DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 204 753 CS 206 354

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TITLE Television News and Audience Viewing Intentions.
PUB DATE Aug 81
NOTE 30p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (64th, East Lansing, MI, August 8-11, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults: *Attribution Theory: Audiences: Models: *News Media: *News Reporting: *Television Research: *Television Viewing
IDENTIFIERS *Audience Analysis

ABSTRACT

A study tested the utility of the viewing intention application of the transfer discrepancy model--a model attempting not only to identify the key program attributes that alter beliefs, but also to identify those that transfer this belief change into changes in viewer behavior. To promote cross-population examination, the study focused on network news. Data collection was accomplished by telephone interviews conducted with 80 adults in each of two cities. Findings suggested that respondents generally intended to watch network evening news programs whenever possible. Among the attributes that were shown to be associated with increases in intentions to view network nightly news were (1) the impact of the news on a viewer's life, (2) the notion that the news made viewers more knowledgeable about news events, (3) indepth coverage, (4) enjoyable newscasters, (5) variety of topics, (6) national news coverage, and (7) international news coverage. These results suggest that the viewing intention application provides a rather unique method for examining the crucial link between the importance a viewer accords a network television news attribute and how that viewer thinks the presence or absence of the attribute actually influences personal news viewing behavior. (HOD)

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# TELEVISION NEWS AND AUDIENCE VIEWING INTENTIONS

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A paper presented at the Annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism, East Lansing, MI., August, 1981, R/TV Journalism Division.

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# TELEVISION NEWS AND AUDIENCE VIEWING INTENTIONS

Media researchers have become increasingly interested in analyzing the dynamics of television news audiences. The study of television news audiences is particularly attractive, not only because of the extensive body of existing research, but also because this program type offers a relatively stable and available schedule, regularly consumed by millions each day. Recent research on television news audiences, in both the public and private sectors, has concentrated on analyzing audience attitudes. In academic research, audience dynamics has generally been approached via the generic uses and gratifications paradigm. In the private sector, dynamics research has been dominated by the attitude survey approaches of the news consultants. The academic approaches have been criticized for their lack of application to the real world, while the private sector approaches have been criticized for being almost atheoretical.

From a general perspective, Wurtzel (1980) has noted that "industry executives" prefer more policy-oriented or applied research, feeling that much social research is too theoretical to be of practical utility. Speaking of academic research in broadcast news, McLeod (1980) cited a significant lack of research that bridges audience, content, and policy. In an attempt to reconcile the positions noted above, this research examines an alternative method for analyzing television news viewing dynamics and presents a viewer typology or segmentation scheme based on the interaction of viewer perceptions of news program content and their intentions to view television network news programs.

A review of the relevant literature indicates that research studies attempting to probe television news program consumption habits have generally

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This research was funded by grants, from the American Broadcasting Companies, to Professors Smith and Davis.

dealt with three major problem areas: (1) the isolation of key viewer and news program characteristics; (2) the formation of audience subgroups or segments whose members share similar profiles on those characteristics; and (3) the assessment of the utility of the findings in terms of theory or the explanation of related phenomena, such as viewer recall of news content. An acceptable alternative model for analyzing viewing dynamics must somehow address these three problem areas, plus offer advantages in terms of addressing policy-oriented situations.

## Review of the Literature

Our literature review uncovered a number of issues on which to base criteria for the selection of an alternative model for analyzing viewing dynamics. The first and most obvious observation centers on the specific research problems addressed by existing research. Television news decision-making research implies the use of content or program-specific attributes, in conjunction with other viewer characteristic variables, to provide some indication of what should changed. If presented in a clear, non-punitive way, this type of information could provide valuable input for news directors. To date, the dominant paradigm, uses and gratifications, has been used by researchers to discover why people view television news, with the implied goal of uncovering the dimensional structure of audiences uses and gratifications related to consumption of that news medium. Statements used in uses and gratifications research presume to tap the interaction of viewer needs and television news consumption. As such, subject responses to statements such as "I watch television news to relax after a hard day," provide theoretically important results, but may have little direct relevance for professionals wishing more content or program specific data on which to base news policy decisions. An attending concern, noted by Greenberg (1974), is the determination of whether subject responses are based on medium or content-specific referents.

If we are to extend such research into the decision-making realm, there seems to be a need to probe more content-specific variables.

