

**This Just In... reports are a quick summary of new health marketing and communication research and trends. These brief “nuggets” spotlight new findings with communication practice implications for CDC and its public health partners.**

Brought to you by the Marketing and Communication Strategy Branch in the Division of Health Communication and Marketing, National Center for Health Marketing, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

## Landmark research study from MTV Networks and Harris Interactive, pioneering a new way for advertising brands to target the “most engaged and valuable audiences”

**Research objective:** As media touch-points have multiplied for consumers during the past decade, many producers and marketers have struggled to understand the factors driving audience engagement with brands and programming in this multiplatform environment that includes television, online and mobile devices. The primary objective of this study was to determine if there are metrics of engagement across consumer touch-points that explain, from a consumer-centric point of view, why and how behaviors are what they are. A secondary purpose was to assess their impact on content and advertising reception.

**Methods:** More than 20,000 Harris Poll Online Panelists between the ages of 13 and 49 participated in evaluating MTV Network programs, competitive programs, networks, and websites. Engagement metrics identified in a 2007 study of “The Hills” were used. These engagement metrics included responses to specific advertising on “The Hills,” on television, online, and on multiple behaviors such as seeking and generating information regarding the program and various online behaviors both on and off MTV properties. “The Hills” is an MTV reality program that follows the lives of several young people living in Los Angeles, California. The program first premiered on May 31, 2006.

**Findings:** The findings reveal that some viewers are significantly more engaged with the content than others. These viewers with higher engagement are more likely to remember seeing an ad, internalize the message, and be motivated by it to share more about the content and advertising when compared with those that are less engaged. This translates into increased purchase intent (up to two- and three-times) among viewers for brands that advertise in engagement rich environments.

The findings suggest that it is content that draws the consumer; so some level of emotional connection exists in order to get the viewer to watch. Taking the next step, moving from television to online, not only requires increased emotional connection, but requires an enhanced sense of “fit” with the program (match between consumer interest and program content) for their entertainment needs. The better the fit, the more likely the viewer is to cross platforms and to seek or generate information regarding the program.

Also, the study identified the most desirable type of viewer, known as “Generators”—super fans who talk about the show in person and by Instant Messaging (IM) and texting. They read blogs, write in them, and create avatars for virtual worlds. The perceived fit with a television program increases two-and-a-half times among the Generators.

### *Practice implications for health marketers and communication professionals*

This research will impact advertisers and marketers in many ways as they assess the importance of engaging consumers through multiple channels. Advancing technologies, especially Web-based, are altering consumers’ relationships with brands, particularly among those whom are most tightly engaged with the program. While television is still the biggest driver of brand awareness, multi-platform media campaigns perform at double to triple the effectiveness of a single platform. Simply said, the value of television advertising grows as viewers connect with marketing messages across screens. Along this vein, marketers could increase the reach and frequency of health messages with a communication strategy that encompasses traditional and new media distributing messages on television, the Web, and via e-mails and text messages.

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