

Why TV Cume Matters: An Exploratory Case Study of Four Local TV News Brands

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ABSTRACT This article demonstrates the value of analyzing non-duplicated audience data that often are overlooked by television professionals. To that end, this exploratory single-market case study focused on the ratings performance of four competing daily television newscasts. Findings suggest that, despite appearances of audience stability using conventional average-quarter-hour data, substantial audience volatility was found when calculating audience turnover using cume data. In addition, the findings provided circumstantial evidence of the impact of *occasional* viewers on building and maintaining brand equity. The study concludes with practical implications for media brand managers and recommendations for future research using some custom ratings analysis tools available from Nielsen Media Research.

KEY WORDS: audience, audience measurement, ratings, television

Relying exclusively on conventional average-quarter-hour (AQH) data can deprive broadcast managers of valuable insights concerning audience brand behavior. Yet local television broadcasters rarely make use of non-duplicated audience information expressed as *cume ratings* to make management decisions. The purpose of this paper was to demonstrate why TV cume data matters by analyzing the ratings performance for one “sweep” month of four competing television newscasts across three daily time periods. Measures of audience stability were compared with audience turnover to reveal audience dynamics that can be overlooked by broadcast managers preoccupied with AQH measures.

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge in media brand management in several ways. First, this cume study is unique in that it focuses on head to head competing media brands operating within the same “product” category (i.e. local news). Given this focus on direct

Copyright © 2008 Journal of Media Business Studies. Walter S. McDowell, “Why TV Cume Matters: Exploring the Notion of Ratings Replenishment in Daily Local Newscasts,” 5(3):1-15 (2008).

competitors, the study introduces a unique comparison of audience stability with audience turnover not published in prior broadcasting studies. Finally, this study concludes with a discussion of several custom cume-based diagnostic tools available to Nielsen Media Research clients that can provide even greater brand insight.

This article begins with a brief overview of Nielsen ratings methodology and applications followed by a more detailed discussion of gross versus cumulative measures of audience behavior expressed as *Average-Quarter-Hour* (AQH) and *cume* ratings data. Next, the discussion turns to reasons why Nielsen and its television clients pay little attention to cume data, while on the other hand, radio operators for many years have benefited from Arbitron's display of cume data in its standard market reports. After reviewing relevant academic literature, the study takes a brand marketing perspective, exploring conventional consumer behavior with an emphasis on enhancing market penetration rather than increased frequency of purchase. Along these same lines, this section looks at the impact on brand growth by heavy versus occasional users of a product. These notions are then translated into the vocabulary and jargon of broadcasting audience research and the domain of media branding. To illustrate the value of cume audience information in brand management decision making, the paper presents the aforementioned case study of four local newscasts. The paper ends with tentative conclusions and implications for media brand managers, including the use of some custom ratings analysis tools available from Nielsen Media Research.

BACKGROUND

Chan-Olmsted (2006) asserts that the media marketplace in recent years has become so complex and so competitive that maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) requires ongoing analyses and monitoring of audience behavior. Although the television industry supports several types of audience research, Nielsen ratings remain the gold standard.

Nielsen Media Research

In the United States, Nielsen Media Research provides television audience estimates for broadcast and cable networks, television stations, program syndicators, regional cable television systems, satellite providers, advertisers and advertising agencies. This information is used to make programming and media-buying decisions. The company's TV services can be divided into two groupings; national and local ratings. For both types of surveys, Nielsen recruits participants by first selecting a random sample of a designated population using updated U.S census data and other proprietary sources. Some households are solicited for

long-term *metered measurement* that may last several years, while others are solicited for short-term *diary measurement* that lasts just one week. While national ratings are derived entirely from People Meters that record demographic as well as household viewing, local market ratings have used a combination of passive meters and paper diaries. All 210 local markets are measured periodically using the diary system. Of these markets, 56 of the largest markets in the U.S now use passive meters. Unlike the more complex national People Meters, passive meters record only household set viewing. Consequently, demographic information is still obtained from diary keepers. Nielsen plans to eventually upgrade these markets with the People Meter technology, but until that time arrives, the periodic “sweep weeks” are still important because of their contribution to ratings for various age and sex demographic categories.¹ The stations selected for this case study currently operate in a top 20 passive metered / diary market. For more detailed information on Nielsen’s methodology, client services and a glossary of common terms, go to the Nielsen corporate website or refer to the company’s annual methodology publications (Nielsen, 2008a; Nielsen Publication 2008b).