Another consideration is the procedure used for variable selection. While procedures varied across the problems and studies reviewed, in some cases, exact lists were imported from previous studies. The exclusive use of previously tested items or statements is positive in the spirit of theory development and replication, but it can potentially produce some serious oversights. By using a questionnaire composed, almost exclusively of items used by other researchers, we assume that the characteristics are static, rather than products of viewer judgment subject to change across populations and time, hence precluding the discovery of other potentially important factors. Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz (1969) have stressed the importance of addressing potential population differences during instrument construction. Drawing television news attributes from population sub-samples, Smith (1977) discovered both characteristic and dimensional differences across two populations of news viewers. Levy (1978) used the results of focus group interviews to generate new items to compliment previously tested items, in order to more comprehensively detail the dimensions of news viewing. We also uncovered studies where researchers comprehensively discussed the conceptual roots of the various uses and gratification dimensions, but then simply presented a list of the items used without providing a clear rationale or details regarding the variable selection process. An alternative model should support the inclusion of a process whereby population-specific variables might emerge.

Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn (1980) made significant contribution by addressing a major concern in the area of basic data analysis strategy. They urged consideration of the discrepancy between gratifications sought by viewers and gratification levels subjects report having obtained from news viewing. These researchers concluded that such discrepancy approaches provide considerable

potential insight into news viewing dynamics and that the differences between gratifications sought and obtained scores may be more due to within-program characteristics than between program characteristics. Their research points to the need for the isolation of characteristics that span individual news program audiences, presumed to be medium characteristics, and those that are program specific. In brief, analyzing the benefits viewers seek in news program viewing may help profile why they watch initially, but examination of what benefits they achieve may be critical to their decisions to alter their viewing habits.

Other recent attempts to audgment our conceptual understanding of viewer types, such as the research of Gutmann (1978) and Eastman (1979), have included lifestyle variables in conjuction with the basic uses and gratifications approach. Schwartz (1980) recently examined newspaper use including lifestyle and psychographic measures. In one sense, these studies attempt to extend our consideration of variable populations in order to more completely profile the news or program consumption dynamics of the audience, hence extending the utility into the decision-making, news-marketing realm. These general studies, like the news-specific studies of Levy (1978) and others, focus almost exclusively upon the formation of viewer groups. If we are to extend this knowledge, it seems logical to move toward either prediction of future behavior or further explanation of past behavior.

In addition to presenting an alternative model that addresses some of the issues noted above, this study focused on the following general research questions: (1) What are the salient attributes of television news program content most closely associated with intentions to increase news viewing? (2) Can this approach yield a useful viewer typology or segmentation scheme? (3) Given identification of the key variables affecting viewing intention, to what extent will subject viewing intentions change as a result of hypothetical

content alterations keyed to those change attributes? These questions seem to address some of the policy-oriented concerns noted early, but the model selected must also evidence some theoretic base, if we are to systematically consider an alternative method.

## The Viewing Intention Model

The alternative approach selected for examination in this research is called viewing intention. The viewing intention approach is an application of the transfer discrepancy model, developed by Danes and Hunter (1980), to the television news viewing situation. The transfer discrepancy model attempts not only to identify the key belief-discrepant messages (program attributes) which alter beliefs, but also to identify those which transfer this belief change into changes in behavior; in this case intentions to view television news programs. While full explication of the theoretic and mathematical formulations behind the transfer discrepancy model is beyond the scope of this paper (see Danes and Hunter, 1980), a conceptual summary will be presented.

The theoretical perspective forming the basis of this model is derived from McGuire's (1969, 1976) information processing approach. McGuire considers eight sequential steps in the processing of information, basically: (1) exposure to the information, (2) perception, (3) comprehension, (4) yielding or agreement with the claims, (5) retention of the content, (6) ability to retrieve the content or messages retained, (7) decision-making process based on information, and finally (8) action or behavior based on decision-making. The transfer discrepancy model concentrates on the decision-making step, but it should be noted that any of the steps may be fruitfully used to analyze audience dynamics.

The specific information integration paradigm used by transfer discrepancy is an extension of Anderson's (1959, 1971, 1974, 1978) simple discrepancy formulation, a communication model derivable from Anderson's averaging rule

for information integration. In these models, the respondent's overall reaction to a product, in this case a television news program, is treated as a subjective probability to view or consume. Two critical assumptions are made. First, the measurement scales are isomorphic with psychological values or beliefs. Second, that information is integrated by the respondent via an averaging process. A new belief, according the averaging rule, results from the integration of an old belief and a belief-changing message, with beliefs changing in the direction of the messages (i.e., either positive or negative). Further, the degree of predicted belief change is proportional to the discrepancy between the belief value communicated in the message and the initial belief held by the respondent prior to message presentation.

