

The DVR Factor

Chances are good that if you have a cable service, you also have a DVR (digital video recorder). In fact, according to a Nielsen study, quoted in Mashable.com (here), the use of DVRs increased five-fold from 2006 to 2011. It seems that of all the devices connected to our TV, we use the DVR the most.



HD DVR photo by Apalapala on Flickr

Like the VCR of yore, the DVR lets you record a show for viewing at your convenience. Perhaps you are at work during the latest episode of Dr. Phil or you have to attend a family gathering during the Oscars. And unlike the VCR, DVRs use hard disk space, giving you hundreds of hours of recording time. A DVR would have been a tremendous help to me during the last episode of Felicity back in the 90s, which due to a VCR glitch, did not record and I never was able to watch it (but I digress).

Yesterday's New York Times has an article that says the networks are now blaming the DVR for weaker ratings (although weaker shows may be more to blame).

There is no doubt that DVRs are affecting how we view TV. One immediate effect for most people is that we no longer view the commercials thanks to the fast forward button. Does this mean that advertisers should re-evaluate whether to even have TV commercials in the advertising mix? Well, yes, they should.

Clearly, relying on TV commercials, especially on shows that people tend to record (perhaps daytime shows or late night shows), is a risky proposition.

However, keep in mind that fast forward does not mean delete. You have to watch the screen while you are fast forwarding, so an intriguing commercial may actually catch your eye and make you hit play.

The DVR Factor is that forgettable or boring commercials will not attract attention anymore, and will even be ignored. On the other hand, interesting and creative commercials will stand out and perhaps even be more memorable and effective.

We are surrounded by advertising—much of which we can skip or ignore. But we still pay attention to advertising messages that resonate with us, whether because they are eye-catching or interesting.

What do you think? Do you watch ads at all?