

case study



Showtime®

Exploratory Research

Background

Showtime, the leader in premium cable television, wanted to conduct exploratory research surrounding their hit show, *Nurse Jackie*. Primarily, Showtime sought to understand how viewers prefer to watch *Nurse Jackie* (which viewing platform, On Demand/DVR/Linear) and what drives their preference(s). This research represented a tremendous opportunity for Showtime to gather in-depth insights about *Nurse Jackie* viewers as well as the show itself.

Why iModerate?

To accomplish their objectives, Showtime required an approach that would not only provide the data they needed, but one that would bring the show's viewers to life.

Showtime felt that iModerate's online one-on-ones would be the ideal option to acquire the qualitative insight needed to create the viewers' stories. Unlike other methods, the chats would give *Nurse Jackie* viewers a chance to open up in an individual conversation. In the end, the integration of the chats into their survey initiative provided Showtime with the hybrid approach they were seeking.

Our Objectives

- Examine and understand any changes in the platform viewing preferences of *Nurse Jackie* over the past four weeks
- Specifically, examine any changes in viewing of the current *Nurse Jackie* episode
- Understand platform switching from both a functional (DVR has limited space, but On-Demand isn't in HD) and emotional (i.e. being part of the water cooler crowd) perspective
- Understand viewer engagement with *Nurse Jackie*

Our Approach

The study was split into four waves over a four-week period. Showtime conducted an online survey with viewers of *Nurse Jackie* who own a digital video recorder (DVR) and have access to Showtime On-Demand. The quantitative portion resulted in 1,857 completes. iModerate's one-on-one chats were added to each of the four waves, and in all, 100 sessions were completed. The viewers that chatted were; males and females, ages 18 to 64, who subscribe to digital cable or telephone company TV service, who receive Showtime, who have Showtime On-Demand and a DVR and who have watched two or more episodes of *Nurse Jackie* this season.

What We Discovered

The iModerate sessions painted a complete picture of *Nurse Jackie*'s viewers and helped Showtime uncover the reasoning behind their viewing and platform preferences. At a high level, the insights revealed that in an ideal world, most *Nurse Jackie* fans would watch the live Monday night premiere, and that those who did were the most fervent fans. However, due to an array of work, family and social commitments, most utilize DVR and On-Demand technologies to watch the show.

While the quantitative data gave Showtime metrics surrounding viewing frequency, television subscription information and demographics, iModerate was able to garner candid feedback surrounding platform benefits, drawbacks and the motivations behind platform switching. Moreover, the qualitative feedback made it possible to group viewers and create five distinct personas based on a number of functional (such as lifestyle, schedule) and emotional (such as feelings toward *Nurse Jackie*) factors. Vignettes were then crafted for each persona, giving Showtime a colorful snapshot of *Nurse Jackie* viewers.

Below is a look at the qualitative findings for the five viewing segments, and a vignette for each. Each vignette incorporates verbatims direct from the iModerate sessions.

Primary On-Demand Viewers

Watching whenever it is convenient and controlling the viewing experience is extremely important for this audience. Having the ability to watch any episode is also critical to their preference for On-Demand. Features like pause and rewind allow them watch every moment and mitigate interruptions. On-Demand also saves space on their DVR for other shows. These viewers are not likely to switch platforms as they don't have time to watch it live and are too busy to remember to set their DVR.



Stephanie watched the first episode of *Nurse Jackie* after a co-worker at the office recommended the show - "I was immediately hooked!" Since then, she's tried to catch the newest episodes on Monday nights, but work and family responsibilities often interfere. She's so busy that she frequently forgets to set her DVR, so Stephanie now watches via On-Demand. She loves having the ability to pause and rewind whenever her young children or the phone interrupts her TV time. After watching 3 or 4 episodes, Stephanie saw an advertisement on Showtime announcing that the newest *Nurse Jackie* episode is available a few days early via On-Demand. She now always catches the new episode a day or two early simply because "I can't wait to see what happens next!"

Primarily Live Viewers

The chats uncovered that these fans are the most ardent and specifically made time in their schedule to watch Monday's premiere. They were genuinely excited by the premiere and look forward to the building of anticipation before it's time to watch a new episode. Participating in Tuesday morning "water cooler" conversations about the show is very important for this group. Platform switching is fairly common due to schedule conflicts and everyday interruptions.



