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Lessons Learned from 197 Metrics, 150 Studies, and 12 Essays: A Field Guide to Digital Metrics

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SIX LESSONS

Lesson 1: Don't Bite the Apple of Vanity Metrics

As Max Kilger, Experian's chief behavioral scientist, warns, "Far too often, metrics are selected because they... may look good, but may not mean much of anything." (Please see "Putting Big Data—and Big Data Metrics—in Perspective," on page 114).

Most likely reports crossing marketers' and researchers' desks list one or more brand objectives—broad-based goals such as "Generate 10 percent increase in sales leads over the next 90 days" or "Raise brand awareness from 20 percent to 50 percent among mothers with children younger than 18 in one year." Supporting charts or tables often will announce that "unique visitors doubled over last month," "page views are up 50 percent," "time on site increased from 15 seconds to 1 minute and 45 seconds," or " 'Likes' increased by 30 percent"—all resulting from the digital group's (modestly proclaimed) "brilliant" new strategy or marketing adjustment.

Numbers such as these make people feel good even as they give the impression that digital marketing efforts are paying off, but they don't answer any number of more pertinent concerns, including the following:

- Why were these metrics reported?
- How do they relate to an objective?
- After data analysis, what remain unanswered?

Brands need to answer these questions; frameworks can help.

Lesson 2: Impose a Framework on Measurement

Metrics, advises Florian Kahlert, GfK managing director of digital market intelligence, must be aligned with objectives (Please see "Finding the Right Digital Metrics for Brand Marketing," on page 115).

Kahlert emphasizes that all parties working toward achieving an objective—the brand organization, agencies, media outlets, and measurement partners—must agree not only on the objective but on the measures used to gauge progress. Without that shared understanding, Kahlert believes, each party may be inclined to select and report only those metrics that reflect their efforts in the best light, but when aggregated, the different metrics may not throw light on the brand's objective.

Frameworks provide the logic for selecting and reporting metrics: They are conceptual structures that support a specific approach to achieving a business objective. In a November 2010 presentation to the ARF Social Media Forum, Paul Banas, Kraft Foods Group's director/consumer insights and strategy, outlined the framework employed to achieve the goal of "increasing consumer involvement with the Oscar Mayer brand." For Banas's team, "involvement" captures what people are doing with the brand; the time they spend with it; and the social capital they expend on it.

This particular "social-involvement" framework is progressive—taking the form of a four-tiered pyramid with each level precisely defined, as the brand aims to move people from awareness to advocacy:

- Awareness (consumers passively receiving brand messages) forms the pyramid's base and lowest social involvement level.
- Social involvement increases with Participation (simple efforts to interact with the brand), which leads to….
- Engagement (greater or more frequent interaction with the brand and sharing) and culminates with…
- Advocacy (unsolicited speaking for the brand to other consumers). The brand aims to move people from awareness to advocacy.

Guided by the four pyramid levels and their definitions, Banas and his colleagues evaluated a variety of metrics before selecting a core group of 13—about three for each level of the pyramid.

Two examples at opposite extremes show how the metrics and levels fit together:

- The low-involving, passive Awareness metrics included impressions, reach, and brand mentions.
- Advocacy metrics focused on positive user-generated content created on the brand's behalf, the number of social recommendations, and the net promoter score.

Standardizing a set of metrics tied to its framework and brand objectives enabled the Oscar Mayer team to measure their marketing's effectiveness on moving people toward their goal of advocacy. By doing so, the group was able to streamline the metrics tracked and assign a clear, distinct role to each one. It also was able to increase its cumulative analytic power, achieve consistency in reporting, and enhance its ability to share insightful stories about the consumer journey from awareness to advocacy with co-workers and partners.

Brands with frameworks avoid the problems of vanity metrics, falling for "sexy" numbers, and wondering what they all mean. Frameworks provide discipline, rigor, guidance, and confidence. Marketers and researchers need to locate the frameworks employed by their brands and use the architecture to guide metrics selection, analysis, and reporting.