The term belief is defined as the viewer's perceived association between a program attribute, for example: "I believe that the NBC Nightly News (program) has broad coverage of international news events (attribute)." We presume that various sources, like networks and local stations, would like to encourage higher viewing frequency. When sources associate a program with an attribute, via some promotional channel, a message is generated. Ideally, we would like to determine which attributes should be cast in message form to produce positive changes in viewing. Hence, this approach seems directly applicable to news program promotion decision-making. There are also other benefits. By discovering those attributes which produce positive changes for groups of viewers, we also discover potentially important viewer-program content interactions, hence providing valuable diagnostics for television news management personnel.

Viewing intention is a person's planned viewing behavior, and a global intention is gathered via subject response to a statement posed in the following manner. "Whenever possible, I watch the X network news." We seek to predict changes in this base intention, as a result of various conditional intention

responses. Thus, the intention to view, considering changes based on attributes of the various programs, becomes the focus of the process, attempting to model the decision-making step noted by McGuire.

In addition to gathering an indication of the extent a respondent currently associates the attribute with his or her news program, transfer discrepancy also uses two conditional intentions in the prediction process: (1) the viewing intention under the if-true, or associative, condition is the person's intention to view a program given the attribute is associated with the news program; (2) viewing intention under the if false, or disassociative, condition is the person's intention to view the news program given the attribute is not associated with the program. This portion of the model addresses the discrepancy issue noted earlier in this paper, in a form similar to Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn's (1980) analysis of gratifications sought versus those obtained. Using subject-supplied ratings on the base line measures and the two conditional measures, if true and if false, the transfer discrepancy model sends test messages to individual viewers. This test message simulation makes two further assumptions, namely the successful reception and processing of the hypothetical attribute message by the subject. The model then statistically evaluates the predicted changes in the base viewing intention as a result of those messages.

Those viewers having maximum predicted positive viewing intention changes for a given message are then grouped into a segment. Conceptually, segments of news viewers are composed of individuals who respond similarly to a given attribute. For any individual viewer, several messages could have strong or equal effects, therefore, individuals can belong to more than one segment. This cross-over makes intuitive sense, because one individual may find two independent attributes equally attractive as reasons to increase news viewing behavior. This characteristic, non-mutually exlusive segments, may make the model inappropriate for problems desiring to form mutually exclusive segments.

Clearly, viewing intention can be changed in either a positive or negative direction, and some attributes of news will actually have little or no effect on viewing intentions. The basic mathematics of this approach are presented in the figure below.

$$\text{VIEWING INTENTION CHANGE} = \begin{cases} ab'\ (i(b)-i), & \text{if message is associated with the news program} \\ ab\ \ (i(b')-i), & \text{if message is disassociated with news news program} \end{cases}$$

WHERE:

$b$ = belief

$b'$ = $1-b$

$a$ = credibility of message source (assumed constant)

$i(b)$ = conditional "if true" or associated intention

$i(b')$ = conditional "if false" or disassociated intention

$i$ = overall or initial intention to view news program

This suggests that intention will change when there is a discrepancy between the respondent's conditional intention and the overall intention to view, with direction (positive or negative) depending upon the stronger of the two conditions. Each respondent is modelled on each attribute and assigned to an attribute segment if the predicted change is statistically significant. Once segment membership has been determined, demographic and viewing habit characteristics can be examined.

In terms of typology or segment creation, the viewing intention approach differs rather significantly from other paradigms, such as the application of uses and gratifications. The viewing intention segments are based on attributes. Viewers within the segment have one major characteristic in common; namely, that the attribute causes predicted change in intention to view television news programs.

## Procedures

In order to test the utility of the viewing intention application of the transfer discrepancy model, two target populations were selected on the basis of differences in market size, television news service characteristics, and ability to receive network evening news broadcasts: (1) Kingston, New York with about 18,000 adults, having no licensed television outlet, and (2) Springfield, Massachusetts, having about 125,000 adults, with ABC and NBC affiliates and strong penetration from the Hartford CBS affiliate. It was determined that network news would be the focus of the research in order to promote cross-population examination.

Attribute Search. In order to elicite attributes of network news from each population, 80 randomly selected subjects in each market were asked in telephone interviews, in open-ended fashion, what they liked and didn't like about network nightly news programs in general. Interviewers made an overt attempt to distinguish between network and local news programs, making clear that this survey dealt only with network evening news programs aired on weekdays. Three open-ended questions were asked of each participant, such as: "What do you like about evening network television news?" From the verbatim responses, master attribute lists were compiled and ranked by frequency , according to market. Table 1 on the following page presents a summary of the top fifteen attributes according to frequency of appearance and percentage of cross-subject duplication.

The attribute search results indicated that while seven of the top ten attributes were duplicated across markets, the free association of attributes did produce market-specific attributes for network evening news. We were surprised that subject responses were at a relatively high level of abstraction, for example, "international/world news coverage," rather than coverage of "the Iran crisis," with the latter being a more precise attribute.

