



## Marketing Messages

**MARY CHARLESON**

### *Marketing budgets not keeping up with digital media consumption*

Last month we looked at how the digital video recorder (DVR) was changing the rules of the TV advertising game. This month we take a more in depth look at numerous technology driven activities that have proliferated modern day life, to measure the impact on marketing efforts.

We looked at the time spent social networking online, visiting virtual worlds, writing emails, blogging, talking on a cell phone, video gaming, watching DVD's, going to movies, watching TV, reading, and listening to music. We wanted to get a sense of where people were spending more, the same or less time on these activities compared to a year ago. **TNS Canadian Facts** conducted the research through a cross Canada panel of 1,000 respondents in February 2008.

Overall, there were three things we are doing more of: social networking, writing emails and listening to music. Although there were variations across demographic groups, all of these areas experienced an increase. There are two things we are doing less of: blogging and watching TV.

37% of females and 28% of males said they were spending more time social networking online. There was a definite youth skew to the results. 51% of those 18-24, and 42% of those 25-34 years old said they were doing more of this activity. In BC 27% were spending more time social networking.

33% of females and 29% of males said they were spending more time writing emails. The majority, 54% said they were spending the same amount of time on this activity as they had a year ago. The number of people spending more time stayed relatively consistent across age groups. Perhaps BC is a little more relaxed after all since 25% here reported spending more time with this activity compared to 38% spending more time in Ontario.

Although cell phone use was about the same for the majority of groups, one group stood out. 31% of those 18-24 years old reported spending more time on this activity.

Listening to music was on the increase. Overall 26% of respondents reported spending more time on this activity. Again youth stood out. 44% of those 18-24 reported spending more time with this activity.

Overall 72% of respondents said they had never blogged. 11% said they were doing less, 8% said they were doing the same, and 4% said they were doing more.

Although 61% overall said they were watching the same amount of TV, only 15% said they were watching more, and 22% said they were watching less. 28% of those 18-24 years old were watching more TV. This was the only group with a significant increase in viewing habits. However, it is still the older demographic, those over 50 years, who are watching the most TV overall.

So what does it all mean for marketers? While we may be spending less time watching TV, we appear to be shifting our habits towards online activities such as social networking and emailing as well as listening to digital music obtained online. Although the shift is most dramatic for younger audiences, consumers across all demographics are increasing the amount of time they spend consuming digital media. But marketing budgets have been slow to align with consumer habits. Forrester Research estimates that the average North American spends 20-30% of their media consumption time in digital channels. Yet, they report that ad agencies on average spend approximately 12% of budgets on digital media. Marketing budgets appear to be out of line with consumer habits.

The story to grasp here is that the growth in the amount of time spent with digital media is real and will continue to grow over time. Many businesses are recognizing this and changing their advertising and marketing allocations accordingly, but a gap still exists.

*Mary Charleson, President of Charleson Communications, is a marketing strategist, speaker, and consultant. She writes monthly and can be reached at [mary@charleson.ca](mailto:mary@charleson.ca)*