

Advertising Research

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Advertising research is a specialized form of marketing research conducted to improve the efficiency of advertising. According to MarketConscious.com, "It may focus on a specific ad or campaign, or may be directed at a more general understanding of how advertising works or how consumers use the information in advertising. It can entail a variety of research approaches, including psychological, sociological, economic, and other perspectives."

History

1879 - N. W. Ayer conducts custom research in an attempt to win the advertising business of Nichols-Shepard Co., a manufacturer of agricultural machinery.

1895 - Harlow Gale of the University of Minnesota mails questionnaires to gather opinions about advertising from the public.

1900s - George B. Waldron conducts qualitative research for Mahin's Advertising Agency.

1910s - 1911 can be considered the year marketing research becomes an industry. That year, J. George Frederick leaves his position as editor of Printer's Ink to begin his research company, the Business Bourse with clients such as General Electric and the Texas Co. Also in 1911, Kellogg Co.'s ad manager, R. O. Eastman creates the Association of National Advertisers which is now known as the Association of National Advertising Managers. The group's first project is a postcard questionnaire to determine magazine readership. The results introduce the concept of duplication of circulation. In 1916, R. O. Eastman starts his own company, the Eastman Research Bureau which boasts clients such as Cosmopolitan, Christian Herald, and General Electric.

1920s - In 1922, Dr. Daniel Starch tests reader recognition levels of magazine and newspaper advertisements and editorial content. In 1923, Dr. George Gallup begins measuring advertising readership.

1930s - In 1936, Dr. George Gallup validates his survey methodology by using the same tools polling voters during public elections. This allows him to successfully compare and validate his study's results against the election's results.

1940s - Post World War II, the U.S. sees a large increase in the number of market research companies.

1950s - Market researchers focus on improving methods and measures. In their search for a single-number statistic to capture the overall performance of the advertising creative, Day-After-Recall (DAR) is created.

1960s - Qualitative focus groups gain in popularity. In addition, some advertisers call for more rigorous measurement of the in-market effectiveness of advertising in order to provide better accountability for the large amounts being spent on advertising. In response, Seymour Smith and Associates, using Advertising Research Foundation data as a jumping-off point, develops the Communicus System, a comprehensive approach to isolating the in-market impact of advertising across media.

1970s - Computers emerge as business tools, allowing researchers to conduct large-scale data

manipulations. (Honomichl p. 175) Multiple studies prove DAR (Recall) scores do not predict sales. The measure, persuasion, also known as motivation, is validated as a predictor of sales. The measure known as "breakthrough" is re-examined by researchers who make a distinction between the attention-getting power of the creative execution (attention) and how well "branded" the ad is (brand linkage). Herbert Krugman seeks to measure non-verbal measures biologically by tracking brain wave activities as respondents watch commercials. (Krugman) Others experiment with galvanic skin response, voice pitch analysis, and eye-tracking.

1980s - Researchers begin to view commercials as a "structured flow of experience" rather than a single unit to be rated on the whole, creating moment-by-moment systems such as the dial-a-meter.

1990s - Ameritest Research creates Picture Sorts to provide accurate non-verbal measurements in a moment-by-moment system. Picture Sorts results are graphed to visually represent commercial viewers' moment-by-moment image recognition (Flow of Attention), positive and negative feelings (Flow of Emotion), and brand values (Flow of Meaning). Trends in in-market tracking include a greater focus on the multimedia nature of entire advertising campaigns.

2000s - Global advertisers seek an integrated marketing research system that will work worldwide so they can compare results across countries. For a look at trends predicted for advertising research in the 21st century, see Seven Trends for the Future. Dr. Robert Heath publishes the seminal and controversial monograph "The Hidden Power of Advertising" which challenged the traditional models used in advertising research and shows how most advertising is processed at an emotional level (not a rational level). His monograph leads to re-examination of in-market research approaches that compare the behaviors of those who have seen advertising versus those who have not, such as the Communicus System, and the development of brand new pretesting systems such as the OTX AdCEP system.

Types of advertising research

There are two types of research, customized and syndicated. Customized research is conducted for a specific client to address that client's needs. Only that client has access to the results of the research. Syndicated research is a single research study conducted by a research company with its results available, for sale, to multiple companies. Pre-market research can be conducted to optimize advertisements for any medium: radio, television, print (magazine, newspaper or direct mail), outdoor billboard (highway, bus, or train), or Internet. Different methods would be applied to gather the necessary data appropriately. Post-testing is conducted after the advertising, either a single ad or an entire multimedia campaign has been run in-market. The focus is on what the advertising has done for the brand, for example increasing brand awareness, trial, frequency of purchasing.

Pre-testing

Pre-testing, also known as copy testing, is a form of customized research that predicts in-market performance of an ad, before it airs, by analyzing audience levels of attention, brand linkage, motivation, entertainment, and communication, as well as breaking down the ad's Flow of Attention and Flow of Emotion. Measuring attention is very important in Pre-testing. The data tells us where customers look at and which parts of the ad they ignore. Attention can be measured with Eye tracking or AttentionTracking. Pre-testing is also used on ads still in rough form - e.g., animatics or ripomatics. Pre-testing is also used to identify weak spots within an ad to improve performance, to more effectively edit 60's to 30's or 30's to 15's, to select images from the spot to use in an integrated campaign's print ad, to pull out the key moments for use in ad tracking, and to identify branding moments.

Campaign pre-testing

A new area of pre-testing driven by the realization that what works on TV does not necessarily translate in other media. Greater budgets allocated to digital media in particular have driven the need for campaign pre-testing. The addition of a media planning tool to this testing approach allows advertisers to test the whole campaign, creative and media, and measures the synergies expected with an integrated campaign.

Post-testing

Post-testing/Tracking studies provide either periodic or continuous in-market research monitoring a brand's performance, including brand awareness, brand preference, product usage and attitudes. Some post-testing approaches simply track changes over time, while others use various methods to quantify the specific changes produced by advertising--either the campaign as a whole or by the different media utilized.

Overall, advertisers use post-testing to plan future advertising campaigns, so the approaches that provide the most detailed information on the accomplishments of the campaign are most valued. The two types of campaign post-testing that have achieved the greatest use among major advertisers include continuous tracking, in which changes in advertising spending are correlated with changes in brand awareness, and longitudinal studies, in which the same group of respondents are tracked over time. With the longitudinal approach, it is possible to go beyond brand awareness, and to isolate the campaign's impact on specific behavioral and perceptual dimensions, and to isolate campaign impact by medium.