And if you don't have a framework handy? Invest in developing one.

Lesson 3: Optimize to Brand Objectives, not Platform Metrics

Many available digital metrics come as "endometrics"—measures that come from within the system being measured (*i.e.,* Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube). And it is vitally important to recognize that the metrics supplied by platforms are derived from their business philosophies and business models.

A social network that talks up the philosophy of engagement, word-of-mouth, "Liking," implied endorsements from friends, contacts or connections, or sharing as drivers of advertising effectiveness, for example, will capture data and report metrics along those lines. When their philosophies are promoted as "how advertising works on their platform" by themselves or others, brands quite naturally seek to optimize one or more of the metrics available for that platform to improve their chances for success.

Consider the ubiquitous "Like". How many times have you heard someone say: "We have to get more Likes!"? What, however, is the business reason why?

Optimizing to platform metrics benefits brands when it helps brands achieve specific objectives. For example, take the brand targeting greater growth by reaching light-users, brand-switchers, and non-users. Some research shows that people who Like a brand are disproportionately the brand's "heavy users" or deal-seekers (Nelson-Field, 2012; UPS, 2013). It is not—as often assumed—a diverse group of people with warm feelings towards a particular brand.

Given this finding, a strategy designed to increase Likes unintentionally risks transforming a growth play into a volume and promotion play. Undoubtedly it will achieve results but probably not the growth outcomes senior management seeks. Conversely, a brand aiming for volume gains or offering a sales promotion may find increasing Likes attractive.

Reflexively optimizing to platform philosophies and metrics puts the cart before the horse. Move that horse in front: Leverage your brand's framework, fit relevant vendor metrics to it, and optimize those. When using third-party platform-focused research, evaluate it thoroughly, then test the findings to determine whether, how, and when the findings apply to your brand.

Lesson 4: Let Metrics Be the Actors that Tell a Brand's Story

Digital media plans frequently employ combinations of interactive media channels and service providers. In fact, it has become routine for brands to deal with multiple disparate data sources for e-mail, social media, Web sites, and mobile. And, all too often, these sources are pitched into isolated data silos.

Keep in mind that the data used for metrics—and the metrics themselves—reflect the actions and behaviors customers or prospects take as they interact with brands, with advertising, and with one another. Integrating multiple data sources is to the brand's advantage, especially when that integration describes patterns of consumer behavior and engagement across media channels and touch points.

Going the next step—synthesizing data and generating insight—allows brands to gain insights into people and craft compelling stories about users' digital experiences told from their points of view. The stories are useful and informative in that they reflect, for example, the experiences people have had when they've clicked links in e-mails that they viewed on a smartphone and then traveled to sites where their journeys continued, the problems they faced, or the enjoyment they found—all pointing to a fuller understanding of the results the brand obtained.

In short, telling and sharing such stories through metrics helps brands enhance brand experiences and increases the chances of achieving brand objectives.

Lesson 5: Give Your Metrics "Characters" a "Personality"

Metrics represent people, help understand their richness and what makes them unique or what they hold in common and, in time, become a path to even deeper consumer insight. All too commonly, however, reported metrics lump people into totals or averages that yield the equivalent of stereotypes. Merely knowing a trend in "Total Unique Visitors" or "Time Spent on Site" does not provide any real insight.

Just as we appreciate and differentiate among our friends and family by their qualities, characteristics, and interests, segmentation in marketing research enables us to appreciate aspects of metrics.

A segment is a sub-group of a larger group. Gender, for example, is segmented into male and female. Age may be segmented any number of ways to suit a particular research purpose and analytic requirement, such as by decade, generation, or marketing target (*e.g.*, men ages 18 to 49). Each segment narrows—and focuses—our attention and gives more details about whom we are interested in.

