



FACESofCHANGE: Engage Youth

At the MRIA 2011 National Conference, Maura Hanley's presentation won rave reviews. She now shares with *Vue* those findings about what the marketing research community can learn from the digital media habits of today's youth.

Maura Hanley

We have done ourselves a disservice separating medium and message; channel planning and creative development; and quantitative and qualitative research. After all, audience size or composition doesn't tell us how engaged people are in content, or what they will notice or remember. Syndicated media and product usage studies don't reveal what motivates us to buy. Insights gained into the hearts and minds of people by talking to them must no longer apply only to what we say to consumers, but when and where we say it.

The FACESofCHANGE study is designed to bring qualitative and quantitative research together to support marketing channel investment decision-making. Channel investments are typically made based on quantitative data only. A key input, particularly for brand campaigns, is projected audience by medium from sources such as comScore, NADbank, PMB, and BBM. When available, performance data such as cost per sale, drives how much to spend and where. But advertisers are increasingly looking for opportunities to engage consumers. They may not be expecting an immediate response from every ad placed, but they want more than just reach or delivery of an ad exposure. Adding qualitative insights to the data mix can lead to better decision-making as we arrive at a deeper understanding of how people are using media. Let's review some of the results from our first study, which focused on youth.

Using members from the Studentawards.com community, FACESofCHANGE: Youth, surveyed 1,225 young adults 18-to-24 and subsequently conducted 23 in-person interviews with the cohort. The study covered the respondents' digital

media habits, social and community activities, and attitudes towards privacy and advertising. The research revealed important differences in answers people provide to surveys, compared to the responses they give when speaking in an interview setting: differences that have significant implications for marketers.

Community and Social Media

Youth spend their time divided between a variety of virtual- and real-world social groups. For example, membership in religious groups (30%) is almost the same as membership in online special interest or hobby groups (29%). The same percentage of students (30%) belong to an online multi-player gaming community as belong to a school club. There's no doubting the ubiquity of Facebook among youth; it's synonymous with social networking. We found the same number of people belonging to Facebook specifically as belonged to any social network: almost 80%.

The quantitative data makes a strong argument for investing in online communities to reach this target, but one-on-one interviews revealed varying levels of engagement in these groups. We gauged engagement by first mention and level of excitement. When asked about groups and communities, the first thing our subjects wanted to talk about were their volunteer activities. 76% of 18- and 19-year-olds, and 58% of students over the age of 20 volunteer. They spoke with passion about volunteering regardless of whether it was for a cause they believed in, an activity they enjoyed or for career advancement. Active involvement in online

communities was cited only by those with a special interest, like the 20-year-old female who was passionate about raw food and chatted with people from around the world, and the 21-year-old male car enthusiast who liked to post pictures of his modified ride.

Facebook is seen as a tool for keeping in touch with friends and family. Frequency of visiting and updating varied widely, though. Importantly, this age group is engaged with their friends via Facebook, not necessarily with Facebook content itself. Probing about brands and advertising on Facebook revealed that all users interviewed noticed ads, particularly those targeted to their interests. But only a few expressed interest in brand pages and then only when deals were made available.

Putting the qualitative and quantitative findings together provides the answer to the question of what message we should put where. The numbers imply that online communities are great places to reach this target, but qualitative findings tell us that they are more receptive to targeted offers than to brand relationships in these environments. Is this group influenced by online and social media marketing? Certainly. They consult online reviews, product sites, family and friends, and even advertising before making purchases. Given that many only work part-time or at entry level jobs, price is a key driver. So, marketers have many opportunities to intercept the path to purchase with an offer.

But if the objective is engagement in order to create preference, change attitudes or develop a relationship, marketers must look beyond the numbers before making an investment to become part of this target's social life. Consider their passions and look for opportunities to support their aspirations. Depending on the objectives, the best place to connect brands with youth may be out in the world, not inside their phone or computer.

TV and Video Viewing

A similar story emerged when we looked at TV viewing. The numbers tell a clear and compelling story. One-on-one discussion reveals important challenges and opportunities.

70% of Canadians 18-to-24 are watching TV programs via their computer. A closer look at their viewing habits uncovered the following division of time:

Average Hours per Week

TV on a TV:	6.3
TV on a computer:	3.1
YouTube or other videos:	3.0

Clearly online video advertising represents as important a channel for reaching this target as traditional TV advertising. However, fragmentation is a significant challenge. One-on-one interviews revealed a huge variety of what types of shows are being watched and what constitutes watching TV on a computer. Some people are streaming and some are downloading. Some have favourite sources (legitimate and illegitimate) while others search randomly each time they

want to find a show. Most use their computer or game console to watch online content on their larger-screen TVs. Importantly, there is also a lot of time spent watching movies online, which has not been included in the figures above as it does not usually represent an advertising opportunity for marketers.

Online targeting provides opportunities to overcome fragmentation. Facebook appears to have habituated them to seeing ads tailored to their interests, so marketers would do well to employ demographic, behavioural and/or contextual targeting to reach this group via online video advertising.

Of course, total time spent watching TV shows and videos is relatively low for this group, both in comparison with older demographics and in comparison with the time this group spends on other activities, both offline and online.

Importantly, much of the time spent watching TV is also spent doing something else at the same time. It is difficult to reach this group and to validate that they have seen your ad, never mind actually engaging them.

Our discussions included questions about where ads are noticed and what is recalled. Here again, the study made clear the difference between the reach by medium that quantitative data can tell us, as compared to engagement by medium (and therefore, by extension, the potential advertising effectiveness) that qualitative research reveals. Out-of-home advertising was mentioned by all and was the first mention for most. This included in-washroom ads; various TTC placements; posters and digital signage outside and in stores. Not surprisingly, the two common denominators that emerged for noticing ads, regardless of where they appeared, were that they were impossible to avoid and/or they were relevant in terms of an already established interest. Both of these qualifications require the marketer to evaluate an advertising placement opportunity using more than just quantitative data.

The synthesis of two research methodologies allowed us to challenge assumptions about where best to reach youth, and dig deeper to uncover opportunities to truly engage this group. All of the interviews were video-recorded, so we could bring findings to life and tell compelling stories about what our insights mean for marketers. We incorporated our findings and videos in a Prezi, which you can view here:

<http://prezi.com/ydgttrdm0kg6/youth-research-project-facesofchange/>

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