Vignette

Since Steve started part-time work after 25 years of working full-time, he's had more time to spend with friends and family. "I'm doing my best to spend as much time as possible with the people I love. Fortunately, *Nurse Jackie* has become part of that." Steve enjoyed the series as soon as he watched the first episode. He told a few friends, his wife and his grown daughter about the show. "For the second episode, three or four people came over and we watched the show together. It was great!" Every Monday the same group comes over to Steve's house for their weekly *Nurse Jackie* viewing party. "We have some food, chat about the previous weekend and watch the show. I'm happy *Nurse Jackie* gives us another excuse to hang out!"

Primary DVR Users

Similar to On-Demand, DVR viewers care most about the convenience offered by this format. They are too busy to catch Monday night episodes and probably wouldn't be able to watch *Nurse Jackie* if they didn't have a DVR. They also like that DVR enables them to watch the episodes in high-definition and that they are able to control how long they keep previous episodes on their hard-drive. Platform switching habits closely mirror those of On-Demand viewers.



Vignette

Kate and Dave have been married for 15 years and have developed similar tastes in TV shows. "We like shows that are intellectually engaging and different from the rest of the junk that clutters the airwaves," says Kate. Despite this, their opposing schedules prevent them from frequently watching together. "I leave for work every day at 5:30am, so I need to be in bed by 9pm. Meanwhile, Kate doesn't even get home from work until around 8pm. We rarely have time to do anything together in the evenings, let alone catch our favorite shows when they air." Without their DVR, the couple would have a hard time keeping up with *Nurse*

Jackie. "Whenever we watch, it's a special time for us. I always skip the Monday premiere because it's important that we watch together. We have to make every moment count and our DVR helps us do that."

Opportunistic Timeshifters

These viewers jump between DVR and On-Demand with ease. The power to watch whenever it is best for them combined with control of the viewing experience has led them away from live viewing for most television programming. They feel like they have evolved beyond live viewing and are extremely content with how they watch *Nurse Jackie*.



Vignette

Maria never knows when she's going to get to watch the next episode of *Nurse Jackie*. "They way things are with work and my family, it's very hard for me to plan when I can catch the next episode of *Nurse Jackie*." For these reasons, she regularly switches between DVR and On-Demand to get her weekly dose. "There's only so much free time I have, so when I'm watching television I need to make sure that I'm only watching shows I care about. It's so easy to just channel surf and really watch nothing." She likes DVR and On-Demand because it allows her to watch *Nurse Jackie* whenever she finds herself with a few free moments. "There

are times when I find myself waiting at home and have 20 minutes or so of free time. I love that I can quickly flip on the DVR or On-Demand station and use that time to see a bit of *Nurse Jackie*."

Combination Viewers

More so than any other respondents, Combination Viewers care only about one thing - convenience. While primarily DVR, On-Demand and live viewers have a degree of loyalty to their preferred method of watching, Combination Viewers will use whatever method is most convenient that week. As long as they are able to watch *Nurse Jackie*, they will keep their preferences flexible.



Vignette

Rachel is a stay-at-home mom with a five year old son, Sam. "Between taking him to school, looking after the house and shuttling between his after-school piano lessons and soccer practices, I'm really busy." However, on most Mondays she's able to watch *Nurse Jackie* during the premiere. "When my husband gets home from work, I kick my feet up a bit and let him handle Sam." But some nights, Rachel is simply too exhausted to stay up for *Nurse Jackie*. "This last Monday I had to get up early for a doctor's appointment, do the usual routine with Sam

and spend the afternoon in jury duty. By 9:30pm, I was ready to pass out." On nights like these, Rachel depends on her DVR or On-Demand to keep up with the show. "Monday nights are fun, but if I'm just too tired I know I can always switch to DVR or On-Demand - they are life-savers for busy moms!"

Why it Mattered for Showtime

iModerate's online one-on-ones gave Showtime the ability to go beyond the quantitative metrics and develop detailed personas to more fully understand their viewership. The 5 personas are known throughout the research group and provide the team with fun and accurate representations of their audience to refer back to. In the end, these personas provided Showtime with detailed emotional hot buttons for the refinement of their On-Demand communications. Moreover, the personas will help inform Showtime's future online platform endeavors and key viewership targets.