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TRA Data Links Shows With Consumers

By **Jon Lafayette**

By linking viewing behavior to purchase activity, research company TRA promises clients it can better target their TV buys.

And at least one of its clients has begun to take advantage of TRA's data.

While most of TRA's clients are planning to use its analytics in the coming upfront advertising market, President Bill Harvey said one client, a big multibrand advertiser, took the data and reallocated commercials it bought at last year's upfront to different brands.

In some cases, TRA data showed certain programming wasn't reaching purchasers of the brand that the company planned to advertise, and a different brand with a better fit was substituted.

This can create a big advantage for marketers, Mr. Harvey said.

TRA urges clients to focus on what it calls "swing purchasers," those people who buy products in the category and have bought a particular brand in the past, but not regularly.

By making buys that target those consumers, TRA can produce big increases in sales with little additional spending, he said.

As an example, he cited a major shampoo brand being outspent by its key rival. Using traditional measures, the competitor had a 41% share of voice in the category, compared to a 29% share for TRA's client. But by rearranging its media buys to target swing purchasers, TRA's client's share of voice with that group rose to 45%, while its bigger-spending rival's share was just 32%.

Mr. Harvey expects that most media buyers and clients eventually will sign up for its research. But for now, the ones that use it first will reap advantages.

“It will make marketing more effective and efficient. But the competitive leverage is for the swift who do it first,” he said.

One analysis of the effects of TRA data on a client’s products shows that “without any increase in budget, just by picking different shows, the average of the brand is able to get triple the amount of impressions it originally had against the households most likely to give the sales response to the advertising,” Mr. Harvey said. “That is homes that purchase the category heavily and also have shown a proclivity to buy the specific brand in the past.”

TRA’s Media TRAnalytics combines second-by-second live and time-shifted viewing in 1.5 million homes with information from 55 million frequent-shopping-card users to create a single-source database of 370,000 anonymous households where TV viewing and purchase behavior can be compared and tracked.

“The sample sizes are huge compared to what the industry’s had in the past,” Mr. Harvey said.

Some of the data can be surprising. For example, TRA found that among heavy purchasers of skin cream, the most popular programming was travel shows, beating out entertainment, fashion, romance and fantasy.

Data is available for other product categories, and TRA clients in the media, including CBS and Discovery Communications, are looking to find selling points they can use with media buyers and clients in the upfront.

“They’re able to do analyses to see how their network looks compared to other networks in reaching any particular kind of target,” Mr. Harvey said. “So if [advertisers are] trying to reach heavy purchasers of beer or soft drinks, or swing purchasers of a given brand, they know if they’re reaching the homes most likely to switch to a brand in response to being reached by advertising” and can hone their pitches accordingly.

At the same time, media buyer MediaVest is also a TRA client, along with an undisclosed number of marketers who use the data for their own purposes.

WPP, parent company of GroupM, is an investor in TRA and GroupM has been showing TRA data to its clients, Mr. Harvey said.