The same holds true for digital metrics. They, too, generally are segmented by demographics, behavior, technology, and user profiles. Brands' abilities to segment vary according to their data sources, data-processing capabilities, and analytic resources. Segmentation tools are becoming more sophisticated and powerful.

Segmentation helps brands analyze progress toward achieving a business objective in ways that evaluating a total metric by itself often cannot. Assume, for example, that a brand's business objective is to build its Web site traffic 35 percent per month. Assume, further, that the brand's framework for building its user base (as distinct from just "getting more traffic") is to attract new users and retain prior visitors and that the brand implements a strategy based on that framework.

One month later, the brand manager gets a fresh metrics report showing that Unique Visitors climbed 25 percent. Can the success of the brand's strategy be properly evaluated with that number?

(Of course not…. But it sure sounds good.)

The brand needs data about what types of visitors came to its site. It needs data segmented by visitor type to properly evaluate the strategy's ability to attract new and prior visitors.

Most analytic packages segment "Unique Visitors" in three ways:

- New Visitors (first-timers in a reporting period);
- Repeat Visitors (people who come two or more times in one reporting period); and
- Returning Visitors (people who come two or more times across reporting periods).

By looking at changes in the numbers for the three segments, the brand can better judge how its strategy is working—much more so than it would be able to do with just the raw number of total visitors. Drilling down even deeper by creating sub-segments for media type and device, for instance, adds descriptive precision about the visitors' context that can be used to fine-tune strategy. To illustrate:

- Most New Unique Visitors usually use a smartphone to access a site.
- Returning Unique Visitors most often use a laptop or desktop to furnish guidance for optimizing each type of experience.

Understanding the different usage patterns may well contribute to more effective strategy.

Digging down into different user segments highlights the merit of relying less on one-size-fits-all stereotypes and choosing to understand people and their "personalities" in ways that brands can leverage. And although the example of a Unique-Visitor hierarchy helps explain that process, the opportunity for products and services to develop analytic insight are seemingly endless brands that choose to take advantage of "out-of-the-box" custom segmentation that leads to better understanding of specific brand purposes.

Segments, in short, supply more granular analysis, more penetrating business insight, and ultimately better storytelling. Explore them.

Lessons 6: Embrace Measurement's Paradigm Shift

Experts contributing to the *Field Guide*'s viewpoints section (Please see "Perspectives and Practices in Today's Measurement Ecosystem" below) describe a shift from metrics rooted in a paradigm centered on media exposure ("What is our advertising doing to people?") to metrics grounded in social activity ("What are people doing with our advertising?")

The movement is toward understanding people as people—their situations, behaviors, connections, interactions, influences, subconscious processes, and emotions—to grasp why they do what they do. With that knowledge at hand, researchers can apply it to create more effective advertising, marketing, and media strategy.

Case in point: The advent of social-television ratings heralds the beginning of valuing and incorporating social data into metrics—an important step forward in what we have begun to call the "engagement age" or "participation era."

It's only a step, however. Marketing researchers still need to find new ways of tapping into audience data and, thereby, continue to move our industry on its path of updating its mental models—maturing from the widely held practices grounded in mass-media thinking to newer ways of accommodating digital, interactive, and social concepts of communications effectiveness.

Advances in measurement will follow changes in mental models that become adopted. With new metrics for guidance and management that are tuned to the age we live in, the prospects for brands to prosper become brighter.