Two Ways to Measure Audience Behavior: Gross Measures and Cumulative Measures

According to Webster, Phalen and Lichty (2006), audience behavior can be measured in two fundamental ways. The first consists of *gross measures* that can be thought of as snapshots of an audience taken at a specific point in time. Typically, broadcast ratings services will combine several gross audience measurements into multi-week *average* scores. For example, both Nielsen TV and Arbitron in their standard market publications present the average of all their sweep weeks.² These averaged scores are tabulated as whole numbers, rating points and share points. For example, a Nielsen Viewers in Profile report (VIP) will provide a four-week average household viewing estimate for a station’s daily 6:00 PM newscast. Most of these data have been transformed into quarter-hour units, resulting in the often used abbreviation of *AQH* representing Average Quarter Hour. That is, a household or person must watch a program or daypart at least five minutes in order to be “credited” for quarter hour viewing (Nielsen, 2006).

A second means of measuring audience consists of cumulative *measures* of individual audiences over time, expressed as “cume.” More specifically, a cume figure is the total number of *non-duplicated* audience members that have watched or listened to a station at least once over a

¹ All 210 markets are measured during February, May and July of each year. Several larger markets have two additional measurement periods for a total of six. These 4-week long diary-based measurement times are known in the industry as “the sweeps” or “sweep weeks.” Metered markets provide household ratings 365 days a year and are often referred to as “overnights.”

² Unlike Nielsen’s 4-week diary-based sweeps, Arbitron radio sweeps are 12 weeks long.

specified period of time. For example, let's return to our 6:00 PM newscast that airs Monday through Friday. Suppose during the first week of a four-week sweep a household watched a particular newscast on Tuesday and Thursday. For Monday through Friday average quarter Hour (AQH) calculations, this household viewing would be counted *twice*. However, following cume protocols, these same household viewing episodes would be counted only once because Thursday's viewing is *duplicated* from Tuesday. This elimination procedure is applied throughout the designated time span. The underlying assumption is that over time, such as four consecutive sweep weeks, dayparts and programs do not necessarily attract the same audience night after night. Instead, they attract substantially different audiences for each consecutive program exposure. In the same vein, Internet researchers often use the term *unique visitors* to identify non-duplicated persons calling up a website over a specified period of time. Cume divided by AQH provides what has been called audience *turnover*.

Apathy Towards Cume Data among Television Professionals

The lack of interest in TV cume data is reinforced by the fact that, unlike Arbitron radio ratings, Nielsen Media Research devotes only a tiny portion of its standard market reports to cume ratings. Indeed, the radio industry has embraced the importance of cume audiences far more than its broadcast industry colleagues in television and cable. One can understand intuitively why television researchers and professionals have paid little attention to cume data, particularly for daily stripped programming. After all, we are talking about the same program content, airing at the same time, experiencing the same lead-in program and the same competition day after day. Recognizing that people are creatures of habit with dozens of daily routines involving work, school and family life, it seems plausible that the same audience probably watches these programs every day. This presumption of an unwavering audience over time is bolstered further by the industry's preoccupation with Nielsen's average quarter hour measures of program performance at the expense of examining corresponding cume data. According to Anne Kissel Elliot Vice President of Communications at Nielsen Media Research, some evidence of cume analyses can be found among the major broadcast and cable networks, but local station operators essentially never request additional cume data from Nielsen (Personal communication, March 28, 2007).

The radio industry uses cume data all the time, as reflected in a typical Arbitron radio ratings report (Arbitron Methodology, 2008). Radio audience behavior on the surface appears quite different from that of television and this may explain much of the apathy towards cume analyses by television station professionals. First, radio typically deals with long, four-hour dayparts (e.g. 6:00 – 10:00 AM “morning drive time”), which logically would enhance cume figures, since most people do

not listen to the radio for four consecutive hours. Secondly, because of the nature of most radio program formats, audiences can join-in-progress (JIP) at any time and not lose the continuity of the program content. Conversely, television programs tend to be locked into strict one-hour and half-hour linear formats, which discourage joining in progress. Consequently, one would not expect important differences between AQH and cume audiences within an individual episode of a stripped TV program. However, by looking across a typical five-day week, a stripped program may accumulate non-duplicated audiences that far exceed its AQH measure for that week.