TABLE 1

TOP 15 MASTER ATTRIBUTE LIST RANKED BY PERCENTAGE

| ITEM | RANK | MARKET | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. To be informed [b] | 1 | S | 37 | 54% |
| | 12 | K | 11 | 15% |
| 2. Network Talent/Personalities [a] | 2 | S | 36 | 53% |
| | 2 | K | 34 | 43% |
| 3. In-Depth/Extensive Coverage [a] | 1 | K | 36 | 45% |
| | 4 | S | 18 | 26% |
| 4. Politics/Political News [a] | 3 | K | 30 | 38% |
| | 8 | S | 12 | 18% |
| 5. International/World News [a] | 4 | K | 29 | 36% |
| | 3 | S | 23 | 34% |
| 6. Style/Format/Presentation [c] | 5 | K | 22 | 28% |
| | 17 | S | 7 | 10% |
| 7. Topic/Story Selection [c] | 6 | K | 21 | 26% |
| | - | S | -- | -- |
| 8. National News [b] | 5 | S | 15 | 22% |
| | 21 | K | 6 | 8% |
| 9. News That Effects Me/My Life [a] | 7 | K | 16 | 20% |
| | 15 | S | 7 | 10% |
| 10. Violence in News [a] | 8 | K | 16 | 20% |
| | 7 | S | 13 | 19% |
| 11. Bad/Negative News [a] | 6 | S | 13 | 19% |
| | 10 | K | 13 | 16% |
| 12. News Biased/Opinionated [a] | 9 | K | 14 | 18% |
| | 10 | S | 10 | 15% |
| 13. Feature Stories | 11 | K | 13 | 16% |
| | 18 | S | 5 | 7% |
| 14. Current News | 9 | S | 11 | 16% |
| | - | K | -- | -- |
| 15. Pictures/Visuals/Film | 13 | K | 10 | 13% |
| | 20 | S | 4 | 6% |

[a]selected for both main survey instruments
[b]selected for Springfield only
[c]selected for Kingston only

In addition, the open-ended format produced attributes that tapped gratifications (feel knowledgeable), generic content types (national news), editorial and packaging elements (story selection, visuals), newscaster variables (newscasters you enjoy watching) and other aspects of the news viewing experience ( news that affects me).[1]

Final Questionnaire Construction. Based upon pretesting in each market, it was determined that ten attributes would be optimal for the final survey. This was partially due to the subjects in the pretest situations noting the repetitious nature of the attribute questions (each being asked three times in a different way) and the pragmatic desire of the researchers to keep the average interview length to around 15 minutes.

Each final questionnaire was composed of 32 attribute items. First, the object of viewing intent, belief, and conditional viewing intention was the subject's reported intention to view any of the network nightly news programs. The viewing intention anchor for each subject was established via their response to: "Whenever possible, I watch the evening network television news." A nine-point scale was used, (see Upah and Cosmas, 1979 for details on scaling and reliability).

Second, using true/false poles, subjects were asked to respond to each of the attributes cast in statement form, for example: "The network evening news has news that affects you." As noted earlier, response to this statement provides the measure of attribute-to-program association, or (b) in the figure describing the basic model. Effectively, this is a measure of the perceived association of the attribute with television network news programs, belief, prior to casting the attributes in associative and disassociative forms. Subjects sequentially responded to each of the ten attribute statements using a nine-interval bi-polar rating scale.

Third, the nine-point scale poles were shifted to extremely likely and extremely unlikely, and subjects were asked if they would view network news if it did have the specific attribute. Representing the associative or if true condition, each of the attributes was sequentially presented, with order rotated, for example: "If network news had news that affected you, would you watch it?" Fourth, using the same scaling technique noted in step three, subjects responded to the ten attribute statements cast in the disassociative or if false condition. "If network news had no news that affected you, would you watch it?"

Finally, a brief set of demographic and viewing habit items were added to tap respondent's weekly news viewing frequency, most viewed network program, age, and sex. Although attribute items were cast in nine-point bi-polar scale form, raw data were transformed into subjective probability scores for input to the transfer discrepancy computer model. Subjective probability scores were found using the Ludke, Stauss, and Gustafson (1971) linear scale method, with the range being 0.0 to 1.0.

Sampling and Data Collection. Data collection was accomplished by telephone interviews conducted during late Spring 1980. Sample frames were composed of residential telephone numbers listed in the Kingston and Springfield metropolitan directories. Skip intervals were derived from a table of random numbers. No apriori provisions for unlisted numbers were made, although, through apparent list errors in the phone books, some subjects with unlisted numbers were reached and did complete the survey. Final sample sizes were 312 for Kingston and 300 for Springfield, yielding a pooled sample of adults, 18+ of 612.

