



Top 10 **Advertising Lessons Learned**

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Extol the virtues of research to a creative and you're likely to get a swift slap. However, an Ipsos ASI evaluation, which tracked thousands of commercial campaigns worldwide, now shows even researchers believe that creative is king. Deborah McCrudden reveals her Top Ten Tips.

Advertising tracking has several forms but the most powerful is continuous weekly tracking. Across 2,500 tracked campaigns, combined with media schedules, Ipsos ASI arrives at our unique global database. From this data, we get a reference point for results and the source of these top 10 media lessons learned from Ipsos ASI. 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.

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 advertising 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. To ensure that creative is as strong as possible, it's important to pre-test creative and consider the ad development process.

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 recall in the minds of consumers 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 gestures towards the fact that creatively it is simply not engaging enough – whether because of its creative style or because of how its message is couched. Better to ditch it 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: 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. Instead, if one can afford to maximise the medium, add a second to extend the reach.

4) Persuasion peaks quickly after airing

Persuasion also peaks quickly. 81% of all campaigns tracked peaked by 850 GRPs and within 12 weeks from start of airing.

5) Minimising ad 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 consumers' minds so that the brand remains top of mind, driving visibility in the marketplace, and continuing to build positive associations.

6) Recency planning is best

Through modeling the data collected on thousands of campaigns around the world, with a wide variety of flying 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 demonstrated 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 firmly established with an initial heavy up burst, followed by lower weights of infrequent but ongoing reminders.

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 more strongly 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 tend to perform more weakly 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. In truth, advertising standout is not achieved by spending more on media than your competitors. The quality of the creative idea is the main driver of ad recall and persuasion; not spend. 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 outshout your rivals through massive spend.

9) Adding an additional media touch point is better than overspending on one medium

Spending money behind bad creative will never produce the desired results. That said, the role of which media channels a brand uses to impact consumers can not be underestimated. However, there is no golden bullet - what works for one brand / 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 roles, rather than affordability - if you cannot 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 - this is especially pertinent for TV.

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 do not jump to conclusions about how this might influence the response to your campaign. We know from our research that whilst older consumers watch more hours of TV, for example, that 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 than their elders. 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.

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.

Contrary to what many creatives believe, our findings point to research backing the thinking that creative is king.



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 60 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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