

The Analysis of Various Controversies in Television Rating System in India

Ms. Aastha Saxena

Research Scholar,

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

The IIS University, Jaipur, Rajasthan

Email- aastha.saxena23@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

*Television rating in India is going through the most divisive and transitional phase since its commencement. While, the methodology of the rating agency TAM has always been under scanner and the industry has been mulling an alternate arrangement for quite some time now, it is for the initial time that a large section of the industry as candidly boycotted the ratings and has gone to the extent of unsubscribing its statistics. While advertisers and advertising agencies are still patronage TAM with an quarrel that an awful rating system is still better than no rating at all, it is very clear that to gratify the requirements of all stakeholders, the sole currency of the Indian television rating needs to be reinvented and there needs to be some serious thinking done before arriving at any verdict related to its new methodology. **The aim of this research is to look into the pros and cons of various controversies surrounding TAM and the reasons behind it.***

KEYWORDS: Indian Television, TAM, Broadcasters, Methodology, Currency

INTRODUCTION

In an industry run by and large on advertisement revenue, virtually all decisions for creating content on television are taken on the basis of audiences' preference of content and the depths of their pockets. The advertisers and media planners today have several takers for their advertising budget using various mass medium platforms. What they would like to know before parting with their money is exactly which target audience a particular media entity or content is trying to reach out to and what is the collective response of audiences to the content. To take such decisions, the only accepted formula for the entire Indian television industry is the Television Audience Measurement (TAM) data provided by a joint venture between A.C.Neilson and Kantar Media group. For all media buying and selling purposes TAM data is considered as the bible by media planners and advertisers. Although, broadcasters have never been quite content with TAM's methodology, it nevertheless has reigned its supremacy as India's sole TV rating agency for more than two decades now. The situation, however, might not remain the same for a long time now. Some of the latest developments, it seems, have opened the Pandora's Box of controversies related to flaws in TAM's rating system. It all started during the early

days of June' 2013 when one after the other some of the major broadcast networks decided to discontinue their weekly subscription to the weekly TV rating service provided by TAM.

Blaming it to the unreliable fluctuations in TAM's data ever since it added more than 30 towns with population over 1 lakh in its rating ambit from January the same year, the broadcasters decided to stop paying for the data. It has become a great source of concern for TAM since broadcasters contribute almost 75% of its total revenue.

Discontent from its clients is not new for the agency as it first happened way back in 2002 when Zee TV unsubscribed from TAM for a few months.

The reason even then was the sample size and the methodology of the agency. Last year, NDTV took the company to court over its research practices. It is thus important to understand the inception of television rating in India and its various shortcomings.

TRP IN RETROSPE

Though, the specific launch associated with continuous TV status dimension seriously isn't crystal clear, it began much prior to launch associated with private satellite TV on pc. The procedure ended up being really easy and the process information. Due to the fact, Doordarshan ended up being the only real channel offered at that time, it absolutely was about obtaining while men and women tuned inside their television sets somewhat what exactly many people viewed. IMRB, the analysis equip associated with since bureau Hindustan Thompson Affiliates (now JWT)

released a process referred to as the actual dairy products process. It dispersed 3, 1000 dairies in 8 urban centers using the demographics on the inhabitants that marketers desired to talk with. Due to the fact, quite a few individuals failed to individual some sort of TV with their individual as well as viewed it with the nearby neighbours, two kinds of diaries (primary as well as secondary) ended up filled out. Any person that viewed a program intended for 5 min's and up ended up being deemed some sort of viewer's. (Kohli Khandekar, 2010)

Any time satellite programmes entered this market, studying viewership evolved into some sort of difficult task. So a acquired not any additional means but to purchase digital men and women feet. In the beginning reviews ended up given by two corporations. Any. G. Neilson joined palms together with IMRB to offer TV Market Measurement (TAM) process, but ahead of it could possibly commence delivering the services, ORG-MARG introduced INTAM with the very same goal in 1996. TAM media exploration could possibly lift off a season later on. The takeover of an. G. Neilson throughout the world by simply VNU (the parent associated with ORG-MARG) in 2002 triggered the actual merger on the two status cash in Indian also. While TAM performed get many opposition such as another bureau aMap in 2004, until eventually date TV Rating Factors (TRP) numbers given by TAM is recognized as since Sort intended for media organizers, marketers and of course TELLY programmes. In the beginning TAM began testing viewership just in Community urban centers nonetheless, together with boost in

TV sexual penetration it shortly bundled inhabitants together with zillion furthermore inhabitants also. Also the number of metered households also improved. Until eventually 2013, just 8150 households ended up metered as a result of TAM fees as well as except Maharashtra, towns with an increase of compared to 1 lakh inhabitants were not bundled. Even so, underneath tremendous marketplace stress, in 2014 TAM provides widened the test basic to 10200 and it has also introduced the actual introduction associated with towns with an increase of compared to 1 lakh inhabitants in says just like, Gujarat, UPWARD, Rajasthan, Punjab. Haryana and many others.

