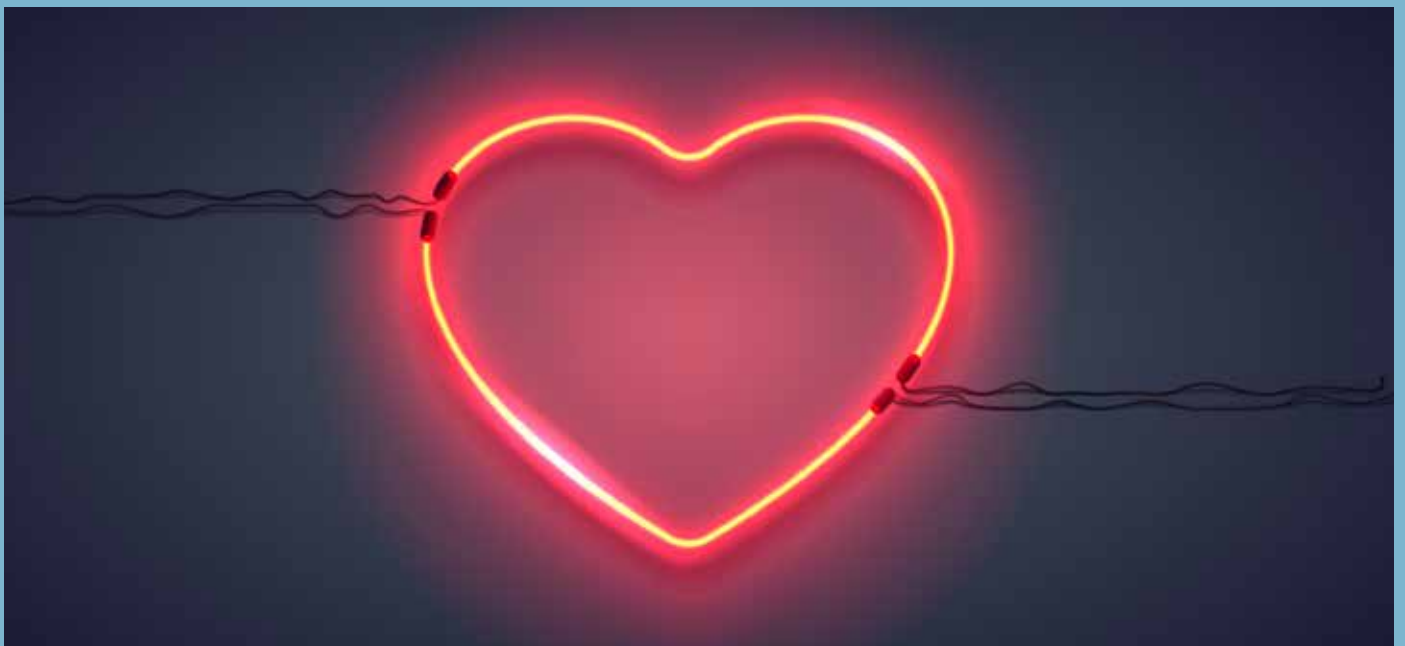


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IPSOS VIEWS

Selling Creative Research Short?
How creative research can help measure
and fuel long-term campaign effects

by Adam Sheridan



REFRAMING CREATIVITY

In their seminal work *The Long and the Short of It*, Binet and Field reframed the debate about the value of creativity, presenting evidence that creatively awarded work is more likely to achieve long-term business effects over two years, or more than non-awarded work.

This was a seismic shift for the advertising industry, helping clients move from relying on anecdotal examples of campaigns they have run or seen to clear evidence that there is a long-term business value to investing in strong creative. In effect, it proved that creativity matters and the type of brave and bold advertising that wins awards is not somehow removed from advertising that delivers long-term