Academic Studies

Academic studies addressing cume specifically are few, but the notion of audience turnover is not new. As early as 1966 researchers were aware of “media-audience accumulation” for all kinds of mass media, including broadcasting (Keller, 1966). In later years, McDowell and Dick (2001) examined audience turnover in long, multi-hour dayparts in over 100 TV markets. Their findings revealed some evidence of a “double jeopardy” effect in which stations earning the biggest audience shares also exhibited the lowest turnover. This study, however, did not examine individual competing programs. Webster (2005) combined cume data and time-spent-viewing for network programming to explore audience fragmentation.

Cume essentially, is a function of audience duplication and several studies in the 1980s and 1990s examined the notions of audience duplication or repeat viewing. In these cases the researchers were looking at how often the same audience member watched multiple airings of a program, either stripped or once per week (Barwise, Ehrenberg & Goodhardt, 1982; Goodhardt, et al, 1987; Webster & Wang, 1992). Again, the focus was not on competing programs within the same genre.

Misconceptions about Brand Stability

According to Hoeffler & Keller (2003) and many other brand management scholars, an important outcome of managing a strong consumer brand is stability in market share over time. That is, brands exhibiting high consumer brand equity are less vulnerable to market fluctuations and competitive attacks, making financial forecasting more reliable. According to McDowell (2006), this is no less true for media brands that need to attract predictable audiences to sell to advertisers. Stability alone, however, can be a deceptive measure in that it can be interpreted wrongly as confirmation of repeat purchasing by the same group of customers. Retail marketing professionals know that many successful brands maintain their high and stable market share by attracting not only heavy users but also occasional users of a product category. In fact, occasional category users (Sometimes referred to as

infrequent users) often make up the majority of total purchases of a branded product. In recent years, the term “long tail” has been used to describe this highly skewed curved distribution of all types of products. From a media perspective, this notion has been reaffirmed in research examining 24-hour cable news viewing habits. Studies conducted by the joint efforts of the Project for Excellence in Journalism and the Committee of Concerned Journalists found that among CNN, Fox News and MSNBC audiences, the number of occasional viewers was significantly higher than regular viewers (Journalism.org, 2006).

Considerable research in retail consumer goods has found that heavy users of a product often are the least brand loyal, while occasional users often are the most brand loyal (Keller, 2003). Returning to our examination of conventional consumer goods, genuine brand loyalty is scarce among most retail consumers in that even the most popular brands share purchases with direct competitors. The result often is that the total number of product category purchases (i.e. all relevant brands) by an individual far exceeds the number of purchases attributed to any one brand, even a supposedly “preferred” brand (Ehrenberg, 1988). The bottom line is that a media product, such as a local newscast, may reveal a relatively stable average “customer” count over a long time interval but the underlying “purchasing” dynamics by individuals may be far more complex.

Attracting Customers

Two fundamental ways to earn more sales from customers in the retail business are to (a) Increase the frequency of brand purchases by current customers and to (b) increase brand purchases by new customers. Research has found that the first strategy is far more difficult than the second. That is, persuading someone to buy more of a branded product is a bigger challenge than persuading someone new to try a product or switch brands. The acquisition of individual customers has been termed by many consumer researchers as market penetration. More precisely, penetration is defined as the percentage of persons or households buying a branded product at least once during a defined period (Jones and Slater, 2003). One can see readily that this definition of penetration resonates with our earlier definition of audience cume. After analyzing scores of relevant retail studies, brand scholars Jones and Slater (2003) maintain that “Generally speaking, when a brand declines, it is the result of falling penetration. Frequency of purchase has not come into the matter at all” (p. 126).

A problem facing marketing professionals is that customer category usage for most products and services is fairly constant, regardless of competitive brand warfare within the category (Ehrenberg, Goodhart and Barwise, 1990; Ehrenberg, 1988). The broadcast news business is quite similar in that unless there is a truly compelling breaking news story, such as a natural disaster, attempting to persuade audiences to watch news more often is nearly impossible (McDowell & Batten, 2005).

Instead, the more plausible strategy might be to attract new individuals (i.e. increase market penetration).

In terms of increasing broadcast audiences, we can see that building AQH and Cume ratings are not mutually exclusive marketing goals. Indeed, as most radio programmers know, building cume automatically builds AQH. Although commercial rates may be based solely on AQH data (such cost-per-thousand and cost per rating point) broadcasters need to be reminded that audiences are composed of individuals. Of course, increasing listening frequency is a worthy goal but most successful radio station operators concede that attracting new audiences—even occasional audiences - from competitors is the name of the game (Keith, 2004).

