

Nielsen hopes to bring science to TV casting

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In this June 20, 2016 file photo, actor Ashton Kutcher attends the Museum of the Moving Image's 2016 Industry Tribute in New York. According to a new analytics tool unveiled by the Nielsen company, Wednesday, June 22, 2016, people who say they like Kutcher are much more apt to watch morning shows than fans of most other celebrities. The ratings company believes the tool can provide scientific rigor to decisions on how to deploy talent. (Photo by Evan Agostini/Invision/AP, File)

Ashton Kutcher as a television morning show host? Aaron Paul as an

advertising spokesman for hybrid automobiles?

Those are two of the ideas suggested by a new analytics tool unveiled by the Nielsen company Wednesday, one that it believes can provide scientific rigor to decisions on how to deploy talent.

Nielsen hopes to sell it to advertising agencies and networks that now rely on intuition and general surveys measuring a celebrity's popularity when they choose someone for a role or advertising campaign. Nielsen says it can now weigh specific consumer attitudes and tendencies to suggest ideas the experts may not have thought about.

For example, the "Two and a Half Men" actor Kutcher may not be the first name to come to mind as a morning host. But Nielsen found that people who say they like Kutcher are much more apt to watch morning shows than fans of most other celebrities.

Nielsen's "fan affinity" tool also rated football player Tim Tebow a good match for a morning show—an out-of-the-box choice until you consider Michael Strahan's path to success.

In the case of Paul, Nielsen found that his fans are more likely to buy or lease a hybrid vehicle, or perform any other eco-friendly activity, than all but 1 percent of fans of the 3,700 personalities in its database. Theoretically, that means people interested in buying such a car would be much more receptive to hearing a sales pitch from the "Breaking Bad" actor.

Liev Schreiber is another good potential pitchman for hybrid vehicles, Nielsen found. Similarly, actresses Amy Adams and Keri Russell would fit well in a campaign for a credit card travel rewards program.

"I don't think there's a single client that could not benefit from this data,"

said Michele Orlick, senior vice president for client consulting at Nielsen.

Nielsen can couple this information with an 'N-score' based on its surveys measuring how well a celebrity is known and liked. That's similar to the better-known and more established 'Q score' ratings maintained by a Long Island company.

Nielsen said its analytics tool will allow clients to cross-reference a celebrity's popularity with many different traits of consumers—among them whether they own a second home, used a travel agent within the past year, bought airline tickets online or stayed at a bed and breakfast.

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