



Rethinking Advertising Development

Is it time to shift the paradigm?

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It is clear that, when they set out to develop a new advertising campaign, advertisers do not plan to air communications that are mediocre, or at best average. Yet year in and year out, advertising is aired which does not yield the return that it could for its brand.

There are many possible “reasons”: lack of time, no alternative ideas, too little money, or too much equity in the existing campaign (even when it is starting to falter in-market).

These reasons suggest a need to take a hard look at the creative development process to understand what might be missing. We would argue it is consumer input.

Many question the role of consumer research in creative development – arguing that “traditional” pre-testing techniques are no longer relevant to today’s fragmented and digitalised media world, or to advertising which seeks to create an emotional connection over and above a specific product message. However, given that the opportunity cost of great creative is equal to, if not more than, the cost of an entire media budget, investment in properly applied consumer research can yield great dividends.

We know that creative quality is the foundation for a successful campaign. It accounts for more than 75% of a campaign’s success, making it a more important driver of success than the media buy. Throwing money behind sub-standard creative will rarely make up for its weakness – particularly given the role of social networks. Great creative ideas can gain further presence through viral activity and word-of-mouth (WoM). Indeed, WoM can often outperform paid media within the touchpoint mix, in terms of the return on brand impact it yields.

What might you be missing out on?

Your advertising might be performing adequately in market – but are you missing out on the opportunity to create something great?

At Ipsos ASI, we believe that the objective behind creative development should be to develop the best advertising possible to build one’s brand. In our experience there are three mainstays needed to achieve great advertising. These do not need to add time to the development schedule (in fact they often reduce cycle times) nor do they need to add to the overall cost:

1. Plan holistically
2. Seek consumer input at an earlier stage to optimise what you create
3. Rethink your action standards when qualifying copy

Are you seeking consumer input at the earliest stages to optimise what you create?

Are you planning holistically?

The benefit of a tight creative brief

The foundation of a holistic plan is the creative brief. For this to have the best chance of success, it needs to be tightly focused and confident. This provides the agency the freedom to create and not be hampered by “what ifs.” It must also have complete buy-in from all key stakeholders. Without such buy-in, the process risks becoming mired in the debate of alternatives.

The brief should be informed by strong foundational research, together with a holistic understanding of your in-market insights, in order to effectively define:

- What you are trying to accomplish for the brand in the context of the competitive set;
- The consumers’ emotional needs that are associated with your brand;
- The clear and compelling consumer insight.

“I have learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

MAYA ANGELOU.

Are you thinking big?

The brief should outline a strong strategy or “Big Idea” – the backbone for a holistic campaign. To be strong it needs to tap into essential human motivations to which everyone can relate, not just a select few. And, it also needs to have a natural role or connection for the brand, without which you do not have a Big Idea.

The agreed Big Idea should serve as the roadmap for all creative, regardless of medium. It should also further serve to align teams and focus efforts by ensuring shared accountability.

Can you ask more from your media?

The continual merging and blending of media means that consumers are empowered to determine where and when to access the content they want. Within this environment, television advertising is not declining in importance, but it will continue to evolve while other media increase in relevance. Advertisers may be more likely to succeed if they plan their creative content and media plans together as one exercise. Knowing beforehand which mediums work best for your category, brand and message, allows advertisers to combine insight of where to focus with an understanding of media synergies and the style, tone and level of message detail required to maximise efficiency of each contact with the consumer.

Some useful tips

- A customer’s purchasing behaviour and potential loyalty can easily be bought with discounts – it is not enough to simply focus communications on loyal purchasers as there are so few of them.
- With this in mind, there is a difference between attitudes and behaviour – advertisers should focus on building the emotional desire for a brand.
- Segmentation limits mass appeal of your product. Most of the biggest brands do not segment – but rather target all consumers with the same emotional desire. This allows consumers to choose the brand for their own personal reasons.
- Touchpoints are not substitutes for each other; they cannot serve the same objective, with the same reach, and to the same target. Focus the message on the strengths of the medium.

“Advertising people who ignore research are as dangerous as generals who ignore decodes of enemy signals.”

DAVID OGILVY.

You can test early stage stimuli with consumers

Early consumer input makes our clients’ advertising spend more efficient. It saves time and money by providing a breadth and depth of insight that can fill in any knowledge gaps that may occur between foundational research and final ad development.

Our experience shows that consumers are able to react and respond to Big Ideas, creative strategies, and early stage advertising, thereby providing meaningful input. The only challenge consumers face is clarity of the stimulus at hand. Typically, that lack of clarity does not come from the level of finish, but the lack of appropriate articulation. Knowing that, and understanding why consumers may be confused, can provide brand teams and agencies with the roadmap to achieving comprehension.