News Media as Brands

The primary motivation for a business to embrace the principles of brand management is competition, and while the notions of branding are not new to most American consumer goods, they are relatively new to media brands. It was not until the early 1990s that electronic media, in the form of radio, television, cable, satellite, telephony and internet delivery systems, began to experience massive competition for the attention of scarce audiences. For television broadcasters, one of the fiercest branding battlegrounds, and consequently an ideal media case study topic for this paper, has been local news. Often generating up to 50 percent of a station's total commercial revenue, these daily stripped programs, airing several times a day in various dayparts, typically face simultaneous competition from four or more news competitors. In such a highly competitive zero sum media marketplace, increasing market share means wrestling away viewers from other brand competitors (McDowell & Batten, 2005).

METHOD

Exploratory Case Study Approach

Media management researchers Doyle and Frith (2007) maintain that case studies are useful in conducting exploratory research, in that “the approach involves illuminating a given issue or phenomenon through the detailed examination of one instance of it.” (p 564). Insights gained from such studies can lead eventually to more elaborate, generalizable research designed to test specific hypotheses and theories. This case study explores the relationship between AQH and cume audiences among four local news brand competitors across several dayparts. More specifically, the study scrutinizes measures of audience stability and audience turnover to see if the introduction of cume data is worthy of more attention.

The Dataset

This single-market exploratory case study analyzed the 5:00 PM, 6:00 PM and 11:00 PM Monday through Friday local newscasts of four competing television newscasts in a top 20 sized market. Ratings data were obtained from a May 2005 Nielsen Viewers in Profile (VIP) sweep report. In accord with the local provider of this data and Nielsen policy, the name of the specific market and station call letters have been disguised. As alluded to earlier, external validity in terms of statistical generalizability is not the purpose of exploratory research. However, the reader can be assured that the market was chosen for its exceptionally “level playing field” in terms of many important structural factors. All stations were long-standing VHF network affiliates (ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox) exhibiting comparable signal coverage with no significant competitive signal intrusions from adjacent TV markets. Audience viewing behavior was derived from a merged sample of 487 metered households and 940 sweep diaries. While Average Quarter Hour (AQH) ratings information is by far the dominant unit of measure in a VIP report, the document does provide some cume information. At the very beginning of the report, a section entitled “Daypart Summary” presents both AQH and Cume combined four-week household ratings for a dozen or so time periods of varying durations. Fortunately, Nielsen offers a few narrowly defined segments, including 5:00 – 6:00 PM, 6:00 – 6:30 and 11:00- 11:30 PM, which can be used for newscast analyses. Demographic information is not available.

Because we were working with summary ratings data for only one market and did not have access to first level data for all sample participants, the researcher refrained from introducing any type of significance tests (e.g. Comparing time periods or stations). As will be demonstrated in the next section, the simple face values of the results should be sufficient to encourage more ambitious studies incorporating many markets.³

RESULTS

Stability Analysis

Tables one through three reflect a ratings stability analysis by time period of the four competing news stations. The tables exhibit for each station (a) the AQH household totals (000) for each day of the week (b) the five-day mean (c) the standard deviation and (d) a stability coefficient expressing the standard deviation as a percentage of the five-day mean. One can see that across all four stations the programming in terms of

³ Nielsen VIP reports do provide in Table 8A “Standard Error: Four Week Estimates” that gives the user a rough estimate of standard error based on five-day AQH households and total persons.

audience size is quite stable. The overall stability coefficient for all stations across all three time periods was a mere 10.8 percent. The 11:00 – 11:30 PM time period, typified by a different lead-in program each night, exhibited the least stability.

Table 1: 5:00 – 6:00 PM Ratings Stability Analysis: Four-week Average Quarter Hour (AQH) Households by Station.

	Mon (000)	Tues (000)	Wed (000)	Thurs (000)	Fri (000)	5 -day Mean (000)	S.D	Stability* %
A	91	73	78	76	70	77	8.08	10
B	49	43	46	48	49	47	2.54	5
C	84	90	84	81	81	84	3.67	4
D	38	33	24	33	30	32	5.12	16
Mean								8.8

* Stability coefficient (%) = standard deviation expressed as a percentage of the 5-day mean.

Table 2: 6:00 – 6:30 PM Ratings Stability Analysis: Four-week Average Quarter Hour (AQH) Households by Station.

