

Measuring Engagement

*A paper prepared for the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) by
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Engagement Vs. Marriage

‘Engagement’ is currently a favorite buzz-word among marketers, advertisers, media, event organizers and promoters. While the more savvy have a thorough understanding of its role in the communication process, there’s always the risk that others will respond the way they did in the ‘70s to ‘*Positioning*’ and the ‘80’s to ‘*Relationship Marketing*’ – ‘*Whatever it is, I want some!*’

This paper is designed to put the current focus on ‘engagement’ into a broader context and research framework, demonstrated by various examples of different measurement tools, including the results of a recent pilot study on Event Engagement.

Roy Morgan International has been studying and conducting research in and around the field of ‘Engagement’ for decades. It was a core part of our business, long before we applied the label ‘*Engagement*’.

So what is ‘Engagement’? As it applies to matrimony, ‘*Engagement*’ is a stepping stone to *marriage*. In the marketing sense: ‘*Engagement*’ is a stepping stone to *preference* (whether preference for a channel, program, event or brand).

Just as it’s a sad fact that engagement is no guarantee of marriage, engaging an audience is no guarantee that they will be persuaded to prefer whatever is being offered. On the other hand, it’s a virtual certainty that every marriage was preceded by an engagement (no matter how short or long). And we similarly contend that it’s virtually impossible to persuade an audience to any point of view without engaging them along the way.

Measuring Engagement with Media, Advertising and Brands

Roy Morgan International measures ‘Engagement’ for different audiences and purposes in different ways:

Media (publishers, broadcasters, event organisers etc) need to do two things:

- A. understand how to engage their audience so they continue to read/watch/listen/visit and tell their friends
- B. have the evidence to demonstrate to their sponsors, agencies and advertisers that their mediums provide good vehicles within which their advertising can achieve brand persuasion

Agencies need to understand which mediums (vehicles) have the greatest power to engage their client’s specific audience, providing the most relevant, synergistic environment.

Advertisers need to understand whether their ads have engaged the target audience and persuaded them to the brand.

Roy Morgan International’s key tools, technologies and methodologies that relate to ‘Engagement’ are:

1. TV Monitor
2. The Reactor
3. Natural Exposure
4. Live Exposure

1. TV Monitor (Attention and Involvement) measures viewers’ engagement with the program

The changes to communications channels that are now in play are the most dramatic since the advent of television. Not only are advertisers faced with the fragmentation of audiences, the persuasive potency of television for advertisers is in slow decline.

However, because television still delivers the biggest chunks of audience, major marketers will continue to use the medium. Their challenge will be to overcome the diminishing *engagement* of TV audiences with programs and commercial messages.

Roy Morgan International realises that advertising effectiveness cannot be adequately predicted just by measuring audience numbers. Those audiences are becoming increasingly conditioned to filtering out unwanted messages. We need to understand the **quality** of the media contact and how the environment can affect the viewer’s propensity to process (and respond to) the commercial message.

The key to maximising TV budgets is therefore, understanding how the program vehicle is **valued** by an audience and how those values then affect the attention they pay to advertising.

