



James & Wilkinson Media (JWM) are a UK based company that specialise in helping broadcasters to maximise their on-air marketing whether it be TV, Radio or Digital. Since its formation in April 2011 JWM have worked with broadcasters across the globe. Each region has its unique challenges and outlooks, however many similar issues exist causing non-optimal performance in the use of broadcasters' highly valuable owned resource both GRPs and creative resource. We thought that our findings in each market might be interesting reading to people who operate in the broadcast world. This is the latest of our monthly bulletins that reflect our business schedule or hot topics in broadcast marketing. This opinion piece focuses on a nostalgic look at audience behavior a bit closer to home, where the heart is.

Children's Viewing Habits - TV is still King

For those Millennial kids of today it is a very different world to previous generations; the first generation that have been completely brought up with technology around them. They are also faced with bundles of choices; 21 children's TV channels in the UK alone (118 globally, 20 in the US, 15 in India and 10 in Australia). In this article we look at how this generation of kids interact with TV.

It's always comforting when we reminisce to a simpler time when we were growing up and things were quite different to what they are today. I remember when... I was a kid and we only had four TV channels, one spot of fresh carpet in the living room, so it was even more difficult to find something compelling to watch as a kid when you have to share your time with everyone else. It was a time of using your imagination in a completely different way – 'colouring in' was something to do, scouring through the atlas book and spinning around the block on your bike. Luckily I was into sport otherwise I don't know what I would've done with myself.

Hand held games were around, but you could hardly see the screens (especially if in 'direct sunlight') and the beeping noises were just annoying. The more complex the stories, the less engaging they became. Donkey Kong and Tetris were probably the only ones worth giving your time to. Until the Sega Mega Drive came out of course.

The 90s and 00s saw a rapid boom in home technology so, being an 80s child, fortunately I was on the cusp of a wave and managed to jump onboard the craze of iPods and wireless technology before it was too late. There are lots of mum's and dads out there who struggle to understand the very basic of modern interfaces – my mum being one of them!

Kids are certainly tech savvy from a very young age and are responsive to all different types of media, but we also know that for now TV is still the King. Amongst children aged 5-15, TV continues to be the medium that they would miss the most if it were taken away*, out of all the activities undertaken regularly. There are differences by age: 5-7s are most likely to say they would miss television (57%) a little higher than 8-11s (42%) – probably due to less of an interest in social activities and the internet. Estimated weekly TV consumption for kids has not changed a great deal since 2007 (approx. 16 hours/ week).

*Data has been taken from the UK market but similar activity has been seen in many other international markets.

A common challenge, especially amongst commercially funded networks, is often how to keep children focused on one channel or network. To tackle this issue, it's important to ask, what do we know about children's actual behavior when they're spending so much time around the centrepiece of the living room, especially when there are so many distractions in place.

The importance of brand resonance is a conversation that JWM have been talking about for a long time and TV creatives are constantly striving to come up with fresh ideas to overcome break retention; how can it be funnier, more navigational or more relevant? Those brand perceptions are important because it has an impact on how a child feels when watching that channel and relates to how the programming ties into that brand. The content is the key reason that kids pledge their loyalty to a brand. Especially amongst pre teenage girls, today's 'young adults' want to aspire to an environment that feels older and 'cool' and inclusive. How that voice is portrayed across the break from programming to navigation, if not subconsciously, is always being considered when your audience is flicking from channel to channel.

With electronic tablets becoming the must have device for children (use of a tablet at home has tripled from 14% to 42% among 5-15s in the UK since 2012), it's indeed worth taking into account how kids are using secondary devices while simultaneously watching the TV. When we look at more tech savvy children or those lighter TV viewers as their first choice (mainly 12-15s where a tablet or mobile phones are available), the internet is mainly used for the purpose of social and because it allows them to understand what is going on in the current world. It encourages awareness of different cultures, types of people and opinions to help them form their own.

We should leverage this behavior by supplementing content within breaks that is more relevant to a child's media habits i.e. interstitial material with a social or cultural context that can be further discovered online. In this instance, the relationship between both media can sit hand in hand and the power of the brand affiliation can then be tested. Ideally, we're aiming to keep those viewers within the brand on another platform rather than them finding their own direction into the path of competitors.

When co viewing is present, more often than not, the older sibling will be in control of the remote. However, occasionally, we see compromising older siblings allowing younger control to perhaps look back on shows that they used to enjoy without embarrassment. And ever more present, 10-14 year olds, who now have increased ownership of mobile phones, are happy to idly watch/listen in the background, whilst also getting a kick out of social use on their phones.

One of the recent things that I learnt from working at a major children's network for over five years, from various focus groups, the Millennial kids really know what they want and it is particularly evident by the way that they surf the programme guide; Searching for 'NEW', hunting for 'Back to Back' episodes and even flicking to find content that is simply not a commercial break triggers an alarm to watch and see. If they don't like it then they will simply move on to the next shiny object.

We are often asked about frequency and exposure of kid's promotion. We would advocate that certain messages should not just be viewed as repetition and have a bigger role to play. Are we getting the most out of positioning during peak time or call to actions if we know that as soon as a commercial break airs, we lose up to 40% of our audience to another device? How can break messages be constructed so that entertainment or humour is at the forefront rather than an imperative?

It could be argued that the real beating heart will always be in the comforts of the living room as 'sharing moments' with family is something that is becoming more enjoyable and revitalized. Perhaps this is due to the social disconnect that being spoilt for choice creates for us.

JWM are always trying to keep our finger on the pulse, looking at new ways to encourage broadcasters to ask the right questions that allow you to connect with your audience. However, the simplest of changes to audience behavior can have a major effect on your on-air messaging so how does this reflect on the overall business objectives?

It's often a challenge within large corporations understanding that an overall strategy is most effective when all wider departments are in synchronicity. The question that we put to our broadcasters is, amongst an increasingly changing landscape, are you considering audience behaviour enough when planning campaigns or further afield when planning long term goals for the business?

Please feel free to give feedback on the above Opinion piece. Should you be interested in exploring how JWM could possible help your broadcast organisation then please do get in touch at:

jg@j-wmedia.com

alan@j-wmedia.com

jo@j-wmedia.com