



CRAIG JAFFE RESEARCH 360° Leadership in Research & Analytics

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A Public Call for Nielsen & Twitter to Share Data (White Paper)

Nielsen recently released top-line findings from a special study claiming Twitter can increase TV ratings.

It was the firm's first meaningful update since December when the two companies announced an exclusive agreement to create something called, "Nielsen Twitter TV Ratings."

In reality however, the link between Twitter conversations and TV viewership cannot be proven until all interested parties have had a chance to analyze the data. We respectfully request Nielsen publish all data so that there is an opportunity for proper peer review.

In the meantime, we have taken it upon ourselves to outline key considerations for creating social TV audience metrics.

Twitter in TV Households:

In order to prove that Twitter can increase TV viewing, Twitter users first need to be identified in the Nielsen sample.

For readers of this paper who want to make some generalizations based on the latest traffic figures and population estimates from comScore and Nielsen respectively, Twitter has about 39 million users representing approximately 13% of people living in TV households.

Extrapolating to Nielsen's national TV sample, that yields about 6,500 people whose TV viewing can be tracked (13% of Nielsen's 50,000 total people sample). A more thorough review of the numbers however should factor out users exclusively tweeting in locations where Nielsen does not measure TV.

Causal Relationship:

To determine if Twitter usage causes TV viewing among the 6,500 people, an experiment needs to be conducted where "cause" is specifically tied to the subject matter of tweets (Twitter usage).

After all, there are a multitude of reasons why people watch TV, and Twitter may or may not be one of the many causes, even among Twitter users.

Experiment:

If Nielsen has not done so already, we propose a test and control design to determine cause.

Nielsen's national TV sample should be split between Twitter users (the test group) and non-Twitter users (the control group).

Both test and control groups will be exposed to the same promotional activity and ostensibly have the same reasons for watching TV. The only difference is that Twitter users will be exposed to tweets and non-Twitter users will not be exposed to tweets.

(A minority of people representing non-Twitter users may read tweets, though it is not likely they will impact the experiment's results)

Next, the industry should pick a handful of regularly scheduled programs to monitor. Nielsen should track TV ratings for Twitter and non-Twitter users during times when tweets are intentionally being sent out about the programs, as well as times when no tweets are being sent out.

The rating change among non-Twitter users will establish a benchmark. Actual ratings for Twitter users should then be compared to the benchmark to conclude if Twitter caused an increase in TV ratings.

Implications and Next Steps:

The financial interest Nielsen and Twitter have in this study and their future "Nielsen Twitter TV Ratings" service suggests industry input is needed. We repeat our public request for Nielsen and Twitter to share its data for peer review.

At stake are new analytics and business models the industry can use to monetize social media more fully.

Nielsen's minute-by-minute data will help us gain even greater insight into the findings and should be considered when conducting the experiment and subsequent analyses.

For sound strategy on key business decisions like these, ask media maven Craig Jaffe. Mr. Jaffe is an award-winning media and marketing executive who manages his own consultancy helping television networks and advertising agencies maximize viewership, drive revenue, and productize research concepts. He can be reached at 917-587-3649 and CraigJaffe@optonline.net. Feel free to also visit him at www.CraigJaffeResearch.com and www.linkedin.com/in/CraigJaffeResearch.

About Craig Jaffe Research 360°:

Craig Jaffe Research 360° is a research and analytics consultancy that advises how consumer trends, behavioral shifts and attitudinal dynamics can be leveraged and monetized. The consultancy is hired to perform Ad Sales Research, Program Research, Analytics, and Consumer Insights. It utilizes a variety of resources -- such as Nielsen, MRI, comScore, Rentrak, and others -- and employs primary research techniques while working with media and marketing companies operating in the television, digital, and social marketplaces. Craig Jaffe Research 360° helps television networks increase ad sales and audiences, and helps advertising and media agencies activate consumer purchase behavior.