Perspectives and Practices in Today's Measurement Ecosystem

Essays from Four Industry Thought Leaders

Editor's Note: *The four essays that follow form a compelling narrative about the state of the art of both measurement and metrics. They take us from the need for cross-platform measurement, through selecting metrics, to measuring campaign delivery and effectiveness. In summary:*

Nielsen's Megan Clarken *begins by explaining the need for cross-platform measurement. Content, Clarken insists, is king. For media owners to attract advertising dollars, they need metrics that enable performance comparisons and contrasts across all media types and devices so that each media owner can tell a convincing story. Ideally, the metrics would come from an independent agency with experience in multi-screen measurement and adheres to standards.*

Max Kilger *of Experian Marketing Services recognizes that brands operate in a world with many metrics that come from many different sources. To avoid a "melee of metrics," he writes, brands and their partners should spend time organizing metrics into a framework (heuristic) so that they can be selected, structured, and related in a way meaningful to the brand.*

In this era of Big Data, Kilger makes the important point that "more data does not mean better metrics." In fact, he explains, more data *translate into different types of measurement problems. Knowing what the data actually measure—and insisting on quality—has become more important than ever before. And Kilger's discussion of a "privacy paradox," with its critical implications for both data quality and the quality metrics produced, should be strongly considered by every organization collecting consumer data.*

With so many options, which metrics should a brand use? GfK's Florian Kahlert *explains how to relate metrics to the brand—clearly state brand objectives at the outset and agree on them. Then, he counsels, make sure they are achievable; know what you need to measure; select the tools for measuring; decide whether you want to rely on your media partner or an independent party; and share your goals with your measurement partner to make sure you're in complete agreement.*

Finally, brands running advertising need to know about performance. The questions are simple: Is the media plan delivering? Is our advertising effective? ComScore's Gian Fulgoni *explains that gross rating points (GRP) increasingly are being used to plan and measure digital campaigns. He shows that by using viewable impressions (and by improving their targeting), brands can discover whether their campaigns are being delivered as intended.*

For effectiveness, Fulgoni points out that consumers' attitudinal and behavioral changes can be measured in near real time. With this metrical insight and the capabilities of digital-advertising technologies, advertisers and agencies are in a position to optimize their campaigns while they are running, increase relevancy of their messaging and, potentially, improve advertising performance.

The Case for Holistic Measurement

Megan Clarken, EVP/Global Product Leadership, Nielsen

Although radio, television, and newsprint continue to form part of our personal media choices, we will still have media companies and industries that claim ownership of these consumption platforms and the rules that regulate them. Who owns the Internet, however, and can the media industry continue to try to lay claim to the devices consumers use to access content?

In the past, concepts of ownership were simple. Television media giants owned the television set and established the standards for how we rate programs. Newspaper and magazine publishers owned the printed press and set the rules for how we count readership and circulation. Radio companies owned the radio and set the rules for how we measure listenership. The world was reasonably simple and "silo-ed," as media brands competed against one another for the attention of advertisers.

Roll forward, however: Who owns the PC, the smartphone, and the tablet? Who owns the next screen or device in which we'll consume media? Is ownership of the device even relevant anymore? What is the online media industry? Does it own these devices and how we measure them? What is an online media company, anyway?

I've worked in the media industry for several decades now, and here's how I see it: A media company is one that uses a medium to communicate to people. To sustain its business, it needs revenue, and that revenue is primarily generated through advertising.

To attract advertising, media companies need to distribute compelling content that attracts their audience. Contemporary audiences demand that content be available anywhere, anytime.

For companies that fulfill these caveats, the single most important element above is compelling content: not a classified ad, or a storefront, or a search result for that matter, but good old-fashioned content.

Though some media companies today may lay claim to the traditional device that they originated from, none can claim the digital "airwaves" or the device at the other end. They can and should all use digital to their advantage.

So, we're left with a media world that is 100 percent digitally enabled, aimed at distributing compelling content anywhere, anytime, and sustained by advertising revenue.

If you believe this—it is perilous not to—you also have to believe that to attract advertising dollars, the measurement requirements are the same for all media companies regardless of where the content is delivered.

How many people did I reach, and how many times did I reach them? Did I reach target, did the message resonate, and did it generate the desired reaction?

Regardless of whether the medium is addressable, regardless of how the advertisement was placed, as a media company, to compete against the rest, there needs to be a compelling story—and that story is best told as one set of numbers, regardless of where and how the content was consumed or the advertisement was delivered.

