	Nielsen Online Campaign Ratings	Francesca Hills	August 13, 2011

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Background

GRP's have been successfully used for TV planning and measurement since the 1950's. However, this TV planning currency has had little application outside of broadcast. In fact, the birth of online advertising in 1994 resulted in a parallel and competing universe of data-driven planning tools and metrics with nearly infinite granularity and control. In the intervening years the industry has tried to bridge the gap between these worlds. The most frequently suggested solution has often been an online GRP. Various initiatives have been launched over the years, now including Nielsen's new Online Campaign Ratings model.

Details

Launching this August, Nielsen's new model uses a tag to count when an online advertisement has been served. This tag is then used by a publisher to match against their own demographic data, which is then aggregated and anonymously mapped back to Nielsen's own customer panel to form a GRP model, thus providing reach and frequency data for specific audiences. Of note is that Nielsen is seeking advantage over their rivals by expanding their partnership with Facebook, which was launched some time ago with their BrandLift product. In effect, Nielsen's new Online Campaign Ratings tool will make extensive use of arguably the world's largest online demographic database. Nielsen will hope their new online GRP instantly becomes the world's most pervasive iGRP planning currency while Facebook will leverage the model to further monetise their inventory, particularly with FMCG companies long-familiar and comfortable with TV style planning approaches.

Implications

The idea of online GRP's has been controversial within the digital industry. Many online planners view offline GRP's as an imperfect model established in an unsophisticated analogue world, one without frequency capping, behavioural targeting, granular IP-based demographic information, and actual impressions and advanced metrics like engagement. In contrast, many "traditional" planners view the online world as unnecessarily complex, dis-integrated, and still largely living in the Wild West. With this in mind, Nielsen's new model strives to maintain the benefits of both media while still connecting the two together.

However, Nielsen is not the only game in town. In particular, Kantar and ComScore have robust and highly-competitive models. Even Google is rumoured to be busy developing their own version, which of course brings a real danger of total fragmentation and a hyper "Beta v. VHS" quagmire in media currencies, even if most of the methodologies are largely similar.

Summary

Simplifying, standardising and streamlining planning currencies and metrics across media is a noble goal and if done right would without a doubt help clients and agencies with cross-media campaigns. In the short-term, competing models will largely fail or succeed based on their ability to get publishers to adopt their tags and anonymously synchronise their panels. In the long-term, the entire debate might be moot. As more devices become IP-enabled, particularly television, we may witness a complete redefinition and harmonisation of planning currencies and metrics, one that finally eliminates the need to bridge the gap between offline and online as that distinction largely disappears.