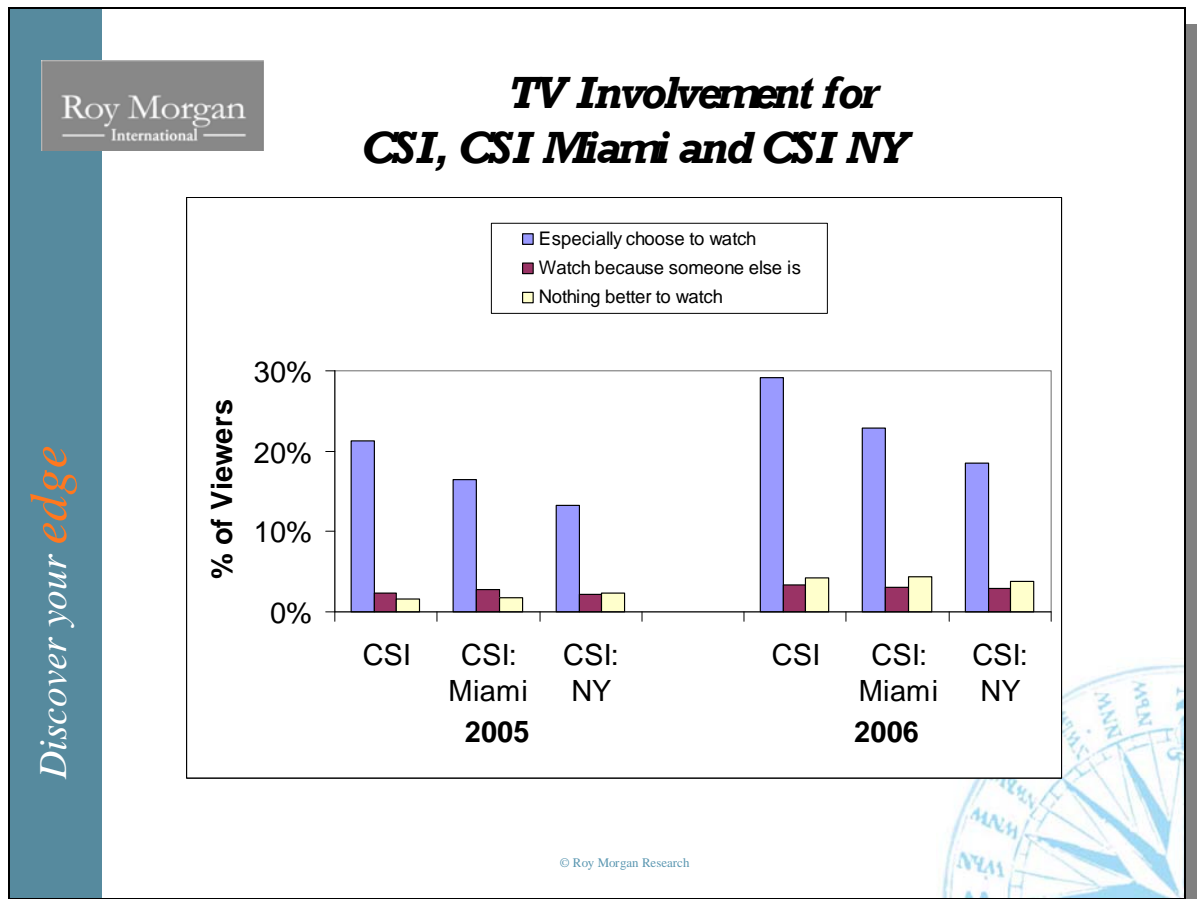
Engagement with television channels and programs has been measured with the *TV Monitor* system through the Roy Morgan Single Source survey since 1999 and is now used by the majority of Australian television networks. The *TV Monitor* system measures viewer engagement at the program level, expressed in terms of *Attention* and *Involvement* with each program on air by day of the week and time slot.

Roy Morgan Single Source is based on the simple premise that if you want to know everything about your target market, it is critical that you interview people within your target market and put all your questions to them. The TV Monitor draws on all aspects of the Single Source survey including media analysis, segmentation by geography, life-stage, psychographics, life aspirations, consumer attitudes, consumer spending patterns and choices.

Included in the media information are three key engagement metrics based on the program/network:

<i>1. Involvement Level</i>	<i>2. Attention Level</i>	<i>3. Attitude to program</i>
• Especially choose to watch	• A lot	• <i>I really love the program</i>
• Watch because someone else is	• Some	
• Nothing better to watch	• Not Much	

Following is an example of how we track the engagement of thousands of television viewers for the triple hit CBS TV series *CSI*, *CSI Miami* and *CSI NY*. These are the figures for 2005 and 2006. We have chosen this example because it demonstrates the strength of these series with a strong increase in the proportion of viewers watching any of the 3 CSI programs when there's 'Nothing better on'.



