



Advertising in a low interest category

From financial services to frozen vegetables, some types of product are undeniably less interesting than others. So it's understandable that advertisers in these categories may feel it's impossible to create impactful advertising. The reality is that in some media, particularly TV, category interest makes little difference to an ad's ability to cut through. Whatever the product, the ad will be effective if the brand message is communicated in a creative and memorable way. However, in other media — notably print — it's a different story. Here, category interest can play a major role in determining an ad's impact.

On TV, most advertising is “low interest”

Certainly, there are very significant differences in category interest. We find category interest scores ranging from 14 percent for financial services and 23 percent for frozen vegetables to around 80 percent for skincare products and perfumes.

A common response to this is for clients and their agencies to try to make their ads look as if they are for something else, on the grounds that this is the only way to hold viewers' attention.

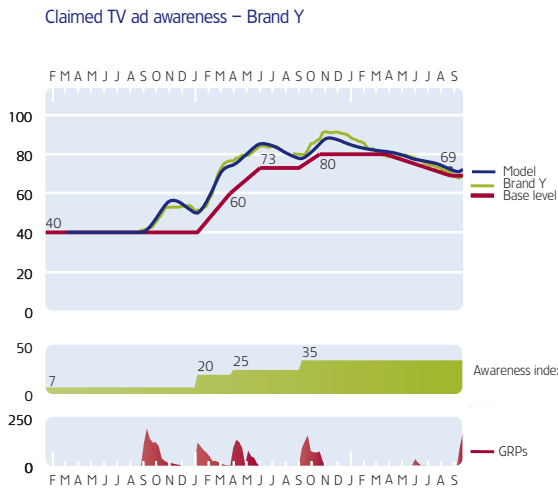
But for TV advertising, such an approach simply isn't justified. In the U.K., for example, the median Awareness Index (AI) is six. For financial services it's five. Similarly, in the U.S. the median is four, for financial services it's three.

The explanation is simple. Most people are fairly uninterested in the vast majority of advertising, whatever the product category. Unless the ad is providing news that is relevant to them, they are unlikely to pay much attention. They are certainly not going to make an effort to remember the message of an ad.

Effective TV ads need to earn the viewer's interest

So to be effective, your ad — whatever it's for — needs to get lodged in memories. And the only way to do this is to ensure that it's involving and enjoyable enough that consumers can't fail to remember it; and that the brand message is creatively integrated into the enjoyable and memorable parts of the ad's “story”.

Advertising for this credit card provides an excellent example. In each execution, the brand name was the focus of the ad, and the campaign was hugely enjoyable. Ad awareness levels were exceptionally high:

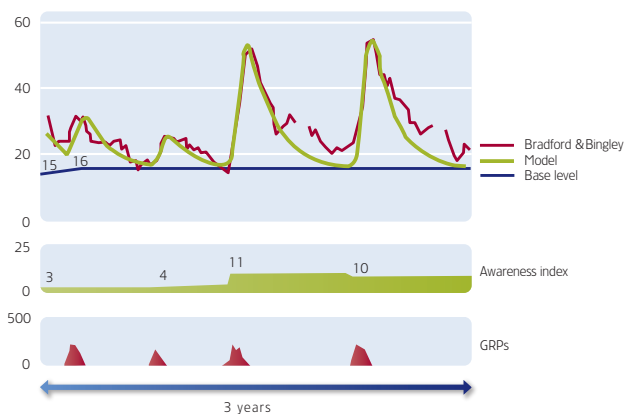


Sometimes, advertisers point to a succession of ads with low AIs to “prove” that it’s not possible to achieve good cut-through in their category or for their brand.

But, as they say in financial services, past performance provides no guide to future performance. After a series of ads with relatively weak AIs, UK financial institution Bradford & Bingley launched a new campaign which started with an AI nearly three times higher. In this case, it built on an old established branding device, which had been dropped from the previous campaigns.

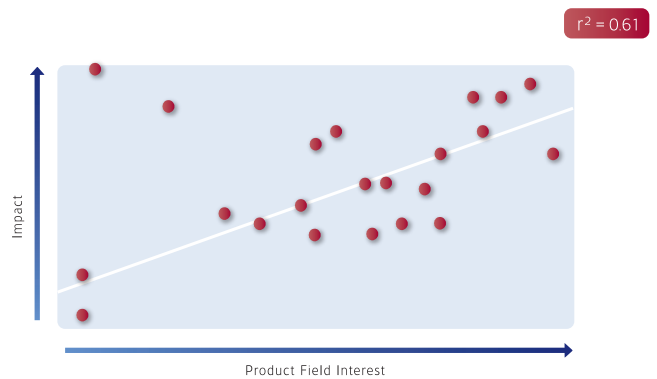
How TV differs from print

Claimed TV ad awareness – Bradford & Bingley
Rolling 4 weekly



In summary, for TV ads, product field is of minimal importance in generating impact. This is because people watch ads in an uninvolved way, and make little effort to process the information at the time. They don’t care whether an ad is for insurance or automotive. It is the job of the creative to engage the viewer, and the brand needs to be creatively highlighted as part of this process.

However, for some other media, different rules apply. In print advertising in particular, product field has a major effect on impact.



This has huge implications for advertising low interest categories in print. If you are trying to communicate with a broad audience, it’s crucially important to use creativity in a way that will prevent readers from turning the page, and then to draw them into the product story.

But there is still a balance to be struck. High impact creativity must never be allowed to obscure an ad’s key communication — as might happen, for example, if a print ad highlighting attractive mortgage rates used an amusing cartoon to grab readers’ attention, which got in the way of a message with real relevance to those in the market. For more on this, see our Knowledge Point “How do I Maximize my Print Budget?”

Knowledge Points are drawn from the Millward Brown Knowledge Bank, consisting of our databases of 50,000 brand reports and 40,000 ads, as well as 1,000 case studies, 700 conference papers and magazine articles, and 250 Learnings documents.

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