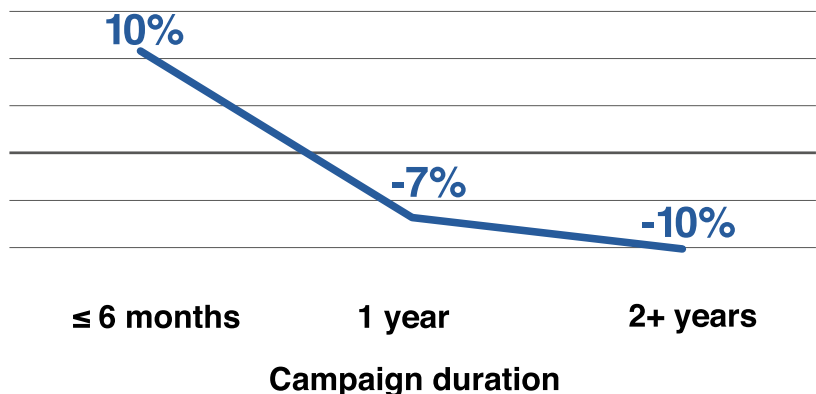
business impact. They are one and the same, emboldening clients to commission more original, thought provoking work that defies category norms.

The authors also went a step further to identify behaviours and practices that help and hinder the pursuit of long-term business effects, and made one particular observation that left advertising research practitioners pausing for thought: Campaigns that use creative pre-testing services are less likely to achieve long-term business effects than those that do not.

Sales effects of pre-tested versus non pre-tested campaigns over time

% reporting very large SALES EFFECTS

(pre-tested minus non pre-tested campaigns)



Source: Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) 'The Long and the Short of It' (2013)



The metrics in Ipsos creative evaluation services do have an observed relationship with long-term market outcomes.

“Traditional pre-testing techniques, because of their focus on persuasion scores, have tended to favour campaigns that work most powerfully over the short term, and discriminate against campaigns that work most powerfully over the long term”. (Binet and Field)

The implication of this finding was clear. The persuasion-focused metrics used in creative evaluation services were fuelling short-term thinking of six month cycles in campaign planning and evaluation, hampering the long-term health of our clients' brands.

This came as a surprise to many advertising research practitioners, Ipsos included. The role of creative evaluation services is to help clients select and optimise the best ads to generate both short *and* long-term business impact for their brands, to strengthen creativity and maximise opportunity. So why is it that campaigns using these services were less likely to achieve long term effects?

This disconnect led Ipsos to ask:

Do the metrics in creative evaluation services have a relationship to actual long-term business effects? And, if they do, why is it that clients who use these services are less likely to achieve them?

To answer the question, we ran a meta-analysis of recent cases in the Ipsos global database that were tested before launch *and* were used as a lead creative in a campaign during a client brand tracking program for a period of at least six months to a year.

The findings suggest that the metrics in Ipsos creative evaluation services do have an observed relationship with long-term market outcomes. Nevertheless, the disconnect remains that campaigns using creative evaluation services are less likely to achieve long-term effects.



This has significant implications, as it means that research companies, creative agencies and clients need to better apply these metrics in their creative development process so that they can be used to improve the chance of achieving long term business effects. So we outline here our views of best practice to achieve this.

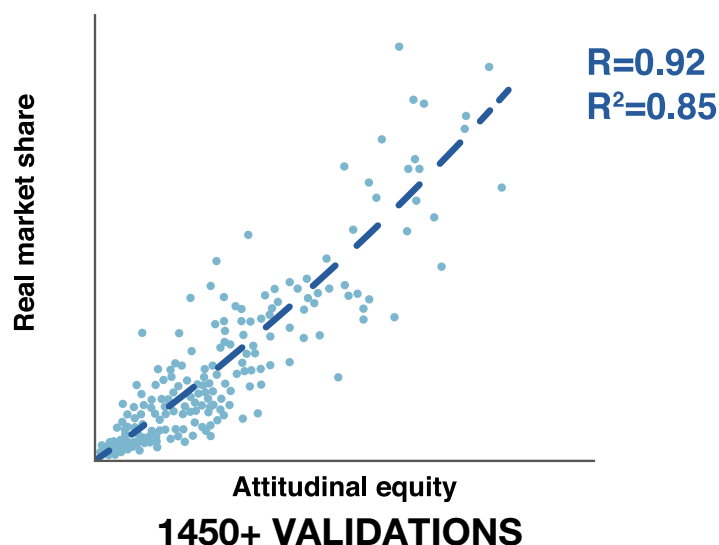
IPSOS METHODS AND METRICS

A key Ipsos measure of brand equity in tracking is Attitudinal Equity (AE), which represents the share

of brand desire, or how much consumers in the target market would choose the brand as opposed to competitors without any barriers to consumption, such as limited distribution. Two key components of this equity metric are *Performance* (if the brand is considered to do the job the respondent needs) and *Closeness* (how close they feel to the brand).

