

Connecting with the connected viewer

 By Leigh Andrews

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Brian Fuhrer, SVP of product leadership for national TV audience measurement at Nielsen USA, spoke at Pamro 2017 on the topics of return path data (RPD) and TV audience measurement (TAM) integration, with today's connected consumer a core consideration.



Brian Fuhrer.

Fuhrer spoke of the current challenges in TV measurement universally.

These include fragmentation, which has grown exponentially from just adding new stations to completely changing the way we consume TV through the rise of VOD.

Consumers watching video on multiple devices also affects the distribution aspect, with consumers also extending the time-shifting window and new disruptive distribution platforms that need to be factored in for effecting measurement and analysis.

“ Total TV audience measurement is a never-ending journey as there's always more content, always more ways to store it and ways to access it keep evolving. ”

Fuhrer contextualised the situation in the US by stating that return path data or RPD is moving from the diary style we know to the data that cable and satellite providers collect from their subscriber set-top boxes. This sounds ideal but there are still a number of stopping points, in addition to staying on top of potential 'breach of privacy' issues in collecting this data:

- Not all set-top boxes are RPD-capable;
- The scope of available data varies by provider;
- Not all providers capture time-shifted viewing; and
- RPD is not a case of plug-and-play into TV ratings. It still needs to be translated into comparable format.

In addition, Fuhrer mentions that quantity not always quality, opportunity to view doesn't equate to actual viewers and RPD does not equate to census.

Cross-platform advertising, here we come

And census itself is no longer reliable in terms of TV viewing, as there are ever-increasing media options vying for consumers' attention - often at the same time. How do you then accurately measure data on the connected viewer?

Fuhrer pointed out that the threat to TV is not just Facebook, Google and all things digital. It's also the impact of Netflix and other non-ad supported subscription models. That said, live TV viewing figures are only down marginally, so the traditional broadcast model is still a great way to deliver advertising. Just keep cognisance of the fact that **live TV-viewing is no longer mutually exclusive** from what consumers do on other devices. So if they are using their mobiles while watching TV, that opens up a whole plethora of cross-platform opportunities.



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Obviously the actual uptake differs from country to country but think of the different popular technologies and how they change year on year. Scarier things than VCRs have come on the market to threaten traditional TV viewing as the content, delivery and even devices to view it on get better. It's almost impossible to buy a non-HD TV these days and the smartphone is no longer something just to talk on.

Threats to traditional TV viewing

When streaming to the TV first started, the most popular device was the Xbox360 [gaming console](#). This has since plateaued back to the device's core usage. Now, it's about enabling smart TVs as multimedia devices, which effectively changes how people think about their content.



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With Wi-Fi, you don't need a complicated installation and cables running throughout your house to receive content. The rise in non-traditional TV usage also leads Fuhrer to step away from the phrase 'HUT' or 'households using TV' as we effectively watch TV on any device and the television set itself is used for so much more that isn't traditionally measured. This is due to **digital streaming devices** like Apple TV, as well as internet-enabled video consoles and internet-enabled smart TVs.

So while TV viewing undoubtedly increases year on year, the **way people are accessing that content** is rapidly changing. This is the biggest change Fuhrer has seen in his career, driven by the popularity of subscription video-on-demand services like Netflix, Amazon and Hulu. This is why Nielsen is working on a 'streaming meter' as an extension of their existing people meter, meaning [official ratings for streaming services](#) are just around the corner.

Fuhrer concluded that consumers are happy with all the media options and the ability to stream, connecting across various devices that provide access that content - we need to keep up.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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