## Viewing Intention Results

The overall news viewing intention for both samples was .815, on a scale from 0.0 (never intend to watch) to 1.0 (always intent to watch). This finding suggests that respondents in both samples generally intended to watch network evening news programs whenever possible. The average number of days viewed, per-week, was also extremely close for both samples: Kingston=3.88 days per-week and Springfield=3.86 days per-week. Overall, the samples represented viewers who reported to be moderate to heavy viewers of network evening news programs. Based on the lack of statistically significant differences across these means, the samples were merged for modelling common attributes, but market-specific attributes used only their respective samples as the base.

Viewing intention segmentation results are presented in Table 2. This table only reports those segments for which the predicted viewing intention score was statistically different from zero, using t-tests and a .05 alpha level. This was also the criterion threshold for individual viewer entry into the attribute segments. The first row of Table 2 reports the key attribute or message for a segment of viewers, thus defining the segment. In other words, segment membership is composed of viewers whose viewing intention was significantly changed, according to the model, in a positive direction by this particular attribute. The average change in viewing intention for segment members is presented in row two. In each of the samples, only five of the ten possible attributes were significant. The third line of the table indicates the percentage size of the viewing segment, using the sample n as base, either pooled or individual, as indicated by the notes. For example, the "affects you" segment contains 86 viewers or 14% of the pooled data base. All columnar data presented below the segment size percentage is based on the segment n. Intention change scores are neither additive nor cumulative as

TABLE 2

ASSOCIATIVE SIMULATION: MESSAGE-MARKET SEGMENTS FOR POOLED NEW YORK AND MASSACHUSETTS SAMPLES

| PRIMARY MESSAGE | EFFECTS YOU | FEEL KNOWLEDGEABLE[a] | CLEAR PRESENTATION[b] | INDEPTH COVERAGE | VARIETY OF TOPICS[b] | ENJOY NEWSCASTERS | NATIONAL NEWS[a] | INTERNATIONAL, WORLD NEWS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intention Change | .259 | .186 | .209 | .252 | .200 | .275 | .123 | .188 |
| Percent of Market - all | 14% | 12.3% | 11 % | 10% | 8 % | 4 % | 3 % | 1.8% |
| - Male | 42% | 35.1% | 44.1% | 51% | 61.5% | 79.2% | 33.3% | 44.5% |
| - Female | 58% | 64.9% | 55.9% | 49% | 38.5% | 20.8% | 66.7% | 54.5% |
| Age (%) | | | | | | | | |
| 18-24 | 29.1 | 21.6 | 23.5 | 19.7 | 30.8 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 36.4 |
| 25-34 | 33.7 | 21.6 | 41.2 | 29.5 | 23.1 | 33.3 | 22.2 | 9.1 |
| 35-49 | 22.1 | 27.0 | 20.6 | 29.5 | 30.8 | 16.7 | 00.0 | 18.2 |
| 50+ | 15.1 | 29.7 | 14.7 | 21.3 | 15.4 | 16.7 | 44.4 | 36.4 |
| Average Age | 34.4 yr. | 41.6 yr. | 35 yr. | 38.2 yr. | 34.5 yr. | 34.8 yr. | 42.4 yr. | 42.7 yr. |
| Viewing Time (%) | | | | | | | | |
| 0 days | 3.5 | N/A | 2.9 | 1.6 | 00.0 | 4.2 | N/A | 0.0 |
| 1 days | 16.3 | 21.6 | 17.6 | 29.5 | 38.5 | 20.8 | 11.1 | 9.1 |
| 2 days | 17.4 | 13.5 | 11.8 | 11.5 | 7.7 | 20.8 | 11.1 | 9.1 |
| 3 days | 31.4 | 18.9 | 38.2 | 26.2 | 19.2 | 29.2 | 22.2 | 45.5 |
| 4 days | 15.1 | 27.0 | 8.8 | 21.3 | 23.1 | 8.3 | 33.3 | 9.1 |
| 5 days | 16.3 | 18.9 | 20.6 | 9.8 | 11.5 | 16.7 | 22.2 | 27.3 |
| Average Days | 2.87 days | 3.08 days | 2.94 days | 2.66 days | 2.62 days | 2.67 days | 3.44 days | 3.36 days |
| Initial Viewing Intention | .543 | .574 | .570 | .537 | .462 | .419 | .708 | .614 |

[a]Denotes Massachusetts Sample
[b]Denotes New York Sample

presented in the table, however, for a given segment one can add the predicted change to the segment's initial viewing intention average, presented at the bottom of each column, to determine the predicted viewing intention as a result of hypothetical, successful promotion of the attribute to segment members. Table 2, then, summerizes data relevant to the first research question, that of identifying attributes that can be associated with increases in intentions to view network nightly news. Each of the segments are briefly described below.

