

A Guide to ACR: The Future of TV and Audience Data

Historically, brands and agencies have relied on post campaign ratings reports for an approximation of the reach and frequency on their linear TV buys, and for guidance around identifying key audiences. Today, advertisers want more immediate and advanced uses of the data. Many smart TVs, including ones sold by Roku, offer a better approach called automatic content recognition, or ACR. With it, brands can do more with viewing data, including understanding their reach and frequency across both traditional linear TV and TV streaming, building audiences for activation, and better understanding key audience behaviors.

Recently, we collaborated with Sequent Partners to publish a guide to ACR called “Automatic Content Recognition: The Future of TV and Audience Data.” This post is the first of a series on the topic of ACR and why it is the future of audience data, and ultimately, the future of TV.

In our first post we will explore how ACR works.

Here's How ACR Works

Roughly twice per second, a Roku TV captures video “snapshots” in 4K resolution. These snapshots are scanned through a database of content and ads, which allows the exposure to be matched to what is airing. For example, if a streamer is watching an NFL football game and sees an ad for a hard seltzer, Roku's ACR will know that the ad has appeared on the TV being watched at that time. In this way, the content on screen is automatically recognized, as the technology's name indicates. The data then is paired with user profile data to link the account watching with the content they're watching. We should note, however, that this data becomes aggregated, removing personally identifiable information before it is received by advertisers.

Why ACR Matters

ACR provides real time, accurate aggregate insights into what viewers are watching. Further, choosing the right provider can give you this data at scale, enabling you to understand what potentially millions of people are watching, allowing for the creation of personalized ad experiences based on that data.

An ACR use case: maximizing audience reach

Roku's ACR technology comes to life in OneView through Linear Insights. It allows you to know how many people your campaigns have reached on traditional linear TV so you can pinpoint audiences your campaign might have missed. Then, you can use TV streaming and audiences identified using Roku's ACR data to reach those missing audiences.

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