

COLUMNS

Mobile's mountain of measurement

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By [Mark Hughes](#)

We have heard a lot about cross-platform measurement. The Interactive Advertising Bureau recently stated the two most important pillars for digital measurement as part of the 3MS initiative are: 1) shifting from a served impression standard to a new standard of viewable impressions, and 2) introducing an online GRP metric to determine reach and frequency based on viewable impressions.

The difficulty of the GRP (gross rating points) comes into play when reconciling TV GRPs historically based on television households and some newer desire to have an online GRP move from TV households to actual people.

For mobile, GRPs get complicated in a hurry.

You see a banner on your laptop. Later, on your balcony, you surf on your smartphone, seeing a banner from the same brand. On your tablet at the beach, you see another banner from the same brand. Three ads, one person. But, from a measurement standpoint, how does anyone know it's one person?

When laptop, smartphone and tablet are all disconnected devices, will reach be counted as three people or one person?

Here is where the mountain of measurement gets steep.

Solutions? There are a few. Make sure yours will not get you fired.

Solution that will get you fired

Device fingerprinting, or device IDs. You can collect user information very easily IP address, operating system, browser version and more. The "more" includes unique pieces of data like "clock skew," where the same devices such as an iPhone will tell time within milliseconds of each other. The millisecond of a difference is akin to a tattoo, its unique for that device.

When you combine all of these unique points and create a unique device ID, that is when you may get into trouble.

Without any current legal precedents, we may be five to six years away from a decision as to whether device fingerprinting is a violation of privacy laws or not.

But before that happens, a device fingerprinting methodology for which the consumer has no way to opt out of tracking simply accumulates millions of dollars of risk for your company, and ignoring that clear and present danger will likely get you fired.

Solution that can work

Applications or Android. When you load apps or use your Android phone, the possibility exists for that app to communicate information that would confirm you on a tablet and you on a smartphone and are not, in fact, two yous, but one you.

Privacy policies and settings certainly play a role and are not entirely perfect, but this is a legal and smart way to calculate online GRPs. Right now anyway, it is the best way.

Who's got mobile measurement?

So, as you look at the landscape, who is best suited to climb the mobile measurement mountain with respect to online GRPs? Google? Nielsen? ComScore?

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Google may have a good shot at solving the mobile measurement mountain for GRPs. It certainly has widespread adoption of Android and Motorola, which could be the gateway communicating who you are. And given their dominance in ad serving with DoubleClick, they can connect many of those dots from an engineering standpoint.

But GRPs grew up in TV, and reconciling a world of GRPs created with TV households gets complicated if you are Google, which has never really been in the business of media ratings.

ComScore has great brand recognition for measurement online, but it is panel-based with small amounts of toolbars. No mobile advantage comes from them, such as owning Android or Motorola. No TV heritage, and no TV component.

It is going to be a harrowing climb up the mountain for comScore, but who knows, things change. Perhaps an acquisition or merger with Rentrak could change things.

Nielsen has a good shot. TV heritage to its core, and it may have invented the GRP. Its partnership with Facebook and Facebook mobile gives it unprecedented access and insight to who you are by laptop, desktop and mobile, since you cannot use Facebook without being logged in, and apps even third-party apps built on their platform have the capability to send signals and information.

To boot, Facebook and Nielsen also know if you are female, male, how old you are, and a host of other things such as education and interests.

Is Nielsen recalibrating online GRPs for those people indexing high for cookie deletion? Maybe not, but that is fixable.

IN THE END, it is likely a GoogleAndroid versus NielsenFacebook battle will occur.

Solving the mobile measurement mountain is the key to solving cross-channel attribution and unlocking more ad dollars. And when we get there: mobile payments. Let the ascent begin.

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