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TRA lifts the veil to reveal new advertising ROI system

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Researcher emerges from stealth mode with potential Apollo killer

US-- Media research agency TRA emerged from stealth mode today, claiming to have developed "the only scalable advertising research system that measures and reports true ROI accountability and transparency for advertising spend".

TRA says its system brings "precise" measurement of advertising effectiveness by matching the ads people actually receive with the products people actually buy".

It does this by combining second-by-second measurement of TV viewing from digital set-top boxes with "verified offline purchasing behaviour".

The set-top box data is currently provided by "one of the largest cable operators in the US and several others", said chairman and CEO Mark Lieberman, although he declined to give details.

Purchase information, meanwhile, is derived from multiple sources – among them, Information Resources and frequent shopper card data from seven major retailers.

All data received by TRA is anonymised: "We never see names and addresses," says Lieberman. Instead, the company's system matches the datasets at the household level using individual customer codes.

By the end of the year, TRA aims to match all-media consumption and buying behaviour in one million homes – a massive figure and one that dwarfs Arbitron and Nielsen's joint Project Apollo initiative, which is currently collecting media and purchase data from a pilot panel of 5,000 households.

A decision on whether to fully commercialise Apollo is due some time this quarter. TRA president Bill Harvey said: "Apollo has been a noble experiment... but it's time to scale this up."

TRA has been in stealth mode for two years. In August 2007 it closed its first institutional financing round, receiving backing from Kodiak Ventures, WPP's Kantar Media Research and unnamed angel investors.

• **WPP** revealed today it had acquired a stake in web analytics firm **NuConomy**. The company, founded in 2006 in Israel and now based in Silicon Valley, California, claims to offer innovative ways to measure interactive web content. WPP said NuConomy will work closely with its insight and consulting group, Kantar.

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