The AE metric has a strong relationship with actual market share across 24 categories and 49 countries and is tracked over time, typically bi-annually or quarterly to help clients understand the long-term brand impact of their campaigns.

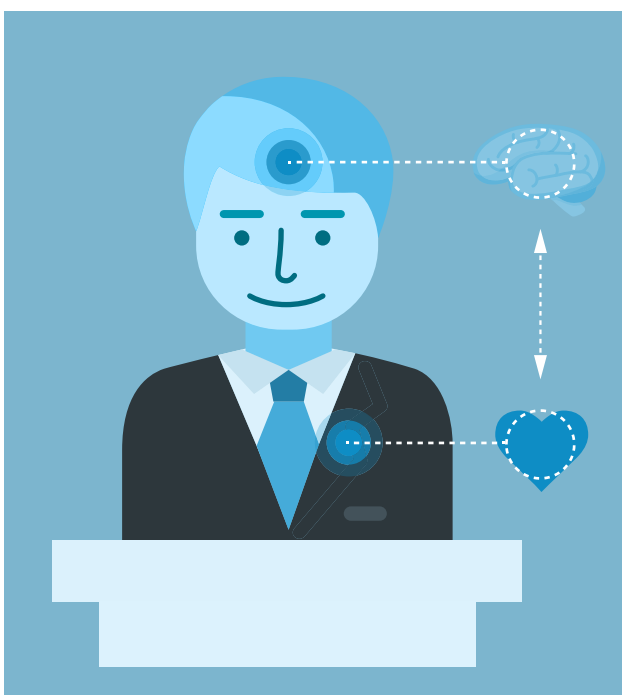
Brand relationship validation to brand share



In market validation: Attitudinal Equity correlated with market share

Our creative testing service, ASI:Connect, measures how effective creative is encoded in memory by exposing test ads to people within other types of content, such as video entertainment. If the creative is not encoded and retrievable from memory, it is unlikely to have an impact at the moment of choice or consumption.

In addition to measuring memory encoding and retrieval, we leverage an exposed vs. unexposed design using two matched samples to measure the brand impact of the creative. This enables us to **observe** this creative impact rather than asking more direct, introspective questions of respondents, which can be susceptible to post-rationalisation bias.



Our measure of the potential of creative to improve long-term brand equity, the Equity Effect Index (EEI), combines the strength of memory encoding and the difference between the exposed and unexposed conditions to the same two measures of Performance and Closeness. We also combine strength of memory encoding and measure the difference between the exposed and unexposed conditions in their intention to buy to measure potential short-term sales impact via the Copy Effect Index (CEI). This metric has been validated across thousands of cases and a range of countries and categories to Market Mix Modelling (MMM) outcome data, an analytic technique that attempts to isolate the effect of marketing activity from other environmental factors, such as seasonality, price promotions and competitor activity.

