

Cross media research: Multichannel measurement

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This article shares some experiences from evaluating integrated communications and how that helps us add real value in terms of actionable insight to clients.

The evolving shape of communications

By virtue of our client base the campaigns we are commissioned to evaluate are larger scale and multimedia. Globally, all the CrossMedia studies we conduct generally include 3-4 media with a digital component included nearly every time. Looking beyond bought advertising media, we usually pull apart 5-6 channels which include direct, “owned” and “earned” media (figure 1 below)

Figure 1:

Typical channel count		
Number	All	ATL
3	16%	31%
4	13%	34%
5	22%	13%
6	31%	13%
7	6%	6%
8	9%	3%
9	3%	0%

The inclusion of digital so often delivers a vital integrated view of the value of digital. We do many studies best described as digital “deep dives”, driven partly by the industry silo focus. Indeed reviewing if a specific activity can add something on top of the composite of everything else is important to attract media budgets; equally optimisation within channel requires this sort of focus. But this leaves clients unclear on how to plan digital in the overall mix, and whilst CrossMedia evaluation approaches may not have the measurement detail of online behavioural streams, they do give a view of digital channels as part of an integrated approach to communications planning.

For our most advanced clients, integrated communications are not limited to multi media campaigns. Their campaigns sit in a wider context of ongoing programmes around brand ideas/themes, content and social engagement. We are asked to evaluate the brand value of these ongoing programmes, the individual campaigns, plus the individual activities within those campaigns. It’s quite a list, but with good sampling, a good survey instrument and multivariate modelling at the respondent level – it is possible.

The variation in client needs for feedback means one size does not fit all

There is a wide range of evaluation briefs to answer and a single solution is not right for all; it is vital to determine what the client really wants to look at. For example, is it proof of performance for one activity, for certain mixes or a holistic view of the contribution of all campaign elements? And what

depth of optimisation are they looking for; simply a “yes/no” to using that media again or an optimisation of spend considering cost, reach, frequency, synergy and timing?

The 3 most common themes and responses are as follows:

1. We are often asked simply to evaluate whether relatively “chunky” media investments are doing anything noticeable in a campaign. We might do this simply by modelling general tracking study respondents who recognise different media or are tagged as online exposed.
2. We are often asked to look at whether one media or a specific mix – often with a smaller reach - is worth investing in and to what end; usually done with a tailored sample, cell based study where other media influences are controlled for but not investigated in their own right.
3. We could be asked to evaluate and optimise multilayered communications across brands and their variants using lots of media with an ongoing thematic programme around fashion supported through digital social media; this involves a larger digitally enhanced longitudinal study with lots of modelling, including path work to test word of mouth/social comment as both an outtake of communications and an influence on brand attitudes.

In practice, a range of solutions are needed to fit a client’s needs, both from within existing brand tracking programmes and via tailored studies.

Whatever the solution, there is a need for best practice

Whilst one solution does not fit all, we do follow the same best practices in all circumstances and this is important.

A clean **baseline** read of people’s awareness, attitudes etc. in the absence of any campaign exposure is vital. Because most campaigns have a pretty high reach, the unexposed are a small and untypical group of people who do not represent the base levels for the rest of the population. So in practical terms this means taking a pre read.

It is also vital to understand and account for a medium’s **audience pre disposition to the brand** in order to split apart the value of the medium’s natural audience profile from the power of the client’s communications running through it. Both are important aspects of the value of a medium, but without this being done, the profile of the audience, being perhaps more in favour of the brand in the first place, could be mistaken as a communication effect and mislead the advertiser.

Discounting other influences is vital to isolate true media effects; in very many cases word of mouth has had an effect on results, as does retail activity, media comment, economic factors and more.

An area of ongoing debate is how accurately any of us can determine exposure, which is the foundation of planning and buying. Claimed recognition can struggle to accurately distinguish certain media in highly integrated campaigns whereas an “OTS” based approach is closest to planning currencies and also helps us look at synergies and frequency effects. We do use recognition when relevant but our preference is to use cookies or tagging for online and estimate OTS for other media through surveys, modelling and calibration to industry surveys for offline.