Source: USA Roy Morgan Single Source

2. The Reactor measures engagement/likeability/involvement

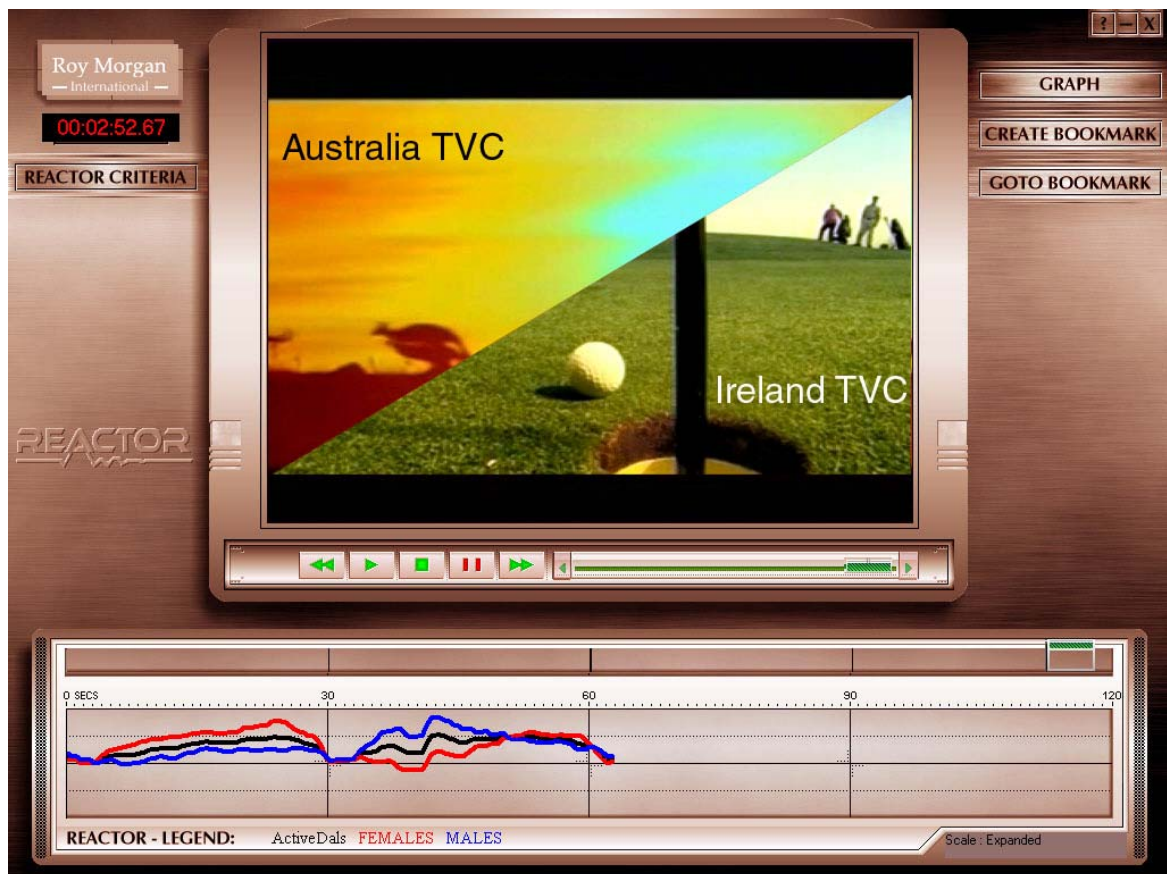
The Reactor tracks respondents' emotional responses (likeability, interest and involvement) on a second by second basis as they watch a video which, depending on the study, may be a whole movie, a TV show, a series of TV commercials, edited highlights of an event or even print ads, pictures, copy lines and web pages.

Respondents use the *Reactor Slider-bar* to record how positively or negatively they feel about what they are seeing and hearing. Their second-by-second *reactions* are captured in real time by the *Reactor* software and average scores (between 0 and 100) can be displayed as a graph (or numerous graphs of different segment groups), synchronised with the original video to which they were *Reacting*.

The example below shows how differently males (red) and females (blue) reacted to two different tourism television commercials. The 'Australia' commercial (the 1st 30 seconds) featured Australian female singer Delta Goodrem with pretty, soft pastel, artistic pictures, while the 'Ireland' commercial (the 2nd 30 seconds) primarily featured men drinking in bars and playing golf. When you see the commercials in their entirety, it's not surprising that **males found the commercial for Australia less engaging than females**, and vice versa.

