understanding "why" means a planner not only knows where valid contact points exist with target consumers, but also understands the context in which the media are consumed. The planner knows not only where to place the message, but what additional meaning messages placed there can have to the consumer.

That knowledge can stimulate innovation for planners. Maybe different types of units become more attractive. Or perhaps a nuance in scheduling or flighting is seen in a different light. Or maybe better added-value elements become evident. Whatever the manifestation, deeper understanding has a way of sparking ideas.

"Why" also matters because it creates an opportunity for the media-planning team to better inform the rest of the communications team. Every bit of insight the team has about the target consumer makes the team better at crafting messages to reach those individuals. There are few creative people who do not find value in understanding what may be going on in the mind of the target consumer at the time a message is delivered. That understanding helps them create messages that resonate at a deeper level, increasing the odds of generating impact for the brand.

What Planners Can Do

It doesn't take much for planners to dig a little deeper for insight. The best course of action is to simply remember that the target insight job is not finished when the list of high-index media opportunities has been generated. A planner has to remember there is another step: Asking "why."

At that point, all a planner need do is perform a simple additional exercise. Put together a complete list of the media behaviors and life activities that have high skews to the target audience; the list could be compiled on paper or on an electronic spreadsheet. Add in indices if you can. Then put in another column, and for each behavior fill in "why" and see what patterns develop.

This should not be done quickly. Planners should always invest time in understanding what the real answer is to "why." For example, in looking at parents with kids, kid media will show up as part of the parents' media behavior. Is the real insight that parents watch or read something because it's what their kid likes? Thinking that parents can be reached via Nickelodeon may be too simplistic.

Considering parents have so little disposable time, a deeper implication may be that since part of their potential media time is sacrificed to things like Nickelodeon, the few adult media vehicles parents can spend time with are that much more important to them. With that in mind, does a planner just place a message in those few vehicles, or does the planner work hard to make sure that those placements do their best to acknowledge the importance the parent may place on them?

Formulating deep consumer insights on which to base a media plan requires more than just a simple accounting of statistics. Like the example of Jack's tattoos, behavior statistics only provide the "what they say" part of the equation.

In going the extra step and asking "why," a media planner can learn what the statistics really mean, uncovering the context present when the advertising message is delivered. Understanding context helps a media planner create a much stronger foundation on which to base a brand's media plan, increasing the chances of generating impact for the brand in the marketplace.

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The image shows a screenshot of a 'Weekly Prime-Time Ratings' chart. It features two tables, one for the week ending 3/5/07 and another for the week ending 3/12/07. Each table lists various TV shows, their networks, and their respective ratings. The top table includes shows like 'American Idol', 'The Contender', and 'The Contender II'. The bottom table includes shows like 'The Contender', 'The Contender II', and 'The Contender III'. The chart uses color coding to highlight top performers.

[Weekly TV Ratings Chart](#)

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