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If you want a glimpse of how television might be watched in the not too distant future, you needn't look any farther than the Interactive Program Guide. The Interactive Program Guide (IPG) allows a viewer to use the remote control to sort programs by themes or categories, obtain details about programs on demand, and select viewing options. Think of it like as Yahoo for television.

Although the IPGs are available to only some viewers today, IPG providers are working hard to make the Interactive Program Guide the television entry point of choice in the future.

For advertisers the big news is that some of the IPGs offer display panels on the left of the programming screen, which not only offer ad messages, but allow viewers to *interactively* obtain more information about the advertised product, program or service. And, for some categories such as Pay-Per-View and video on demand, viewers can make buying choices, directly from the ad on the screen.

Today, the Interactive Program Guide technology comes built into a number of models of new television sets, or is available via subscription to cable companies. The leading IPG provider, Gemstar-TV Guide International, offers two such interactive guides: Gemstar's *IPG Guide Plus Gold*, which comes with some new models of television and TV Guide's IPG, *TV Guide Interactive*, which is accessed via

Research in the Digital Media: The Interactive Television Guide



digital cable set-top boxes. (See Figure on the right)

Gallup & Robinson helped Gemstar-TV Guide International evaluate the advertising effectiveness of the IPG. Some of the objectives of the research included understanding how viewers respond to this new advertising platform and summarizing the ways advertisers can make their IPG advertising more effective.

G&R's real-world, in-context testing program was the ideal solution for fulfilling the specific learning objectives of this research. The methodology is an at-home, in-context, natural-exposure system. This allows the assessments to be conducted under conditions that minimize their influence on a viewer's behavior. Users of the IPG

were interviewed on the telephone, after potential exposure to the IPG medium. Multiple measures of advertising effectiveness were obtained to fully evaluate the effectiveness of the advertising including among others, delayed proved recall, communication and persuasion. Special questions were developed to get at new behavioral opportunities, such as click through rates.

The results presented below are based on a sample of about 1,387 men and women, 18+ in age, and users of the TV Guide Interactive IPG. About 53 ads across 34 brands

from many categories have been included in this analysis. It should be noted that TV Guide Interactive IPG users span all ages, but are more upscale with higher penetration of newer technologies such as the Internet.

What Copy Testing Results Showed

G&R's copy testing results showed the IPG vehicle is a robust advertising medium.

1. Although a wide range of performance is seen, results indicate substantial levels of advertising awareness and persuasion can be obtained via this medium.
2. Ad category can influence results. Not surprisingly, since the TV Guide is a program guide, entertainment sector ads, including theatrical releases, Pay-Per-View, and other television programming, lead the way with significantly higher proved recall and persuasion levels. Ads from other categories, however, have also proven to be effective when used creatively, such as for packaged goods, durables, publications, retail and other services. It should be noted that while these are interactive ads, advertising awareness and persuasion can be obtained without these ads necessarily being clicked on.
3. The IPG ad click rate, calculated from respondents who claimed to have clicked on the specific test ad, varies significantly from ad to ad. The average reported click rate for all tested ads of 3.4% is more than nine times greater than the online Internet click through rate of .36% at the time of the study (as reported by

Nielsen Net Ratings). More than half of the IPG users report having clicked on an advertising display box for additional information at some time, and over a third of the sample say they click on these ads for more information once a week or more.

What Viewing Behavior Data Showed

G&R was able to validate its measures by linking its advertising effectiveness results for programming promotion ads to real program viewing behavior. To evaluate the impact of IPG ads on program viewing, Gemstar-TV Guide International conducted a Network audience cume analysis using custom ratings data (Nielsen) among digital (TV Guide Interactive) and analog cable homes (non-TV Guide Interactive) for five programs promoted on the IPG platform. Pre and post IPG promotions results showed a 37% increase for the programs that were promoted on the TV Guide Interactive IPG. IPG panels ads for the same five programs were also tested via G&R's advertising effectiveness studies outlined above: proved recall for these programs was roughly 35% higher than for all ads, and persuasion for these ads averaged 33% higher than all ads.

Research that Helps Make Better Decisions

Using proven research practices to assess and help shape potentially important new media improves our confidence about both old and new learning. Time-tested advertising research measures enhance understanding of new media vehicles and, when adapted to new

measurement opportunities, reinforce the validity of proven advertising research techniques. Other results from this very rich research database show how media weight works in building ad awareness, and that general principles of good advertising communication hold true for this type of medium as well. For any one interested in how communications work, it is interesting and reassuring when studies of new forms of communication reconcile with and expand upon existing principles of communications effectiveness. 