FUNCTIONING OF TRP

Television set Viewership Ratings or maybe TRP can be period accessed regular with the entire period men and women within the test homes expend watching a particular cleansing soap or maybe plan. Ratings might be for one second, five moments, quarter-hour or maybe 24 hours. Asia at the moment features 10200 test residences around 160 villages and urban centers with all the people of just one lakh and over. These kind of homes are usually linked with the electronic digital individual's meters. These people meters document the volume of programmes currently being seen for the TV SET pieces. Each and every channel incorporates a unique volume which can be kept at the agency's bank. Once each week the results via anyone meters can be gathered, decoded using the volume complementing method, assessed and ratings are usually attained. TAM releases the results in way of several stories good need to have and desire with the clients.

This clients usually are usually TV programmes, content production residences, marketers, marketing organizations and content production organizations. Plus the stories are designed in line with a variety of genres of programmes (entertainment, reports, sports activities etc.), demographics (get older, sex, income degrees and so forth with the viewers), and terminology, urban centers TV Ratings to the past few days are usually introduced just about every Friday.

At the beginning of each calendar year TAM updates it is confirming market place. The first task in TAM technique can be Establishment/Baseline analyze which can be performed over a test measurement of approx. 60000 in order to 80, 000 homes. With regard to trying the first step can be village collection and test divide in a test village and afterwards property collection. Due to this, a method termed Simulated Annealing is utilized to ensure balance between your parameters of Socio-cultural regions (therefore spreading geographic spread), C&S penetration (average C&S penetration of tried villages adequate to individuals availability). In a village, an example will be divide every bit as concerning SECA, N, D and D/E. That guarantees ample test regarding control a new market divide including SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION'S A, as their whole world percentage in comparison with additional SECs can be comparatively smaller. Alternative is usually to putting in individuals meters and training the homes concerning it is utilization. Files selection can be carried out through a digital individuals meter technology termed TVM 5, data can be kept seeing that encrypted data within the

individuals meter which is sent on the data centre either by using GSM or maybe GPRS throughout the transmission unit. Top quality Command and Files Approval can be carried out through weekly validations a really Conformity Approval such as Assessments upon switch pressing by means of solar panel property people, Complex Approval such as investigations upon products linked difficulties, Seeing validation such as Assessments regarding irregular seeing, ongoing seeing, Employees Approval such as Assessments by the data extractor upon household details.

Apart from the science of data analysis, credibility of TAM lies in the fact that information about all metered homes are kept as tight secret so none of the stake holders could temper with the viewing choice of sampled viewers.

LIMITATIONS, CRITICISM AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Audience measurement and channel rating system by TAM has always been under criticism for several reasons. Even before the latest face-off with the broadcasters TAM was in news last year for all the wrong reasons. 2012 saw the first ever open war between the agency and one of its clients and the matter was dragged to the court of laws. In July 2012, NDTV (which owns three news channels, NDTV India, NDTV 24x7 and NDTV Profit) filed a case against The Nielsen Co. in a New York court for “manipulating television viewership data in favour of channels that were willing to offer bribes to its officials”. In its petition the company claimed that low ratings for NDTV news channels have also led to public claims by other news channels of being the number 1 (one) channel. “This

loss of hard-earned reputation and goodwill along with the damage to the profitability of NDTV as a result of low advertising revenues has in turn severely damaged the brand value of NDTV,” the petition claimed.

