



10 lessons for media planning

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Ipsos MORI

Ultimately, outspending your rivals on various media channels is unlikely to achieve the recall you want for your ad or brand. A more measured approach needs to be taken, says Deborah McCrudden of Ipsos.

Advertising tracking has several forms but the most powerful is continuous weekly tracking. Ipsos ASI's global database tracks 2,500 campaigns, combined with their media schedules. From this data, we get a reference point for results, which is the source for these 10 Media Lessons. These are general observations - any one brand situation may be uniquely different. Also, these are not supposed to be 'hard rules', but simply to act as guidelines for best practice. There are more media channels today than at any point in history, with more being created every day. With ever-growing pressure on budgets, advertisers need access to as much information as possible so that they can maximise the effectiveness of their campaigns - what, where, when, how and for how long. Creative is king, but you need to understand the whole picture to get the best results.

1. Creative is king

When looking at advertising and promotion spend, it's easy to assume that, because media comprises such a high proportion of overall spend, it must be the most important factor. In fact, creative has a disproportionate influence on the success or failure of an ad campaign. Ipsos ASI's global advertising database shows that creative quality accounts for about three-quarters of variance when explaining differences in ad recall levels. Weak creative rarely earns good recall based on heavy media. So, despite the high cost of buying media, the 'creative' is key for driving success.

2. Ads do not wear-in

Although TV ads do have long-term brand equity-building potential, the most marked impact is in the short term. A strong ad will achieve high levels of consumer recall within the first burst of spend. A poor performing ad will not. It is wishful thinking to hope that an ad will 'wear-in' on the flawed principle that 'a bit more spend' will surely have an impact. An ad that does not achieve good recall in the first burst of spend signifies that it is simply not engaging enough - whether because of its creative style or because of how its message is couched. It is more prudent to ditch weak creative as quickly as possible, than hope that the media spend will lift it to success.

3. All media builds with diminishing returns

It's not only TV that experiences this lack of wear-in. All media appear to build with diminishing returns. The recommendation, therefore, is to focus your media plan on building reach quickly and not to drive recall too high in any one medium. Our database shows that for new creatives, the most optimal spend is somewhere between 120 and 149 weekly GRPs - that seems to have the greatest impact on overall recall levels. Above that, diminishing returns sets in and you seem to get 'less bang for your buck'. Once you've maximised any one medium (at around 700 GRPs in total for recall) - add a second medium to extend the reach.

4. Persuasion peaks quickly after airing

It's not just recall that's affected, persuasion also peaks quickly - 81% of all campaigns tracked have peaked by 850 GRPs and within 12 weeks from start of airing. This again highlights the importance of that first burst. Maximise its effectiveness and make sure the creative is as strong as possible.

5. Minimising recall decay is more important than building recall

If an ad is compelling in itself, and engages consumers in a dialogue with what the brand is all about, then it is almost certain to achieve high recall. However, to maximise marketing spend efficiency and brand impact, it is hugely important to sustain that level of recall in consumer minds so that the brand remains top of mind, driving visibility in the marketplace, and continuing to build positive associations. A way of doing this is to adopt ten or 15-second cut-downs of original creative. After initial spend on a strong creative (700-850GRPs), focus additional spend on cut-down versions, allowing more exposures over time and acting as a reminder to consumers of the original creative.

6. Recency planning is best

Through modeling data collected on thousands of campaigns around the world, with a wide variety of flighting patterns, we have seen that more continuous TV plans tend to maintain advertising presence more efficiently than 'burst' plans. This links closely to the theory of Recency Planning, which states that your ad should be the last ad seen prior to a purchasing decision. This has been shown to be a successful strategy, particularly for FMCG products, where purchasing occasions come along in quick succession. Burst-based Frequency Planning can be wasteful because of the rapid decay of advertising effects and the consequent long periods off air, allowing competitors the opportunity to become top of mind prior to the next purchase occasion. Recency planning works best once an advertising idea has been established with an initial heavy upburst, followed by lower weights of infrequent but ongoing reminders.



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7. Creative pools should be aired sequentially, not concurrently

Often brands develop a 'pool of creatives' they can call upon. The temptation might be to air multiple creative executions concurrently in the hope that the campaign will cut through stronger and more brand messages can be conveyed. In reality, the opposite is true. By airing concurrently, a brand is asking the consumer to remember multiple executions and messages, with each receiving a diluted share of budget. As a result, cut-through and message take-out tends to perform weaker than when creative pools are aired sequentially. If a particular creative performs outstandingly, one can always re-air after the creative pool has run its course.

8. Share of voice is not so important

It is a common misconception that a brand can achieve strong levels of ad recall just by outspending its rivals and achieving a strong share of voice in market. Indeed, some brands/companies place specific targets on a minimum SOV, believing it to be a pre-requisite for strong ad performance. Advertising standout is not achieved by spending more on media than your rivals. The quality of the creative idea is the main driver of ad recall and persuasion. It is better to spend time, effort and money on creating a strong creative that is engaging and relevant to your audience, than trying to shout your rivals through massive spend.

9. Add a media touchpoint rather than overspending on one

Spending money behind bad creative will never produce the desired results. That said, the role of which media channels a brand uses cannot be underestimated. However, there is no golden bullet – what works for one brand or product, will not necessarily work for another. Are there any golden rules? Yes. Ensure each media channel has an objective and assess performance against these objectives. Pick your media channels based on their role, rather than affordability – if you can't see how a channel will add benefit, do not use it. Assume most consumers will experience more than one media channel, therefore, maintain creative and message synergy across all channels. Extending the campaign to an additional media channel is more effective than over spending on one.

10. TV ad recall does not follow 'media consumption'

While it is important to understand the media consumption habits of your target audience, it is also important that you don't

jump to conclusions about how this might influence the response to your campaign. We know from our research that, while older consumers watch more hours of TV, for example, this does not necessarily correlate with increased advertising recognition among this group. In fact, we see much higher recognition scores from younger people who watch less TV. The hypothesis is that younger consumers are more engaged with branded communications and, therefore, require fewer opportunities to see an ad and internalise it. With this in mind, advertisers and their media agencies must make sure that they research and understand both the potential and actual impact of their brand campaigns, rather than just making a leap of faith.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deborah McCrudden is Head of ASI UK at Ipsos MORI since joining in 2009. A communications specialist of 20 years, her agency career includes Marketing Sciences, TRBI, Synovate and Research International, both sides of the Atlantic.

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