Evidence shows that those numbers are best sourced through an independent provider who understands multi-screen behavior and how to measure across platforms—and who instills advertiser confidence through trust, transparency, and compliance.

Why is this important? Unlike traditional media devices, digital devices introduce "audience leakage." In other words, media companies are no longer competing against one another but against every other form of activity known to humans. Bored with this program, I'll just play a game; I'll surf using search; and I'll shop—in other words, the competition to retain an audience on these devices is fierce. To retain a premium for advertising, companies must tell a premium story—across devices covering the reach, resonance, and reaction to content and advertising I mentioned a moment ago.

What about the other "online businesses?" Well, they're just businesses that have found a channel and have taken advantage of the technology—adapting their business models to be relevant in a digital world. Shopping, searching, matching: They're offline business models that skipped straight past GO and collected $200. They also need measurement, but the KPIs that define their success are different. I can assure you that online businesses have workable KPIs and are refining their metrics by the day to also compete for advertising dollars.

The takeaway for media companies is to focus on what they do best:

- create and distribute compelling content over all of the channels that are available to them;
- sell the story as a complete and premium story and measure it that way, independently and comparatively; and
- finally, be good at it: The competition has just begun and you no longer own the screen.

Putting Big Data—and Big Data Metrics—in Perspective

Max Kilger, PhD, Chief Behavioral Scientist, Experian Consumer Insights

One consequence of Big Data is the plethora of new metrics that are available today, as this book amply demonstrates. In some of the mobile research Experian's Simmons has done, I have described the situation as a "melee of metrics." There is such a staggering array of Big Data–generated metrics that researchers have difficulty selecting which ones are really important and deciding what those selected metrics really mean.

Organizing schemes (heuristics) play an important role in overcoming the selection and meaning problem by revealing the structure and relationships among metrics. For example, when faced with a gaggle of more than 100 mobile metrics, my colleagues and I developed a heuristic in the shape of a pyramid that clearly outlined their purpose and their relationships (See Figure 1).