	Mon (000)	Tues (000)	Wed (000)	Thurs (000)	Fri (000)	5-day Mean (000)	S.D	Stability* %
A	65	57	58	50	47	55	7.08	12
B	70	70	68	65	65	68	2.50	3
C	68	71	68	73	76	71	3.42	5
D	45	44	37	46	42	43	3.56	8
Mean								7.0

* Stability coefficient (%) = standard deviation expressed as a percentage of the 5-day mean.

Table 3: 11:00 – 11:30 PM Ratings Stability Analysis: Four-week Average Quarter Hour (AQH) Households by Station

	Mon (000)	Tues (000)	Wed (000)	Thurs (000)	Fri (000)	5-day Mean (000)	S.D	Stability* %
A	96	76	79	96	64	82	13.79	17
B	63	65	80	72	70	70	6.67	10
C	57	52	58	44	38	50	8.61	17
D	71	73	99	108	66	83	18.79	23
Mean								16.7

* Stability coefficient (%) = standard deviation expressed as a percentage of the 5-day mean.

Tables four through six introduce cume data and calculations of audience turnover. Here we see the five-day AQH mean audiences (displayed earlier in tables one through three) compared with their

respective cume audience delivery. Percent turnover was calculated by calculating the program's cume as a percentage of its AQH. One can see that all stations exhibited substantial turnover, easily exceeding 300 percent. The 5:00 – 6:00 PM time segment showed the most audience turnover at 412 percent.

Table 4: 5:00 – 6:00 PM Ratings Turnover Analysis: Four-week AQH and Cume Households by Station

Station	5-day Mean (000)	Cume (000)	Turnover %*
A	77	289	375
B	47	191	406
C	84	294	350
D	32	165	515
combined			412

* Turnover coefficient (%) = Cume expressed as a percentage of AQH audience

Table 5: 6:00 – 6:30 PM Ratings Turnover Analysis: Four-week AQH and Cume Households by Station

Station	5-day Mean (000)	Cume (000)	Turnover %*
A	55	196	356
B	68	180	264
C	71	241	336
D	43	145	337
combined			333

* Turnover coefficient (%) = Cume expressed as a percentage of AQH audience

Table 6: 11:00 – 11:30 PM Ratings Turnover Analysis: Four-week AQH and Cume Households by Station

Station	5-day Mean (000)	4-week Cume (000)	Turnover %*
A	82	290	358
B	70	263	375
C	50	193	386
D	83	304	366
combined			371

* Turnover coefficient (%) = Cume expressed as a percentage of AQH audience

DISCUSSION

For decades television broadcasters have relied heavily on average quarter hour Nielsen ratings to make management decisions. Cume ratings, which have been far more popular within the radio industry, have yet to be taken seriously in television. As was revealed in this case study, television program content that is stripped Monday through Friday, such as local newscasts, can generate considerable volatility in terms of audience turnover, while still exhibiting a day to day stability. Furthermore, these tentative results disclose a remarkable degree of underlying uniformity in audience behavior in that across all competing brands measures of “category usage” of news viewing were far more alike than they were different.

The relatively high turnover figures imply a substantial number of occasional viewers contribute to the total audience attracted to a newscast and that these infrequent customers probably are brand loyal. The ratings phenomenon of remarkable AQH stability existing along side equally remarkable audience turnover suggests a kind of replenishment theory in which cume audiences replenish AQH audience voids created by people that do not watch a newscast consistently over time. Of course without more in-depth data to prove these claims, we are still speculating, however, the circumstantial evidence is persuasive.

Recognizing that this study was exploratory, several observations from this limited dataset should stimulate additional research. First, time period may be a factor in influencing turnover as exemplified by the 5:00 to 6:00 PM time period compared with the other two. Also, the tentative findings suggest that share of market may influence the degree of turnover.

The heuristic intention of exploratory research is to generate questions and foster new research domains and, indeed, this study provides as many questions as observations. In particular, what factors that cause some channels to exhibit more stability than others and why does the degree of stability vary among different time slots? Borrowing what we know about radio listening, one can propose that program content probably influences the audience “joining-in-progress” capacity and consequently the degree of turnover. For example, a two-hour morning TV programs, such as Today and Good Morning America, are designed to accommodate audiences coming and going every few minutes, yet still exhibiting ratings stability. On the contrary, a two-hour TV movie tends to discourage joining-in-progress and therefore audience turnover probably is inconsequential, yet the movie still would exhibit relative stable audience levels throughout its duration. Another approach to content is the fact that most cable networks tend to concentrate on a distinctive content niche, while the major broadcast networks still aim for a wider cut of audience interests. Why entire dayparts appear to foster more turnover than others is a more perplexing question and

conceivably has something to do with audience lifestyles and viewing habits.