News That Affects You. The attribute defining the largest audience segment, in both surveys, was "news that affects you." This attribute conceptually refers to the coverage of news that has a direct impact on viewer's lives and the interpretation of key national and international stories with regard to potential impact on the average citizen, as suggested by the detailed results of the attribute search. This finding is not particularly surprising. The notions of proximity as a news value and localizing are rather common practices in broadcast news. While localizing may not be a prime option at the network level, there is a clear suggestion that more global events might be presented or interpreted with regard to their potential impact on individuals.

Viewers defined by this segment tended to following the overall sample splits with regard to sex, but tended toward younger viewers and respondents with moderate viewing levels.[2] About half of the segment members, 48.8%, were ABC viewers, 24.4% were CBS viewers, and 26.8% were NBC viewers. This segment was based on pooled data.

Feel Knowledgeable and Clear Presentation. The second most important attributes were survey specific. For the Springfield sample, the "feel knowledgeable" attribute, defining a 12.3% segment, tapped the notion that network evening news makes viewers feel generally knowledgeable about news events. This attribute is similar to uses and gratifications statements

tapping information seeking dimensions. As noted in Table 2, segment membership was primarily composed of female viewers and older viewers, evidencing a moderate initial viewing intention, .574, and the third highest average days per-week viewed, 3.08. The segment was equally populated with ABC and NBC viewers, 37.8% each, with 24.3% reported to be regular CBS viewers.

For Kingston respondents, the "clear presentation" attribute, defining an 11% segment of the Kingston sample, referenced the clear packaging and writing of news. While basically following the male/female sample split, this segment had a slightly higher average age, but was heavily populated with individuals in the 25-34 age bracket. This segment had the second highest weekly viewing average and the second highest initial viewing intention of the five significant Kingston survey attributes. CBS viewers accounted for 44.1% of this segment, ABC viewers 26.5% and NBC viewers 29.4%.

Indepth Coverage. "Indepth coverage" was the third largest segment for each sample, hence pooled, defining an overall segment of 10%. This attribute seemed to reference the perceived depth, detail, and length of individual news items. Since respondents in the attribute search mentioned the in-depth news features on the network programs, such as ABC's "Special Assignment" stories, this may also indicate, at least partially, a positive response to such detailed news coverage. Segment membership was evenly split between male and female respondents and was heavy in the middle age ranges, 25-49. Respondents in this segment were comparatively light news viewers, averaging 2.66 days per-week, but evidenced moderate initial viewing intention, averaging .537. In terms of network viewership, there was a relatively even split with ABC viewers accounting for 34.4% of the segment, CBS viewers 31.1%, and NBC viewers 34.5%.

Enjoyable Newscasters. The presence or absence of newscasters the viewers enjoy watching was an attribute defining a 4% pooled segment. This small segment size is relatively surprising, considering the importance accorded news talent in both public and private research and the popular press. Interestingly, this segment was predominantly male. The Kingston segment was basically younger, lighter viewers with lower initial viewing intentions, while the Springfield segment was more evenly split across age ranges with slightly heavier viewing patterns and much stronger initial viewing intention scores. In the pooled data, this attribute showed the highest intention change score. ABC viewers accounted for 62.5% of this segment, CBS viewers 12.5%, and NBC viewers 25.0%.

Variety of Topics and National News. For the Kingston sample, "variety of topics," suggesting breadth of network news editorial content, was a market-specific attribute defining 8% of the Kingston respondents. These were primarily younger, male viewers, having comparatively low weekly news viewing levels and base viewing intentions. Network viewership was about evenly split with 30.8% being ABC viewers, 34.6% CBS, and 34.6% NBC.

National news coverage, referencing both Washington D.C. news and news events around the nation, was an attribute defining a 3% segment of the Springfield sample. The age split was bi-modal, with 33% under 24 years and 44% over 50 years of age. This segment contained the heaviest viewers in terms of average initial viewing intention and average days viewed per-week. About 68% were female. ABC viewers dominated the segment, 62.5%, with CBS and NBC equally represented with 22.2% each. This segment evidenced the lowest predicted viewing intention change, which is reasonable since they were already heavy viewers averaging 3.44 days and the upper bound being five days.

International/World News. The last significant attribute, "international and world news" defined a pooled segment of almost 2%. The sex split was similar to that of the pooled data and the average age was the highest of all segments, 42.7.

