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**POV: Market research in the first person**

Staying a step ahead of the media tide

*By Henry Laura, Vice President*

If my years in media research have taught me anything, it is that the media and advertising landscapes are in a permanent state of change, with ever-increasing levels of complexity. Traditional media are evolving, and new media types and behaviors around them continue to develop. More important for marketers, media content is such a large part of the consumer's day that it is increasingly difficult to stand out in the crowd with advertising messages.

As researchers, we need to provide clients integrated business insights that create better decisions – not just in the wake of these media and marketing changes, but in anticipation of them. We need to answer questions such as:

- How do media technology changes affect people's attitudes and behaviors toward my product or service?
- How do advertisers best reach those who are adding these new technologies to their repertoire of media consumption?
- What important messages received in a specific medium will inspire them to make a purchase?

- What is the best combination of media elements to drive my brand objective; and to which consumer-brand profile?

Any communications or ad campaign designed to convey a message and result in spending must be based upon a complete behavioral understanding of what that target is bringing to the process.

Add on top of this the current economic challenges, and the complexity only grows; people are buying less, and marketers are under considerable pressure to make certain that every decision they make results in solid return on their objective. In times like this, it is simply more important than ever that marketers understand what does or does not motivate consumers, and how that translates into specific applications of media.

**Accuracy is not being reinvented**

Dare I admit having been in this business long enough to remember when TV was the only screen in the house? When the Internet was too new to be considered a medium?

But while the media landscape has changed, there have been fewer shifts in what makes for solid research. I have yet

to hear about a replacement for statistical principles, or for a well-designed questionnaire.

The options for doing cheaper, quicker research have multiplied – but, if anything, there are fewer companies now that produce research that can truly inform decisions. I do worry sometimes that some in the newest generation of researchers may not know that better is not just possible – it is essential.

To break through the clutter and the demands placed upon the consumer, marketers and researchers must understand how to efficiently and effectively deliver the right message to the right target in the right medium at the right time. For example: What is the optimal media mix to influence those who are buying less Starbucks coffee than they used to?



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### Taking steps in the right directions

How can these goals be accomplished? This is crucial when so many critical decisions are riding on knowing the needs and wants and goals and opinions of a public that is changing its behaviors and rituals, many of which will become

permanent. This is no time for data overload, but rather for knowledge and actionable advice on media and its users.

Knowledge Networks is uniquely positioned to inform and advise our clients and to help them make bold but well-informed moves in the midst of radical media change. Clients have told us that they need a comprehensive, single-source solution for information. And, Knowledge Networks provides its clients with a more expansive and representative view of the consumer than any other online research company. In addition, we can help you identify important characteristics about your key targets, and use that information to improve your products, targeting, and messaging. Recently, for example, KN has undertaken an extensive review of the issue of addressable television advertising with key clients, because our core approach is focused on the consumer. We understand the consumer's media behavior throughout the day and provide guidance to clients as they design research for effective decision-making.

Our KnowledgePanel® is representative of the American population, and our panelists are profiled for facts that include their socio-economic status, lifestyle, opinion, media and technology usage and attitudes to name a few. Because of the investments we have made in panel integrity and representativeness, our clients know that we provide the complete look at the consumer. And, they use the insights they derive from our information to create campaigns that effectively communicate and motivate the consumer to spend.

In many ways, the distinctions between “new” and “traditional” media are irrelevant; the only categories and

identifications that matter are those that people themselves perceive. To understand and leverage how consumers are reinventing media in their everyday lives is every marketer's challenge; and it is one that Knowledge Networks can help them meet.



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