This study was conducted online and provided a wide selection of graphs by country, demographics, psychographics plus travel history and propensity.

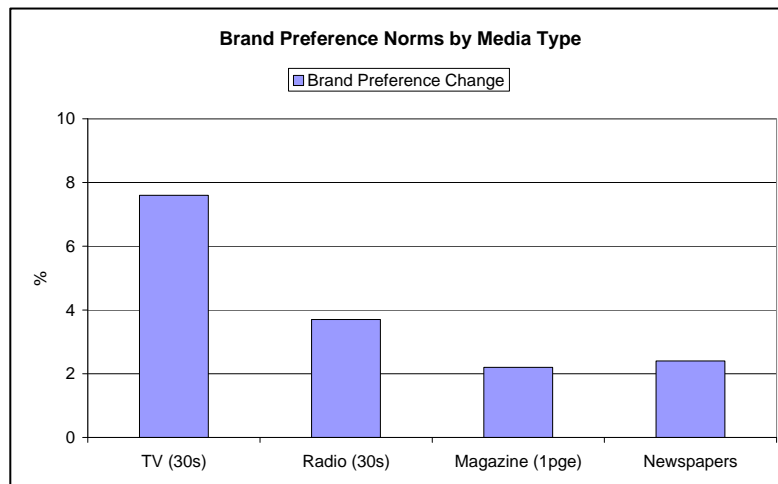
Through experience, we learn how to more accurately interpret results. For example, **Japanese audiences generally have lower average engagement scores than Americans**. The scores, however, need to be considered in the light of American people generally being more demonstrable, especially with their emotional *reactions*, than Japanese people who, culturally, tend to be more reserved.



Source: Roy Morgan International

3. Natural Exposure measures persuasion

The *Natural Exposure* methodology developed by our US based advertising communications research firm Mapes and Ross, has been used for more than 30 years to measure persuasion (shifts in brand preference) as a result of the audience's engagement with brands and messages due to their exposure to advertising (in its natural environment). Thousands of *Natural Exposure* tests show different levels of persuasion for different types of media (TV, Radio, Magazines, Newspapers and Trade Journals); different kinds of advertising; different product categories and for different people for whom the product, message or advertising has different levels of relevance* .



Source: Mapes and Ross (a division of Roy Morgan International)

The *Natural Exposure* Brand Preference questions determine whether consumers have **changed** their preferences for a brand as a result of exposure to the Event.

The respondent is exposed to the advertising in its natural environment (eg, within the pages of a magazine or one of several television commercials in an ad break within an appropriate program or as part of the event). Respondents are not asked to concentrate on the advertising and are expecting to be questioned on the program or event itself.

Consequently, *Natural Exposure* gives a true measure of an advertisement's ability to attract the audience's attention and engage them with the message in a relevant, meaningful way, so as to achieve an increase in preference for the brand. (Obviously, this measure cannot be accurately achieved by other ad testing methodologies which draw the respondent's attention to the material being tested.)

It's worth emphasising that *Natural Exposure* is the *acid test*. The material being tested can receive no help from a moderator, its position in a list, other respondents or the respondent's anxiousness to be 'helpful'. And, quite obviously, there's a world of difference between traditional measures of advertising like 'recall' or even 'message take-out' and an increased propensity to prefer the brand (persuasion).

The following questions are asked prior to exposure to the advertising and again, usually one day after exposure. The same questions are asked in relation to a number of different

* Levine 2006, [Media Neutral Analysis of Key Advertising Media](#) IIR Telecommunications Marketing Conference, Melbourne Australia

categories. This helps avoid any specific emphasis that might influence the respondent's answers.

Q1. Thinking about brands of [Category] " _____ " do you feel that there is:

a) One Brand of " _____ " that is the very best
"Which one do you feel is best?"

b) No single Brand of " _____ " is best, but 2 or 3 are better than others.
"Which 2 or 3 do you feel are better than others?"

c) Or do you feel that all brands of " _____ " are about the same?

Q2. What brand of " _____ " would you like to try?

Clearly, the slightest positive movement between the Pre and Post results is highly significant.

The following chart shows the kinds of shifts the methodology measures:

Example data only

Shifts in Persuasion can occur at different levels.

