

Sarah Pearson, ACB – Summary of a Presentation of the ACB/London Business School Video Ethnography Study.

Funded by a consortium formed of Ofcom, Channel 4, Five, ITV, and Initiative, the research carried out by ACB examines the impact of personal video recorders (PVRs) on television viewing behaviour. Specifically, the focus is on the viewing of advertisements to gain a deeper understanding of *actual* viewing behaviour, complementing hard data produced by BARB's large samples.

The methodology for this study centred on installing cameras in participants' homes, which had the ability to record not just the participant watching television, but also what they were watching. As well as this, all of the living rooms were fitted with microphones to enable the capture of relevant comments and discussions. Using video ethnography, researchers were able to observe both viewing and non-viewing behaviour. As well as the ethnography, further qualitative research was carried out through interviewing and an extensive behavioural coding system was set in place to further measure viewing behaviour on a second by second basis.

Findings indicated that there was a somewhat surprising tendency among the majority of participants to initially watch live TV and only revert to the PVR as a kind of back-up. The only exception was a sole participant, whose behaviour was the exact opposite. Another interesting discovery was that there was no evidence of PVR use among the children or teenagers in the study. This brought about issues of ownership, whereby the technology may either have belonged to an adult in the house who was not their parent (in the case of non-nuclear families, of which there are many). Furthermore, many children simply saw no reason to use it. Nevertheless, what was found was that all of the participants in the study saw the technology as something that had made a positive difference to their viewing experience.

With regards to adverts, the study captured 3480 opportunities to see (OTS) commercials. Of these, 70% were live and 30% were time-shifted. The overall finding was that 75% (overall household TV viewing on main set) multiplied by 70% (live TV viewing) plus 25% (viewing from other TV sets) multiplied by one hundred gave the overall live viewing proportion as 78%. So this 78% represents the amount of viewing that is watched live; which is lower than BARB's figure of 86%. Optimistic predictions suggest that in ten years time PVR time-shifted viewing may be around 15%. This, however, assumes that the late adopters of the technology will time-shift as much earlier adopters, which of course remains to be seen.

Another finding from the study was that, somewhat unsurprisingly, more TV promos than adverts were viewed live. 40% of these TV promos were watched live *after* being time-shifted. This leads to the reiteration that time-shifting does not necessarily constitute fast-forwarding. Overall, 70% of adverts were viewed live, and of the 30% that were time-shifted one third were watched at normal speed. Therefore, the bottom line is that 68% of time-shifted commercials are fast-forwarded, 80% of all commercials are viewed at normal speed, 87% of all TV promos are viewed at normal speed, and only 20% of all adverts are viewed in fast-forward. It is important to clarify that they were *viewed* in fast-forward, because it was found that fast-forwarding through adverts takes concentration, in order to know where to stop. One particular participant, who claimed to fast-forward adverts, was seen to do so, but did so slowly and still comments on most of the adverts. Hence, although the claimed behaviour is correct, it is problematic. It does not tell the whole story. In this instance, the adverts were fast-forwarded, but the participant also paid attention to them.

In summary the PVR use is fairly low; live viewing still prevails. Moreover, it has been found that time-shifting does not always mean fast-forwarding; one-third of time-shifted adverts are viewed at normal speed. Perhaps most importantly, the research carried out by ACB has shown that claimed behaviour is problematic and can be misleading and that the importance of measuring actual behaviour cannot be overstated.

For a full copy of the report – PVRs and Advertising Exposure: A Video Ethnographic Study (requires Adobe 7.0) please visit www.acbuk.net or call Sarah on 44-1273-704781 and we will post you a hard copy or the Executive Summary if you prefer.