

Groping in the dark

 By [Chris Brewer](#)

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There is a good reason why the ad industry has a poor understanding of social media and the way consumers interact with the internet. It's called "high-speed technology advancement".

What this means, basically, is that technology is advancing at such a rapid rate we simply can't keep up.

So who knows how your adspend on Facebook, Twitter and other apps is performing? Advertising has never been an exact science but, these days, I'm beginning to seriously question decisions.

Oh yes, they (platforms and providers etc.) can give you loads of stuff like page views, average session duration, bounces and so on. But what does that really mean?

I had an enlightening chat with a UK company recently who have developed an interesting concept of "identifying unknown web traffic". Fascinating stuff.

They reckon they can identify the exact business names and contact details of those visiting your website but who don't follow up with you, or show any sign of interest.

This means that, armed with that information, you can theoretically contact them and ask if they enjoyed looking at your site and if they require more information.

It verges a little on the spooky side but they justify it by saying that "only 1 in 4 referrals will go on to make an enquiry and that only 2% of web site traffic will make an enquiry at all."

As I've said, that's very interesting and it's new to me. Of course it may not be new to you because I'm sure others have similar products which you currently use.

But who knows when a better-still idea will turn up? And, really, what is the true value of all this feedback data we can now get our hands on?

As an example, in the UK in 2012, 4% of respondents in a survey said they had not used their cell phone (recently) to make a call. Last year that number was 25% and this year it's 31%.

That's nearly one-third of cell phone owners who don't use their phones to make a call! This means they could be anywhere

when an internet ad is flashed in front of them – because they're browsing the net on the move.



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Like you, I expect, I use an iPhone and, sometimes, in the middle of the night, I receive an unsolicited text message – which makes me angry. But Deloitte, the business advisory firm, estimates that more than 15 million people are disrupting their sleep pattern by checking their messages in the early hours – and often replying!

More than 80% of users said they had a smartphone and 10% of them instinctively reach for their phone within five minutes of waking up and more than half within 15 minutes.

In 2014, 48% used email on their phones, this year that figure is 71%.

The research also revealed that smartphone usage is increasingly affecting social behaviour, with a third of 18- to 24-year olds using their device “always” or “very often” when meeting friends, shopping or watching television. (Courtesy *The Daily Telegraph*).

Apart from to total changes in social interaction, which obviously will impact on advertising messages, how does the industry take serious note (or even advantage) of this?

Especially given that once you think you've got the measure of the beast, along comes “ad blocking”, which is growing at a phenomenal rate.

I've not read any convincing articles or papers recently who offer any kind of suggestion on a sensible way forward.

But it's obviously a serious dilemma for the communications industry and one which needs to be addressed very soon. Or perhaps the changes are happening so fast that we'll forever be groping blindly in the dark?

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ABOUT CHRIS BREWER

Having joined the ad industry in London, Chris Brewer spent most of his career in media analysis and planning - but has performed just about every advertising task from Creative to Research. He's an honorary lifetime member of the Advertising Media Association and regularly advises agencies and clients regarding their media plan costs and strategies. He is also often asked to talk at industry functions. Email: chris@brewers.co.za. Twitter: [@brewersapps](https://twitter.com/brewersapps). Read his blog: www.brewersdroop.co.za

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