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DEMOGRAPHICS VS PSYCHOGRAPHICS

Recently I spoke with the general manager of a Rock station in a market with a top-rated CHR. He was looking for a sounding board for some programming changes that were under consideration. He believed the CHR station in his market had a bigger audience share than it deserved, and his station could draw listeners away by adjusting its programming. He reasoned that since the 18-34 demographic was key to both stations - and the CHR was winning - his station needed to re-focus its music to attract more listeners. He went on to say that Arbitron's rating results made it clear to him what kind of changes were needed. His station should play less hard rock and more pop-oriented songs. After all, the market had expressed itself through the pages of Arbitron. Hadn't it?

Discussions along those lines happen often. The GM's conclusion was based on analysis of Arbitron's demographic data and it assumed that those with similar age/sex characteristics share similar tastes. That, of course, is rarely the case. People within the same demographic group typically fall into several psychographic categories based on core music orientation, values, attitudes and lifestyles. Knowing the comparative size of each group of listeners within an overall age/sex cell is the information that is needed to make the right strategic decisions.

Although radio stations compete directly with each other for revenue based on ratings performance within particular demographic categories - they are not necessarily competing for the *same listeners* within those categories. It is a distinction that is easily blurred and often a source of confusion

STATIONALITY

Age of influence is often referenced when targeting music to particular age groups. It holds that the music people were exposed to in their late teens and early 20s will always be important to them; in many cases their favorite for life. The study of cohorts is similar. It maintains that the attitudes of large segments of the population are imprinted for life by the mood of the times and events experienced during young adulthood.

The idea that various segments of the population hold attitudes that are shared among themselves, but different from other segments is important to keep in mind when developing imaging and marketing messages. It is especially important for stations with age targets that include groups that are characteristically different. For example, a 25-44 audience target includes the Gen X oriented 25-34 cell, and the Boomer-influenced 35-44 age category. A TV spot featuring a few too many skateboarders could send the message to the upper end of the 25-44 target that the station is for people who are younger than they are. Similarly, an over abundance of audio-drops from the likes of Animal House could make younger listeners feel the station is not for them. Seek out the words, messages and images that communicate horizontally across your station's entire age target. Non-music elements need to be programmed as carefully as the music in order to develop a *personality* for your station that is clear and consistent.

RANDOM THOUGHTS

- There are big differences in the quality of audio-streaming among stations on the Internet. Some are very good while others are just horrible. Carefully evaluate the various companies before signing on with them. Compare the audio quality of the stations they are streaming to that of other providers. Avoid long term agreements so you don't get stuck with a company that fails to keep pace with improving technology.

- Arbitron's delayed release of its Fall '99 rating information underscores the need to put research, marketing and promotions planning on a schedule that is not tied to the release of ratings data. There is simply not enough time to properly conduct research, plan promotions and media campaigns in the short period between the delivery of one survey and the start of the next.

- Why conduct research on a regular basis? Because perceptions, music tastes, and competitive dynamics are always changing. If there were ever a powerful example of just how dramatically things can change; it would be the Republican presidential primary race in South Carolina. The front-runner's 20 point lead gone practically overnight. And without research, who would have known? Up-to-date information on the changing competitive environment allowed the candidates to adjust their strategies to maximize their chances of winning

- WRKI in Danbury CT is looking for a 7-Mid air talent. If you know of anyone, please call me or I95 PD Tom Bass at 203-775-1212.

- Congratulations to Flint's "Cars 108" and "Banana 101.5" for hitting their ratings goals. Cars 108 is the 25-54 market leader, while The Banana is first with men!

Best regards,