This segment evidenced the second highest initial viewing intention, .614, and the second highest average days viewed per-week, 3.36. It also had the second lowest predicted intention change score. It was dominated by CBS viewers, 54.5%, with ABC viewers accounting for 27.3% and NBC viewers 18.2%. This attribute seemed to reference network evening news coverage of international events in general, which, like national news, seems almost a necessary defining characteristic of the program genre.

Forecasted Increases in Viewing. The third research question addressed the degree of intention to view change produced by various program attributes. An examination of the base intention averages and the change scores in Table 2 does provide a basic response to this question, however, these scores are more readily interpreted when transformed into projected increases in days-viewed. For the pooled data, the intention to watch network news, whenever possible, was positively correlated ( 0.633, p. <.001) with the number of days the subject reported viewing network nightly news. In order to transform viewing intention increases into forecasted days viewed, perhaps a clearer index, a simple regression was computed with the unstandardized regression formula being: Forecasted Days = 1.45+2.97(intention). Table 3 summerizes the predictions for the data in terms of Forecasted Viewing Intention, Viewing Days (base) and Increase in Viewing Days as a function of individual attributes successfully cast in promotional messages.

The results indicate that the greatest increase in days of network news viewed will be generated by the top-five attributes. Thus, while the model does not currently provide predictions based on a collection of attributes, (e.g., "affects you," "indepth coverage," and "national news") it is relatively safe to assume that any combination of the top attributes will produce a stronger effect than the promotion of any single attribute.

TABLE 3

FORECASTED VIEWING INTENTION, VIEWING DAYS, AND INCREASE IN VIEWING DAYS AS A FUNCTION OF PERSUASIVE MESSAGES

| MESSAGE | BASE INTENTION | CHANGE INTENTION | NEW INTENTION | INITIAL DAYS VIEW | FORECASTED DAYS VIEW | DAYS VIEW INCREASE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Affects you | .543 | .259 | .862 | 2.87 | 4.01 | 1.14 |
| Indepth Coverage | .537 | .252 | .789 | 2.66 | 3.79 | 1.13 |
| Enjoy Newscasters | .419 | .275 | .694 | 2.67 | 3.51 | .84 |
| Clear Presentation | .570 | .209 | .779 | 2.94 | 3.76 | .82 |
| Variety of Topics | .462 | .200 | .662 | 2.62 | 3.42 | .80 |
| Feel Knowledgeable | .574 | .186 | .760 | 3.08 | 3.70 | .63 |
| National News | .708 | .123 | .831 | 3.44 | 3.92 | .48 |
| International/ World News | .614 | .188 | .802 | 3.36 | 3.83 | .47 |

Summary Attribute Results. Table 4 presents the profile across surveys and attributes for all attribute items included in this study. This particular modelling selected only those with significant positive effects on viewing intention. Lack of significance, according to the transfer discrepancy model, is not an indication that audience members fail to accord importance to the attribute. It simply indicates that promotional association of the attribute with the news program will not yield significantly higher predicted viewing intentions. There are two other possible interpretations for the non-significant attributes. Attributes can have no significant positive or negative effect, or they could have a significant negative effect on viewing intention if they were disassociated with the program, for example; "program X does not cover national news." These options must be probed in further analysis of this data and with appropriate modifications to the computer program.

## DISCUSSION

This research discovered eight network television news attributes that produced significant positive increases in viewing intention for individual viewer segments; four attributes spanned the two samples and four were sample specific. We would presume, that based on these results, promotional messages stressing the attributes "news that affects you," "indepth coverage," "newscasters you enjoy," and "international/world news coverage," would produce significant positive changes in network news viewing intentions across the populations surveyed. Population or market-specific attributes, such as "feel knowledgeable" and "variety of topics" were also predicted to produce increases. Attribute importance should not be judged on the magnitude of predicted viewing increase alone, but also in terms of the audience size, segment percentage of the sample. For example, the highest intention change was produced by the "newscasters" attribute, but it was significant for only 4% of the subjects, about 25 people out of 612. The "affects

TABLE 4

ATTRIBUTE SUMMARY RESULTS

| ATTRIBUTE | KINGSTON Rank | KINGSTON Segment % | SPRINGFIELD Rank | SPRINGFIELD Segment % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| News that Affects You | 1 | 12% | 1 | 16% |
| Feel Knowledgeable | -- | -- | 2 | 12% |
| Clear Presentation | 2 | 11% | -- | -- |
| Indepth Coverage | 3 | 10% | 3 | 10% |
| Variety of Topics | 4 | 8% | -- | -- |
| Newscasters You Enjoy | 5 | 4% | 4 | 4% |
| National News Coverage | -- | -- | 5 | 3% |
| Crime/Violent News | -- | NS | -- | NS |
| Biased/Unbiased | -- | NS | -- | NS |
| Bad News | -- | NS | -- | NS |
| Political Coverage | -- | NS | -- | NS |
| International/World News* | -- | NS | -- | NS |

*While not significant in individual samples, the pooled data for this attribute did reach a significant level.

you" attribute, with a relatively high intention change score was significant for 14%, or about 86 viewers.