Real World Applications

On a practical level, cume data can help in management decision-making and gaining a competitive advantage. For instance, based on findings from this case study, a marketing strategy designed to increase frequency of viewing local news probably would have disappointing results. Instead, brand managers should concentrate on attracting audiences away from competitors. In addition, managers should not take the myopic perspective of focusing marketing efforts exclusively on heavy category users (i.e. “news junkies”). Instead, shrewd managers recognize the impact of occasion viewers on the overall AQH performance of a stripped program. Looking at these turnover percentages over a four-week period (i.e. 20 newscasts per time period), one could presume that the majority of viewers watched a newscast only once or twice per week. Every program—not just newscasts—should be analyzed for its cume audience characteristics.

Limitations

The most obvious limitation, and really the theme of this paper, was the overall lack of detailed cume data. As stated in the methodology section, cume ratings are provided for only a small handful of program segments with no data for age/sex demographic groups. In addition, unlike our calculations for stability, cume data is not available on an individual day basis.

Of course external validity is another limitation, but the intent of this study was not to generalize findings but merely to make a point. The results from this single case study justify additional quantitative research using probability sampling and significance testing among more markets, stations and program genres. Several market factors may influence the AQH/Cume relationship, including the number of competing stations (i.e. small markets versus large markets) and the cultural heterogeneity of available audiences. In particular, an examination of local Hispanic newscasts from Telemundo and Univision might be worthwhile.

Reconciling the vocabulary and jargon of different disciplines can sometimes confuse well intentioned researchers. For example, the terms cume, non-duplicated, reach and penetration measure essentially the same thing.

Nielsen Tools

Although Nielsen offers little cume information within its regular Viewers in Profile (VIP) market reports, the company does provide some custom services to clients that, with some simple tweaking, can be used to delve

deeper into the cume behavior of TV audiences. Regrettably, Nielsen refused to provide such analyses of this study's dataset because the researcher is not a client, however, the company did provide a description of several services that can be adapted readily to embrace the topic of this paper.

A Nielsen client brochure states that

Local Custom Analysis Reports enable station managers to gain a much greater understanding of the behavior of audiences in a market, going well beyond what is provided in the pages of regular ratings book. These reports access the viewing data of individual homes and persons in a market, thereby affording the opportunity to create special reports aimed at narrowly defined demographic audiences and unique behaviors.

Television sales executives for years have used the concept of reach, which is identical in definition to cume, to help sell commercial time. Software calculates for inquiring advertisers and media buyers the audience reach and frequency of proposed advertising schedules. Nielsen is one of the major providers of such software, along with several other "third party" companies such as Tapscan and Marketron. Using a little improvisation, an enterprising programming executive can manipulate this sales-oriented software to uncover program information. For example, calculating the "net reach" of hypothetically placing one commercial in each newscast of five daily 6:00 PM newscasts will yield the program's weekly cume audience, including demographic cumes.

Another custom Nielsen service intended primarily for sales is called Audience Duplication Analysis (Only-Only- Both). These reports compare the net reach (i.e. cume) of any two programs in which advertising is placed. The software reveals how many households or demographic persons watched each program exclusively and how many watch both (i.e. only-only-both). Typically this is used to compare early and late newscasts on the same station but it easily could be modified to include day to day stripped episodes airing at the same time or incorporate competing programs. This can be an excellent tool for studying audience loyalty and brand switching.

Nielsen will also provide its clients with detailed information on the frequency of viewing of stripped programming. That is, one can request data on how many people watch all five days, or four or three and so on. Although this type of analysis is not listed as a standard custom report, the company will in fact provide such information for a negotiated fee. This can be the perfect tool for assessing more precisely the degree of occasional viewing discussed earlier in the article.

The Future

In addition to adding to the existing body of knowledge on broadcast audience ratings, this article hopefully will generate more interest in cume ratings on the part of both academic and industry researchers and as a result, spur Nielsen to expand its cume data offerings for its regular subscriber publications. This simple case study demonstrated that indeed TV cume data does matter and opens the door for expanded research and theory development. In addition to investigating the notions of audience replenishment, TV cume data offers opportunities for all kinds of audience research that recognizes the value of analyzing accumulated audiences over time.

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