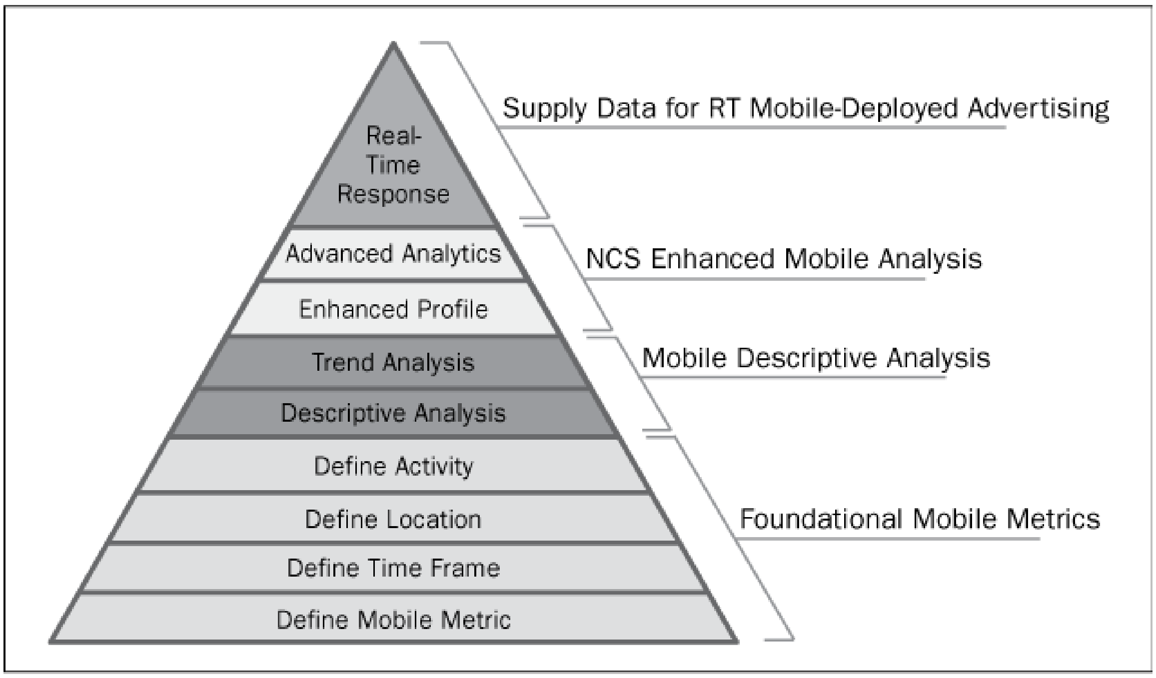

Figure 1 Heuristic Device for Mobile Metrics, Experian Consumer Insights

This step facilitated a much better understanding of the measurement arena for the researchers involved that later guided the development of relevant client-facing metrics dashboards.

Here is what we learned:

- More Data Do Not Mean Better Metrics

Big Data's emergence in market research derives in no small part from the deployment of passive measurement applications that run in the background on platforms, such as mobile devices, and record application use, Web browsing, and GPS location, for example. However, using passive measurement does not always directly translate into more accurate measurement.

Consider the case when someone opens an application on his or her smartphone, uses it, and then puts the phone away without closing the application—the "pocketful of measurement problem." Monitoring applications often record the application as open and being used for a long period of time when in fact it is no longer being used by the person. How much time was actually spent with the app? We can't know. Problems such as these introduce gross inaccuracies that are capable of generating potentially misleading metrics that lead to bad insights and poor decisions. Disentangling measurement issues such as these are some of the challenges Big Data researchers must grapple with if Big Data promises are to be realized.

- The Issue of Privacy and Big Data

Big Data bring privacy to the forefront. Connecting many disparate databases to produce a clearer picture of the consumer elevates privacy concerns. Market researchers need to build a better, more comprehensive understanding of privacy. Phenomena such as the privacy paradox—where individuals express conservative views about personal privacy but then exhibit behaviors that suggest just the opposite—need to be understood.

For example, a recent national probability study found that about 37 percent of the adult U.S. population would be willing to provide some personal information to a company to get something they want. How the privacy paradox affects consent rates, return rates, item non-response, and other key response measures is important because, like passive measurement, it affects data quality and ultimately the value of the metrics we produce and the actions we take based on them.

In summary, the emergence of Big Data and Big Data metrics heralds a new era that is likely to change market research in ways that will persist for many years. The potential for discovery and for advancing our knowledge of consumers and consumer behavior is significant. Despite the hype and magical thinking around Big Data's potentials and benefits, the new metrics we work with must be derived from high-quality data sources.

Every brand needs to establish or enforce its own data standards—quality in, quality out—and select those metrics that measure what is meaningful for the brand. It is an exciting and a challenging time for researchers; hopefully, we will make the best of this new era in marketing to benefit our brands and customers.

Finding the Right Digital Metrics for Brand Marketing

Florian Kahlert, Managing Director / Digital Market Intelligence, GfK

In the early days of digital media, the allure and promise were that advertising was directly measurable—practically Nirvana for people who wanted to understand the value of their advertising.

With the opportunities, however, came controversies—many of them "teapot tempests," from today's perspective. First, we started quibbling about a page impression: Should it be defined by a hit or a page load? Then we tried to nail down the ad impression: Should it count only when the advertisement is fully downloaded or when it is simply requested from the ad server? Clicks came into fashion, but after people started generating automated clicks for campaigns, they fell out of fashion.

Things only get more complex when we begin to look at brand advertising. Does a click really represent a changed attitude toward a brand? Is it really more relevant when the user engages with a brand message for 10 seconds rather than 5? Or 20 seconds rather than 15?

