Television Audience Behavior: a Study for a Quality Evaluation Index

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Keywords: tv audience, quality index, tv rating

1. The aim

Auditel is a research company that measures the television audience in Italy on a panel of about 12,000 individuals in more than 5,100 households. Daily Auditel aggregate data estimate how many people are looking at a channel, but they give no information about viewer behavior.

Starting from individual, minute by minute, data we developed an experimental study to know something more about how a single program has been watched.

2. The main hypothesis

Our first assumption is that the viewer freely chooses the program he wants to see; obviously he will select what he prefers among all the channels at his disposal. Consequently the simplest index to evaluate tv audience behavior can be represented by its total audience, i.e. the measure of how many people are, in average, in front of television.

However, such index doesn’t consider whether people’s eyes were stuck on tv or whether they were distracted by other programs.

We introduced some other hypothesis in order to better understand tv audience behavior related to a high rating program:

- The program is able to “capture” the audience for its almost whole duration;
- People wait for it, tuned on the channel, also before it starts;
- Few viewers change channel during advertising or during broadcasting;
- The program is able to “attract” viewers from other channels.

We started from the information contained in the Auditel research, where each record represents a viewer and what he is viewing, minute by minute.

After some tests, we studied several indexes (about 15) to average the behaviors of all the viewers of each program. Each index qualifies and quantifies a single aspect of the above hypothesis and it growths if it identifies a “positive” quality of the program.

We based on several broadcast genres, by considering also some day parts, in order to represent the main different behaviors of the viewers according to them.
In fact the “attention” required to view a movie (people should be interested to see it for its total length) could be quite different from that required to view a show (people may be interested only in parts of it). Similarly, overall audience goes up and down during the day (typically it increases during lunch and dinner time and decreases overnight).

The valuable number of parameters considered allows to overcame the limits of similar approaches proposed in the past.

3. The evaluation of each program

All the indexes evaluated have been collected in “macro-indexes” (previously defined), obtained by a weighted average of the original ones; the weights have been defined by considering the variability and the “informative contribute” to the audience behavior of each index.

Finally we have processed a global index, called “indicatore di qualità dell’ascolto”, which represents the average global evaluation of each program and which is a weighted average of the macro-indexes.

4. Main results

The next figure shows some results concerning the genres of the prime time.

*Figure 1: Audience quality index (Spring 2007 – Prime Time)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Indicatore di qualità dell’ascolto</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports (events and magazines)</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>Fiction/Movies</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>Educational, Art and Culture</td>
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References