The attribute results of this research also support the findings of other news audience researchers, with regard to the perceived importance of detailed coverage, the viewing feeling informed by the newscast, the importance of newscasters and talent, and the presentation of news that has impact on viewers lives. Similar attributes have been uncovered in audience judgment and credibility studies (Markham, 1968 and Smith, 1977) and in uses and gratifications research (Levy, 1978 and Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn, 1980). From a more pragmatic perspective, the results of this study underscore the potential increase in importance of indepth coverage of news events and translation of the impact or importance of even national and international level stories to the lives of the viewers, when possible. These findings also suggested that "newscasters" alone may not be strong enough motivation to change viewing habits for a large portion of the audience. Further, that national and international news coverage, at least for the network programs referenced, have become accepted points of definition of the genre of evening network news, hence their promotion may not alone yield increased viewing intention.

From a different theoretical perspective, these results also tend to support the viability of a discrepancy-based approach to analyzing audience dynamics, previously advocated by Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn (1980). The viewing intention application provides a rather unique method for examining the crucial link between the importance a viewer accords a network television news attribute and how that viewer thinks the presence or absence of the attribute actually influences personal news viewing behavior. For example, while a person may feel there is too much "crime and violence" and too much "political coverage," both found to be non-significant in terms of producing viewing intention increases, these attributes may have little potential impact on their viewing habits.

The second research question addressed the utility of this viewing intention approach regarding audience segmentation. This approach is clearly different from the general uses and gratification typologies and the marketing-oriented segmentation schemes of television viewing represented by Frank and Greenberg(1980). In this study, viewer segments or groups were composed exclusively of respondents who would, based on the modelling procedure, increase their viewing intentions given specific program attribute-based messages. This strategy provides indicies of both the power of the attribute to positively change viewing intentions and the relative size of the group most effected. Thus, the approach offers policv-makers data relevant to television news attribute importance and a hypothetical look at the performance of that attribute within a viewer decision-making context.

With regard to the variables employed to describe segment membership, network viewed, age, and so on, we noted several patterns. Typically, younger viewers were more likely to indicate greater viewing intention changes in response to the presence or absence of certain attributes. These viewers watched network evening news less frequently than did the average sample viewer. While these variables and their values across segments were valuable aids in characterizing the segments, future studies should clearly explore a larger pool of variables, including demographic, lifestyle-psychographic, and viewing habits.

Non-mutually exclusive segment membership is both a positive and negative consideration. Conceptually, it seems defensible in that one viewer may be persuaded by more than one attribute or message, but pragmatically, some research problems may require the creation of mutually exclusive segments. A more important consideration is that the viewing intention model, as applied in this study, did not account for all viewers surveyed. Do those "other" viewers represent a status quo sub-set of the population, who, for various reasons will not change their viewing habits? Are there large negative change segments? These issues should be addressed in further applications of the model to news viewing analysis.

Certainly this model requires the satisfaction of a number of assumptions, via its base in information processing, not the least of which are the assumed reception, retention, and integration of the attribute-based messages by the viewers. But, one clear advantage of this model, is that the results generated can be verified via field experiments. Stations or networks could actually make appropriate editorial changes, produce promotional messages, and track segment viewing levels. This is obviously one of the next steps in the logical evaluation of the model's reliability and predictive capabilities.

This initial application of the viewing intention approach and the transfer discrepancy model to the analysis of television news audience dynamics has shown promise in responding to both the theoretical and pragmatic concerns of academic and applied researchers. In the applied area, this type of data might be used by television news personnel as a diagnostic tool or as guide in the preparation of promotional messages for the program. Future academic research might concentrate on the examination of a broader pool of program attributes, viewing habits, viewer lifestyles, and demographic characteristics. Opportunities for integrating this approach with basic uses and gratifications strategies should also be explored. The extension of this model may make contributions to our understanding of the complex dynamics of news media consumption, helping to link attitudes and predicted behaviors.

## NOTES

1. Additional information on: the attribute search phase, questionnaire construction, reliabilities, and other descriptive statistics were omitted from this paper to conserve space, but are available from the authors upon request.

2. Pooled sample profiles were: Initial Viewing Intention =0.815; Days Per-Week Viewed = 3.87; Average Age = 44.3 years; Sex, Male=41% Female=59%.

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