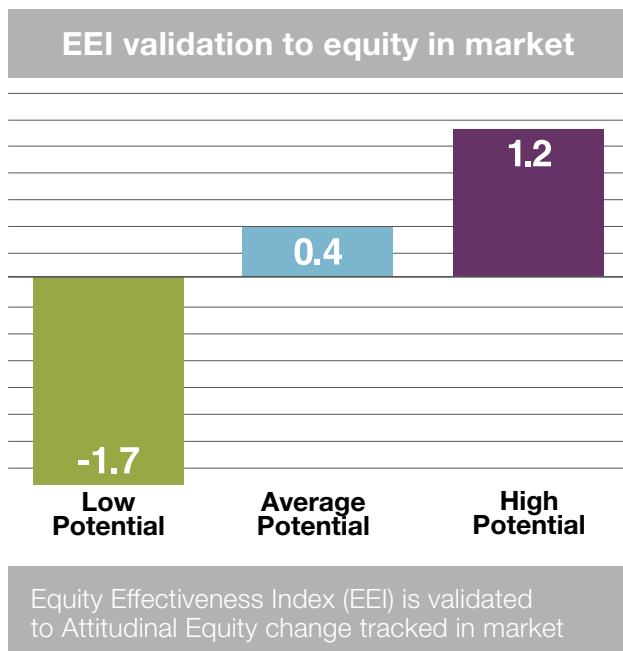
WHAT WE DID

To answer our question of whether the metrics in creative evaluation services are connected with actual long-term business effects, we measured the potential long-term brand equity effect of an ad in a creative test against the actual impact observed in tracking. The dataset comprised 102 ads that were tested pre-launch and were the lead creative in campaigns tracked for a minimum of six months to a year. These cases represented seven global advertisers, 37 brands and were aired between 2015-2018.

Having compiled the dataset, we looked at the brand equity change over time in tracking (AE), split by tertiles of brand equity potential in the creative pre-test (EEI) and compared the average change within each tertile.

OUR LEARNINGS

We observed that, on average, ads identified in the creative test as having high long-term brand equity potential and were aired as a lead creative in the campaign were linked to a positive improvement in market brand equity. By contrast, those identified as average observed minimal change and low potential ads were linked to a negative brand equity change over time:



This suggests that the measure of brand equity potential in the Ipsos creative test can help clients identify the best ads to support long-term brand building, if this is their business objective with the tested campaign.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

While there is evidence that creative evaluation metrics can help to select ads geared towards the pursuit of long term effects, do we then see strong evidence that ads that are pre-tested are less likely to achieve them than those not? One possible explanation is the **application** of the metrics in creative development.

This perhaps makes intuitive sense and is why at the inception of any program of creative measurement we believe clients and agencies need to consider the following to give the best chance of success:

- **Have a clear business objective in the creative brief:** The brief should always outline the business objective, whether it's sales, market share increase or fame and a clear timeline to achieve it. With a clear objective, you can select and apply the right metrics, whether that's long-term equity, short-term sales or both.
- **Speak the same language:** All too often, clients and agencies have the same objective, but can be susceptible to articulating the means to achieve it or measure it in different ways, leading to ambiguity in decision-making and lowering the chances of success.

- **Have clearly defined decision-making frameworks and accountability:** In many respects, having the metrics and insights is the easy part. When you have them, there needs to be clear ownership of applying them to enable business value.
- **Create the right conditions for collaboration:** No company or creative agency partnership is the same, so you need a research agency who can effectively partner to provide the right type of research and map the right measurement and analytic framework for the needs and structure of the business.
- **Use data as a spotlight, not a crutch:** While companies such as Ipsos are in the business of providing data to clients, this is only one part of the service. In creative testing, any data should be treated as a signal of potential and a spotlight to guide decision-making, rather than a go/no go system that can alone miss opportunities to nurture and optimise promising campaigns. Experienced practitioners with passion for Creative Excellence are key to this!



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CLOSING THOUGHTS

While we see encouraging evidence that creative testing metrics have a relationship with long term-brand effects, it's clear that research agencies, clients and creative agencies need to work together more effectively to apply them in the right way to increase rather than decrease the likelihood of achieving them in market.

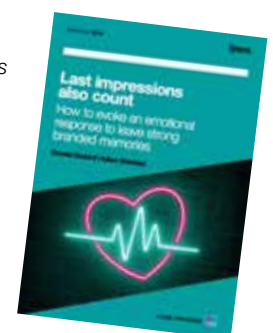
In addition to continuing to develop and apply metrics to measure a greater range of constructs, such as non-conscious, immediate emotional responses (see *Last Impressions Also Count* for some applications), Ipsos and other research agencies need to continue to collaborate with creative agencies and clients to apply the right metrics to the right business objectives, in the right way.

When we focus on metrics that match the objectives, will we move forward to gain value from them and use research to help pursue bold creative that delivers long term business effects, instead of selling creative research short.

FURTHER READING

The Long and the Short of it: Balancing Short and Long-Term Marketing Strategies
by Les Binet, Peter Field.

Last Impressions Also Count
https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/publication/documents/2018-09/the_impressions_also_count.pdf



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