The truth is, we have tried a lot of metrics and approaches—not necessarily because they were the *right* metrics but because they seemed easy to collect and measure reliably.

And, for things such as direct response advertising, this expedient approach works pretty well.

The picture is quite different, however, for brands. Brands are often not looking for a conversion (you won't likely be buying cheese slices online); they have goals that are less easily measured. And here I just used the critical word: *goals.* A goal can be a change in attitude toward a brand, recall, association, favorability, purchase intent—or, ideally, purchases online or off-line. Those goals most often cannot be expressed by easy digital metrics, such as "clicks," and are more difficult to pin down.

To make matters more complicated, not all brand marketers have the same goals for their campaigns; in fact, a marketer might have two goals for the same campaign. For a new brand, awareness may be the priority, but for toothpaste with 90 percent awareness, purchase intent will likely take precedence. The challenge is to measure what the campaign was intended to achieve.

To be insightful, then, a metric must be relevant. We cannot change the goals to match the most convenient metrics, and we should not pretend that clicks are equal to purchase intent.

Six Steps to Help Make Your Next Digital Campaign More Effective

- Clearly define and communicate the goals of your campaign—not in metrics, but in objectives: "If I achieve a click rate of 0.5 percent, my campaign is successful" is not a goal. "I would like to increase awareness of my brand by at least x percent," however, might well be a goal.
- Make sure your goal is achievable and that the media plan and creative support it: If you have a creative that is designed to drive clicks but people don't remember why they clicked or what brand the advertisement was for, you've failed. If you go with the goal of raising awareness but your goal is impossible to achieve, you are likewise in trouble. For example, raising awareness by 15 percentage points when your base awareness is in the 80 percent range is probably not do-able. Focusing on achievable targets and supporting them with logical steps are key.
- Once you have identified what you need to measure (*e.g.* awareness or purchase intent), select the proper tools to measure: If it is a hard goal (*e.g.*, driving people to a site or asking them to download information), conversion pixels may be appropriate, allowing you to directly measure how well you're doing. If your success metric is brick-and-mortar sales increases, however, things are a bit trickier. Most likely you will have to use an indirect metric (*e.g.*, measure purchase intent as an indicator with a known correlation to purchase).
- Decide whether you want to rely on your media partner or an independent third party to provide these metrics: Often, a third party will use the same tools, but usually it can measure your entire plan, not just one site or a few sites. Conversely, it will charge you for the service, whereas media partners often include metrics as a value add.
- When you select your partners, make sure you understand what they measure, what methodology they use, and what they deliver to you: Some will provide you with data, some with insights and analysis, and the fees they will charge may reflect this. That doesn't mean that more expensive is better, but there are constraints. You shouldn't expect a research company to deliver a full campaign with insights and analysis for the same price as a raw data delivery in a SAAS environment.
- Make sure you share your goals with your measurement partners of choice: They can help you decide how to best measure it. It may be a survey that can help you understand why people are making a certain selection, or it may be a passive tracking solution (which tells you what people are doing), or a combination of both.
- In summary, decide on the goals of your digital brand campaign first. Then use that knowledge to select your metrics. Even if it's a metric that seems outlandish, push for it; don't be guided just by what is "known," "conventional," or supposedly "do-able."

Measuring the Delivery and Effectiveness of Digital Media Plans

Gian Fulgoni, co-founder and executive chairman, comScore, Inc.

Late in 2011, the 3MS initiative ("Making Measurement Make Sense") was launched by three key trade groups: the Interactive Advertising Bureau, which represents online publishers; the Association of National Advertisers, which represents advertisers; and the 4As (formerly known as the American Association of Advertising Agencies). One of the key tenets of 3MS was moving digital measurement from a "served" ad impression to a "viewable" standard, which is to say an ad impression that is visible to the end user. In television parlance, this means "having an opportunity" to be seen.

