

Transforming Brand Tracking to Help Today's Marketers Succeed

In-market brand tracking has evolved beyond the lumbering survey omnibuses of old – but the environment in which they operate is changing even faster. It's clear there's a need to be more radical in our transformation of the approach. Only on-demand access to exactly the right information needed to answer specific business questions will boost the bottom line.



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The tracking of consumer perceptions – and the overall equity built from these perceptions – is a vital part of understanding and building a consistent, compelling 360° brand experience. Getting a fast read of what people believe and feel about a brand, and how this is impacted by the communications they see, enables marketers to quickly course-correct – flexing and changing messaging and creative to better deliver on brand goals.

But across the wider research industry, brand tracking hasn't quite been keeping up with the pace of change.

The proliferation of freely available data from numerous sources is exciting, but also overwhelming. Marketers can get lots of information easily, and at little or no cost, but the challenge is how to handle and structure it meaningfully to make it useful for brand-building decisions.

The era of the traditional large-scale, all-encompassing study may be drawing to a close.

Marketers are not necessarily getting the meaningful insight they need to make fast decisions that deliver brand growth. Tracking could do with a shake-up.

BEYOND SURVEYS TO INTEGRATED DATA INTELLIGENCE

To guide marketing decisions and actions most effectively, brand tracking needs to bring in – and bring together – the best data from

all available sources to answer each individual question. Collecting all the available data isn't enough; this disparate data must be treated intelligently, and then delivered in a timely, accessible way.

This means integrating focused, efficient surveys with the most relevant non-survey “big data” you can get your hands on, including all types of social and behavioral data as appropriate. It's about gathering exactly the right information that's required to make a decision – and only that information. This ensures that the brand spends its money exactly where it's needed, and gets answers as rapidly as possible.

Questions about brand communications, for example – such as “is our advertising delivering?” – could quickly be answered using search and social data to measure the impact in-market. “Which channels generate the best ROI?” could be determined by the passive identification of people actually exposed to different media activities.

The integration of sales and behavioral data alongside surveys will allow questions like “am I translating equity into purchase?” to be answered rapidly. When marketers want to know, “how strong is my brand?” social media data alone can provide an indicator of the underlying equity of most brands.

MEANINGFUL AND FUTURE-FOCUSED

Tracking data gleaned from different sources has to be connected and intelligently treated and analysed in order to explain brand performance – to ensure that it indicates the brand's future potential and informs early decisions about the actions to take to course-correct where necessary.

Marketers can turn hindsight into foresight by using measures that have already been proven to predict the future, or by applying predictive analytics and simulations. These link multiple data sources together and use models to detect the likely impact of marketing activity on sales performance, market share and price paid.

AT THE SPEED OF BUSINESS

To be really actionable, insights need to be delivered as soon as they're required to allow for early decision-making and course-correction, and presented in a way that's visually clear and impactful.

Better tech platforms and modular research methods will be key to the future of data delivery. Surveys will need to be delivered on any device. They should be short and focused so they work on smartphones and can be turned around fast. Results, too, will need to be accessible and shareable on any device – from real-time indicators of short-term activity (for instance online conversation that indicates the ad is being noticed), to deeper evaluations of whether the campaign is building the brand, and on to predictive insights that will improve the campaign's performance – such as which channels and ads are giving the best ROI.

The technical capability already exists to automate the real-time delivery of data to client management systems, and present it via intuitive, user-friendly dashboards.

Bring that capability together with exactly the right data, integrated from the best available

sources, using intelligent metrics and analytics, and marketers have the power to access a quality of information about the current and potential strength of their brands that has never before been possible.

The cost-effectiveness and speed of this approach allows marketers to ask as many questions as they like, as often as they need to – building up a deep, nuanced 360° picture of the brand. Not only do they understand how it's being perceived and experienced by consumers today; they know what this means for its long-term equity.

They also have the information they need to make both fast, iterative decisions that have a positive short-term effect on in-market activity, and long-term decisions that shape the brand's future strategy.

Key Takeaways

- **Marketers need fast, focused delivery of precisely the right data, from the best of all available sources.**
- **A “data-agnostic” philosophy is not enough – data must be treated intelligently to provide real meaning.**
- **Modular research and predictive insights mean money is spent exactly – and only – where it's needed.**