The broadcaster demanded \$810 million (Rs.4, 520 crore) for fraud and \$580 million for negligence, in addition to other claims, according to the petition. The company explained that it’s claiming the damages for “loss of advertising revenues, increased carriage costs, loss of reputation, loss of goodwill, loss of stock value, and loss of other revenues. While this matter is in the court, it did spark a debate on the credibility of India’s only television rating currency. Some months before the NDTV lawsuit the stakeholders of television ratings had finally taken a step in kick starting the much talk about and equally delayed Broadcast Audience Measurement Council (BARC). In fact, root cause of inception of BARC itself lied in collective criticism of TAM by industry stake holders. So strong was the anti-TAM feeling at one point in 2008, there was serious danger of the government taking over ratings, through the TRAI. That is when BARC stepped in to say that the Government should have nothing to do with ratings and should let it be run by an industry body. (Kohli Khandekar, 2010)

BARC is aimed at providing an alternative to television audience measurement system. However, its formation was finally announced in March 2012. It is a joint venture between The Indian Broadcasting Federation (IBF), The Indian Society of Advertisers (ISA) and Advertising Agencies Association of India

(AAAI). IBF has 60% stake in the council while rest 40% are shared by ISA and AAAI. So far, BARC has called for a global request for information (RFI) to understand the state-of-the art systems and process in the area of television audience measurement research. It has also formed a technical committee of three industry experts. The brief of the committee is to design the complete research plan, which is a multilayered exercise.

This exercise is supposed to be completed in two stages. Stage one will comprise of designing and commissioning an establishment survey which is a cross-sectional study of TV penetration (both rural and urban), viewership habits (both terrestrial and satellite delivered channels over analog as well as digital delivery modes) and demographic taxonomy of

viewers. This study will become the basis of designing the rating panel. Stage two will begin once stage one completes and will take up actual designing of the data collection methods.

Though it will be some time before an alternate system of television audience measurement comes in place, the move emphasizes at the fact that the industry desperately needs some change and improvement in this direction. Till that time TAM will continue to be the sole currency to control Rs300 billion industry of choosing right platform for advertisement of television. Among the widely criticized aspects of TAM ratings is the fact that it has a very low sample base. This can be analysed by simply comparing the number of metered households in India with some other countries:

TABLE1

Country	Number of C&S Households	Number of People Meters	Number of Households Per People Meter
INDIA	185 million	10,200	18,137
U.S.A	114 million	20,000	5,700
U.K	26 million	5,100	5,098

Industry possesses constantly talked about possessing at the very least 35, 000 individuals metres which may perform justice to the wide TV market bottom throughout Indian. Nevertheless, advertising observers believe that smaller trial bottom connected with TAM might be both equally blamed upon industry stakeholders.

TAM such as any advertising firm can be an income searching for corporate and business. It will invest in its infrastructure only till this level with the ability to harvest income outside of all of them. Growing its infrastructure bottom through a number of times and also implementing labor force to accumulate

and also study the significantly greater measurement connected with info is probably likely to lower raise its fees beyond any doubt which often eventually must be paid for through its customers (channels, marketers and also promoting agencies). In its defence TAM constantly highlights that since industry just isn't ready to spend a lot more with regard to superior high quality info, they will must be at ease with the current process.

Possibly this tiny trial bottom connected with TAM just isn't spread out uniformly. TAM methods only cities that as well along with populace of greater than 1 lakh. Lower populace households are usually calculated only throughout Maharashtra. Substantial regions such as north Japanese expresses, Kashmir and also fresh produced expresses such as Chhattisgarh and also Uttarakhand did not include a good one individuals meter till recently. Likewise, TAM process is definitely skewed in the direction of higher making and also higher non reusable revenue households residing in large metropolitan areas. Until The month of January 2007, this appropriated 25% connected with its metres downright with regard to SECA house-holders and also furnished in depth studies to be able to its people. (Mehta, 2009)

Another problem with TAM is that the analogue cable operators often change the frequencies of channels. Thus, TAM needs to keep checking with the cable operators and update it accordingly. Adding to this is the problem of failure of people meters to work at any given point of time mostly due to power cuts and other system problems. The gap between the total number of metered houses and total number

of working people meters is filled with the help of statistical methods. Since the survey base is already so small these things only increase the margin of error. In spite of facing these controversies, TAM, however, till now has managed to sail through albeit swiftly in the Indian markets till now. Experts feel that it might not be the same this time around since the industry for once seems pretty united and is backed with the hope that the alternate rating system BARC should be in place soon. Industry experts expect it to start functioning by 2015. However, it remains to be seen how the industry copes with two rating systems since it is not a common practice among other markets. Also, TAM is backed by two very strong parent companies A.C.Neilson and Kantar Media and would not give up so easily in a market which although is not very big in terms of revenue but has huge potential of expanding and growing.

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