	Pre-exposure Mentions	Post-exposure Mentions	Change to Test Brand
<i>Best brand</i>	10.4%	14.4%	+ 4%
<i>One of the better 2 or 3 brands</i>	8.9%	11.4%	+ 2.5%
<i>Like to try brand</i>	2.6%	6.6%	+ 4%
TOTAL Persuasion	21.9%	32.4%	+ 10.5%

• The change in brand preference is benchmarked against norms

Persuasion shifted +10.5% pre to post exposure

The brand preference question has been sales validated[†] and is an extremely reliable measure for determining whether advertising (**in any medium**) is persuasive (positively or negatively) for the brand. Our data has proven a direct link between brand preference and actual buying behaviour.

It is fair to say our primary focus of *Natural Exposure* is on measuring the end goal - *persuasion* (correlated with sales) - rather than teasing out the instrumental or explanatory variable – *engagement*.

[†] Journal of Advertising Research; Journal of Advertising Research Classics: Eight Key Articles that have led our thinking.

5. Live Exposure measures both persuasion to the brand and engagement with the experience

Event Engagement measurement requires a multi-measure approach, as Events by nature involve the *interaction* between multiple variables including the Event itself (type, size, location, experience etc.), the brand (its idea, its equity etc.) and how the consumer *engages* with each of these.

The *Live Exposure* methodology which draws upon our many years of specialised experience in measuring brand, satisfaction, events, media and advertising. It combines three proven methodologies (*Natural Exposure*, *Event Advocacy*, and *The Reactor*) to measure the ‘engagement’ of the consumer with the brand and the event. The metrics used recognise that ‘engagement’ occurs at both a rational or cognitive level as well as at the emotional level.

In *Live Exposure*, the impact that Brand Advertising or Brand Sponsorship of an event has on the brand is measured via the *Natural Exposure* Pre/Post Brand Preference questions.

Event Engagement is determined through an Event Advocacy Score and *Reactor* Engagement Scores which are recorded after the event.

Event participants *re-live* the event by watching video highlights using the *Reactor* to record how they instinctively feel about what they are seeing and hearing. Measurement of different types of events shows a wide range of Likeability Scores and Engagement Scores depending on the type event.

Natural Exposure

The pre/post *Natural Exposure* methodology and the *Natural Exposure* **Brand Preference** questions are at the heart of *Live Exposure*. Before respondents are ‘exposed’ to the event they are asked their brand preferences in a short (Pre-event) questionnaire. After the event, respondents complete a short online (Post-event) survey which asks their brand preferences again and an Event Advocacy question. Usually, the online survey also includes a *Reactor* session.

Recently, Roy Morgan International conducted a *Live Exposure* Pilot Study. We measured the change in brand preference for the four major sponsor brands before the event and then after the event. Before, during and after the event, the principal sponsor, Dr Pepper, engaged in far more advertising and marketing activity than the other three sponsors.

The following table shows that the event worked for all sponsors and that Dr Pepper experienced the greater preference change. (This is not surprising given the significant media exposure and event based marketing activity.)

	Dr. Pepper	Aquafina	Geico	Food Lion
Pre- mentions	26.3%	26.3%	15.8%	5.3%
Post- mentions	52.6%	36.8%	31.6%	21.1%
Brand Preference Change	+26.3%	+10.5%	+15.8%	+15.8%

Event Advocacy

In measuring the event itself as a medium, an Event Advocacy question - '*Would you go again or recommend the event to a friend*' - is asked in the Post-event survey. The Event Advocacy question has been derived from our customer satisfaction work and the use of an advocacy measure is increasingly accepted as being a combination of the emotional response and rational assessment of the 'customer experience' or relationship.

It is our contention that this single advocacy question is at least as effective as any other question in determining a respondent's level of *Engagement* with an event. While it may be possible that a respondent would like to attend again or recommend it to a friend without having felt *engaged*, to a large degree, it is highly unlikely.

The Reactor

Since 1993, we have been using our *Reactor* methodology to measure audience engagement, interest and involvement with all kinds of live events, from political debates to exhibitions and conferences. Engagement with the Event is measured with the *Reactor* second-by-second *reaction* tracking technology.