Learn what does and does not work for consumers with regards to your brand

Take the opportunity to learn at various stages. It is about knowing your consumer intimately – fully understanding their needs and emotional desires for your brand. It is also about knowing what articulation of an insight carries more emotional triggers, and then knowing how to visually express that. Or what brand connection carries more credibility and meaning, so that the story is complete.

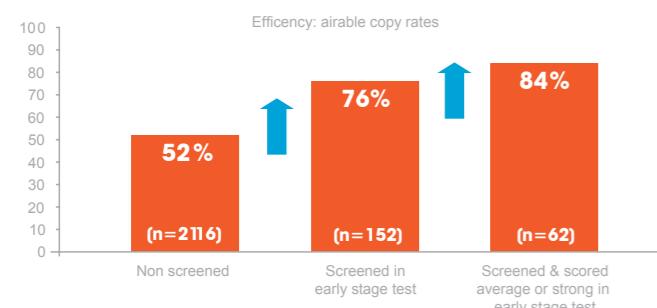


There are no regrets when you learn from failure...

The outcome could be creative that really pays off: agencies can break free of the one or two safe ideas and create without the risk of failure. Iterate without risk, by exploring and refining ideas and executional elements before making the expensive investment of full production. It is far easier to make adjustments to concepts, storyboards and animatics versus re-cuts and re-edits of already finalised communications.

We recommend that the process acts like a funnel – start with as many good ideas as possible, and whittle down to a few great ideas. Early stage research means you can identify the best ideas quickly, and weed out the ideas that fall short.

Earlier feedback in the development process eliminates weaker ideas before significant production budget has been invested and translates to more effective ads on air. Higher success rates mean less time and money wasted on rework.



Qualitative input is still a must

Important for the development of consumer insights or understanding of need states, it can play as important a role in creative development. You can deconstruct and reconstruct stimulus readily, getting to the heart of what is and isn't working, and what you may have missed. You can also easily tap into the emotional associations consumers have with your brand. When combined with robust quantitative data, qualitative research can help propel ideas forward efficiently.

Same brands, same ad agencies, same research company, different process

Once convinced of the value of early stage research some of our clients have chosen to focus on Big Ideas, some on creative strategies, while others have focused on executional strategies, storyboards and animatics. Regardless of what they chose to test, there are a few commonalities between the most successful processes:

- All agency partners, both above and below the line, were a part of the process ensuring fully integrated communications.
- While more pieces of early stage stimulus were developed than in the past, only the best one or two ideas proceeded to finished production, saving on production costs.
- Having learned from the early stage research, there were no "what ifs" about what to do when investing in final production – no re-cuts or re-edits.

Our experience is that investing in the process means less time spent on deciding what to proceed with. The ideas that were progressed to production were far more likely to yield great creative right away.

	CEI* Results After Early Stage Idea Testing	Client's Average CEI in Category
Personal Care (Region 1)	176	242
Personal Care (Region 2)	245	299
Home Care (Region 1)	167	135
		92
		107
		93

*Copy Effect Index (CEI) was developed by Ipsos ASI to provide clients with a relative indicator of advertising effectiveness: the higher the CEI, the greater the potential for an ad to create a sales reaction in response to ad spending (other things being equal). Average CEI = 100; above average CEI = 130.



A few useful tips for early stage

- Tone and personality are easily conveyed in a strategic concept – both to the benefit and disservice of an idea. Don't suppose to know what consumers are thinking or feeling. But do surprise them with great insight and understanding. Remember, every single word and phrase counts.
- You can get meaningful consumer response to static key visuals or PowerPoint slides with a recorded script as an early stage ad idea. Just make sure that you do not over-narrate and therefore over-promise on what the final communications can deliver.
- Screen various creative devices and hooks. If there are a variety of different ways to demonstrate the same thing and you are not sure which one will have the most impact, test them with consumers. You may find the least expensive device could have the most impact.
- Given the expense of celebrity endorsements, get consumer input before you sign on the dotted line.

What about action standards?

"Don't bunt. Aim out of the ball park. Aim for the company of immortals."

DAVID OGILVY

If your action standards for airing an ad are that your ad must fall within an average range on pre-test results, then the ads you air will most typically be average. At the end of the day, what is the opportunity cost to the brand of putting mediocre advertising on air?

So, are you missing out? Consider your creative development process: is it designed to deliver excellent creative, or could it potentially evolve? And might it be time to rethink the goal of creative development?

"Never stop testing, and your advertising will never stop improving."

DAVID OGILVY

About Ipsos MORI

Ipsos MORI is one of the largest and best known research companies in the UK and a key part of the Ipsos group, a leading global research company. With a direct presence in 84 countries, our clients benefit from specialist knowledge drawn from our five global practices: public affairs research, advertising testing and tracking, media evaluation, marketing research and consultancy, customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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