ComScore has now conducted numerous studies around the globe measuring the degree to which digital ad impressions are viewable, and the results clearly show that there is much room for improvement. In more than 4,000 studies involving billions of impressions from dozens of leading advertisers such as General Mills, P&G, Ford, and Allstate, we have found that on, average, about 30 percent of display ads are never visible to the end user, generally because the user doesn't scroll down the page far enough or leaves the page before the advertisement is fully rendered.

Obviously, a non-viewable advertisement has no possibility of affecting behavior. As a result, publishers are now beginning to guarantee the viewability of their inventory, much to the delight of their advertiser clients. This undoubtedly helps make digital advertising more directly comparable to television advertising and should help in the formulation of more powerful multi-platform advertising campaigns. It will be most interesting to see the rate at which guaranteed viewable impressions become an industry standard.

An important issue that needs to be mentioned at this point is the relative accuracy of cookie-based targeting. ComScore research has shown that while it's generally superior to what can be achieved using traditional media, it often fails to match the hype. Because of cookie deletion (comScore research has shown that about 30 percent of Internet users delete their ad server cookies in a month at a rate of five to six times per month) and the fact that a cookie is a unique browser identifier (but not a person identifier), a cookie can often fail to accurately reflect the demographic and behavioral characteristics of the person using the computer at any given point in time. Here's what comScore has found:

Targeting accuracy using cookies (percent of impressions)

- 70 percent for one demo (*e.g.*, women);
- 48 percent for two demos (*e.g.*, women ages 18 to 34);
- 11 percent for three demos (*e.g.*, women ages 18 to 34 with kids); and
- 36 percent for behavioral targeting delivered accurately.

On a related topic, digital media are seeing a growing use of online GRPs to plan and measure the delivery of digital campaigns while the plan is still running. When coupled with a viewability measure and a targeting accuracy metric, this can provide a huge step forward in ensuring that an advertiser's media plan is being delivered as intended.

This was vividly illustrated recently by Kellogg's (a comScore client), which reported a 5× to 6× increase in financial return on investment from its digital campaigns since the client began making on-the-fly adjustments to the delivery of its digital media plans. An indication of the growing use of these metrics is that comScore's Campaign Essentials product suite has now been used in more than 5,000 studies by 160 advertisers/agencies across 32 countries, and its use is accelerating rapidly.

Turning to the measurement of the impact of digital campaigns, there are now a variety of ways in which the attitudinal or behavioral impact of online campaigns can be measured—including the ability to measure attitudinal shifts while the campaign is still running (which allows for in-flight adjustments). Because of this, it's especially frustrating to see click-through rates (CTR) still being utilized as an effectiveness metric, even though CTRs average no more than 0.1 percent (yes, that's only one in 1,000 ads in a campaign being clicked) and despite the fact that research has shown no relationship between CTRs and campaign effectiveness (Fulgoni and Mörn, 2009).

A recent comScore survey found that fully one-third of advertisers, agencies, and publishers routinely use CTR as a performance metric. The reasons are simple: CTR is fast, inexpensive, and easy to compute … but unfortunately, it's also a fundamentally misleading measure of digital advertising effectiveness.

When the correct behavioral effectiveness metrics are used, including the all-important lift in sales, the effectiveness of digital advertising becomes clear. For example, comScore compared the average sales lift from television advertising for CPG brands (as measured by Information Resources using its BehaviorScan system) with the lift generated by online advertising as measured by comScore in hundreds of real-world studies comparing ad-exposed consumers to non-exposed control groups.

We found that television generated an average in-store sales lift of 8 percent over a year, whereas online advertising (over a three-month period) generated an average in-store sales lift of 9 percent. Further analysis showed that the faster impact of online advertising occurred because of two factors:

- a greater use of price and promotion incentives in digital ads compared to television ads, and
- the more precise targeting that online advertising provides.

The keys to measuring delivery and success are using the right methods and metrics, not necessarily the ones that are the most accessible or convenient.

Reference

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