The very best of practices is to have a clear accountability framework

There are so many things that can be measured and it is interesting how many different things clients want us to look at. The challenge is to determine what should be measured and for what purpose rather than measure everything that can be measured and treat it all the same way.

A useful categorisation of measures separates measures of advertising engagement (outtakes) and measures of brand engagement (outcomes). The accountability task is to robustly quantify the contribution of spend/exposure to brand outcomes - relying on outtakes to help us understand why certain relationships are more successful than others, but not relying on them as the end game in themselves.

The digital communications revolution has flooded the market with communications engagement metrics (outtakes) such as dwell-time, interaction, “friending” and so on. These measures are easy to collect, move over time in interesting ways and deliver input to dashboards that give a sense of being in control. But they are only symptoms of the real and final brand outcome.

Common currencies for measuring across different media help us breakdown planning and evaluation silos and integrate wider media types. In brand engagement evaluation, common currencies have emerged and – especially Millward Brown’s OTS-based approach - deliver insight on reach, frequency and overlap across paid, owned and earned media.

The return on research investment is huge

Evaluating campaigns properly is so hard that most effort goes into execution and far less is spent on the value of decisions it supports. A simple and very potent thing to do is to reflect on the media budget value of the advice given and here are a few examples:

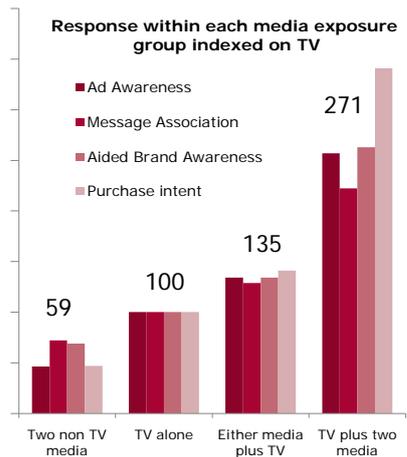
1. For a regular TV advertiser, we saw that their second waves of TV showed a quicker build to optimum frequency levels, reaching diminishing returns faster. Understanding this means this client can deploy use TV at lighter weights for longer thus covering more purchase intervals; the nominal return on \$1 million media spend would therefore be \$500k.
2. In another case, a powerful pre tested ad showed fast response at lower frequencies than actually deployed in one market needing a third less GRPs to reach optimum efficiency. The nominal value per \$1m media spend here was \$300k, but the real value was much higher since this advice was applied with success to other countries.
3. A few times now, we have seen perfectly good outdoor creative have no effect simply because it was phased before any TV “pre- cooking”; in fact generally speaking we see non-TV media benefit a lot from TV priming which does have mix and scheduling implications. In this case, when one client put things right in their next campaign, the outdoor communications shone through. With a typical outdoor campaign costing roughly \$900k, this is a valuable insight.
4. Particularly in launches – or other “tough” tasks - we see the highest response among two to three overlapping media (we call this magnification). In one case without altering budget splits by media, a very modest optimization to maximize overlap was worth at minimum

\$100k per \$million media budget; obviously too late for that campaign but vital learning for future launches (see figure 2).

Figure 2:



Multimedia benefits in action on a launch campaign



In this launch case the non TV media uplifts were about 60 percent of TV alone.

When TV was added to them they were 35 percent higher than TV alone; more than doubling their effectiveness.

Beyond this even, three media magnified the effects significantly.



Source: Millward Brown CrossMedia case study, Product Launch, 2010

Conclusion

Effectiveness evaluation has come a long way in recent years and keeping a firm eye on client needs and communications trends will help it deliver valuable advice into the future. In the future more clients will devote more research budget to good quality CrossMedia research; it pays back on a campaign by campaign basis and in the longer term.

We enormously undersell the value of the advice we give in this area, perhaps finding it too audacious to put the types of examples given in this article. But not doing this leaves us justifying our efforts on a cost-plus, commodity basis when in fact our knowhow and experience, along with the data, actively contribute to decisions that can drive future brand growth.