After completing the Post-event online survey, respondents watch video footage of highlights of the event and use the *Reactor* to record how they instinctively feel (primarily Likeability) about what they are seeing and hearing. The images and sounds enable people to recall how they felt *during* the event and, consequently, respond to images while they 're-live' the event.

Measuring real-time emotional responses to the event, the *Reactor* captures the following:

- *Interest or likeability* – this is the average Liking score
- *Involvement* – this is a calculation of the frequency and range of *Reactor* dial movements. (The rationale is that, generally, the more involved people are, the more they actively respond to the stimulus.)

The recent pilot study mentioned earlier was a College Football Championship Event in Jacksonville, Florida. The major sponsor, Dr Pepper, held a promotion at half time. The *Reactor* graph (below) shows that the *Dr Pepper Half Time Throw* segment scored higher on Likeability than the rest of the edited highlights of the game itself.

Roy Morgan International

REACTOR

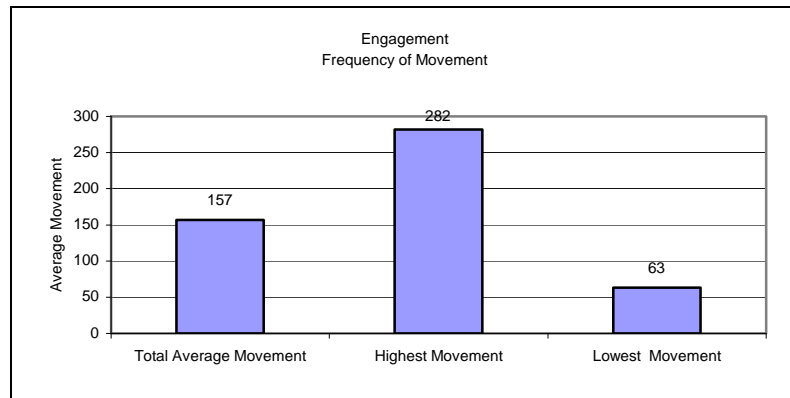
REACTOR is a product of Roy Morgan Research

Discover your edge

Dr Pepper Half-time Throw scores higher than the rest of the game.

© Roy Morgan Research

The chart below shows that there was a wide variation in the number of dial movements made by respondents. The *Reactor* records the dial position four times per second. On average respondents made 157 dial movements throughout the duration of the video, while some respondents made as many as 282 dial movements, others moved the dial as few 63 times.



Follow the link to www.roymorgan.com/Graphics/Reactor/Microsoft.wmv to view an example of a Reactor project (2 minutes of a conference speech by Ms. Karen Worstell, Chief Information Security Officer, Microsoft Corporation USA at the Microsoft Executive Summit 2005).

Is Engagement the Holy Grail?

The importance of 'Engagement' cannot be overstated. But it's hardly an objective in itself. It's a step along the way to capturing the hearts and minds of an audience – for the medium/event, in the hope they'll come back again and bring their friends – for the advertiser/sponsor, in the hope of increasing preference, so more of them will purchase the brand.

The critical question is: 'Are these end objectives likely to be achieved *without* engagement?' And the answer is 'no'. 'Engagement' is, almost invariably, an indispensable ingredient in the communication process that makes the critical difference:

It's the difference between people 'hearing' your radio commercial and 'listening' to it.

The difference between a TV program being 'on' and your target market being 'into' the program.

The difference between attending an event and feeling part of the event.

If you think about it, 'Engagement' is what we all strive for. It's how we 'capture' our audience and ensure they come back for more. It's the creative idea that strikes an empathetic chord and makes the reader, visitor, listener or viewer feel that *this is for them*. It can turn 'spectators' into 'participants', 'prospects' into 'customers' and 'customers' into 'ambassadors'.

Roy Morgan International's approach to measuring engagement with brands, advertising and media has been brought about through an experienced and multi-country and multi-disciplinary team incorporating consumer research, advertising, media, marketing, modelling, statistics and software solutions.

For all inquiries contact Tony Bazerghi, Roy Morgan International (Tony.Bazerghi@roymorgan.com) or follow the link to www.roymorgan.com.