

In Terms of ROI: Getting Excited about the Media Research Priorities - Bill Harvey - MediaBizBloggers



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There is a healthy sense across the industry of readiness for positive change in media research. Several new groups have arisen which call attention to this common theme. The old rhetoric that maintained the status quo for so long no longer holds sway. This is all very good news.

The general progressive outlook is tempered by realization that before there have been high hopes and aspirations ultimately left unfulfilled. Everyone driving the change train is quick to candidly express their concerns that maybe we won't hold this new movement together, and from its diverse interests and ideas coalesce something workable and sustainable. This frankness is also good.

Today's blog posting aims to help keep the train moving toward convergence by airing some of the factional forces within the overall movement. As we talk with people across the industry about their priorities for media research improvement, five directions emerge: singlesource/ROI, crossmedia, set top box, engagement, and Hispanic. Not intending to account for 100% of the varied interests out there I apologize if I've left off the reader's very own. I trust such omissions will be vocalized by commentary added to this blog.

Set Top Box

Let's start with set top box. Since my hollering in the desert about STB back in the '90s when we were the only ones doing it, it's gratifying that this submovement has become massive. Fueled by reaction against the Nielsen monopoly, and the increasing TV audience fragmentation which demands far larger sample sizes than are affordable through opt-in panels and new-install technology, STB appears an obvious answer to the majority of practitioners today.

STB is not easy and no research is perfect. Therefore the real question with STB is "How do we combine STB with other methods and data to give us everything we need, in a way that is affordable and truly better than what we have now?" This is something which is at the core of what TRA's Media TRAnalytics © is all about. Several companies each with their own idea as to how to answer this are following their stars and at the same time eagerly studying the CIMM RFPs to see how a large chunk of the industry feels about the answer to this question. We may see some companies change course once guided by CIMM thinking.

Crossmedia

The other CIMM RFP focuses on crossmedia. Like most terms of art in media research, the term 'crossmedia' means different things to different people at different times. To some it is all about measuring video exposure in its entirety across TV, Internet and mobile. To others it's about measuring all major media on the same sample to know the reach/frequency across a campaign in TV, Internet, mobile, radio, magazines, newspapers and outdoor (plus perhaps other media). Yet others think of crossmedia in terms of knowing how each of the latter media contribute not only to reach/frequency but also how they contribute to ROI (media exposure that drives product sales).

I am of the last camp: ***I no longer can get excited about counting eyeballs or opportunities to see.*** Without an effectiveness aspect, to me media research is stuck measuring something gross and of questionable value, and spending the brainpower of extremely smart people making sure that these mere exposure measures are as accurate as can be. To me that is a shame when what the advertiser has always needed is a more scientific and empirical means of maximizing ROI, and eyeball data are not that.

The pivot point in crossmedia is the degree to which ROI will ultimately be desired within crossmedia. If that is low priority and exposure is all we want, then opt-in panels with new-install technology are the way to go. If we will also want ROI out of crossmedia in the end then we had better make huge crossmedia samples affordable, because without huge samples we will not be able to take advantage of crossmedia ROI analysis because the cell sizes of those exposed to various media/creative permutations and the subcell sizes of the different brand purchase behavior change groups within these crossmedia cells will be too small to read with statistical significance. This stems from the fragmentation of media audiences crossed with the small size of most brand penetration levels.

TRA, giving ROI the highest priority, of course has taken the route of building a system that is inherently crossmedia (today focused on TV) and capable of affordably sustaining huge sample sizes.

Singlesource/ROI

The industry leaders who give singlesource (SS) the highest priority are looking for two things, one of which is effectiveness measurement through ROI. The other is the ability to target purchaser segments directly, without having to do the inferential surrogate indirect matching via demographics, which loses so much signal into mere noise.

Others hark back to DAGMAR and seek to measure effectiveness based on surveys rather than based on hard purchase data, and therefore would give up on ROI, instead settling for ROO (Return On Objectives, stated in terms of communications goals e.g. 70% awareness, 20% consideration, etc.). Because of the current-day major importance of marketing mix modeling (MMM) in helping major advertisers decide on media budget allocations, we do not believe in this path any longer; the C suite already has embraced MMM for its hard dollar figures and survey stats are not going to find a place at that table.

Again we at TRA have taken the path of massive sample sizes in order to yield statistically significant actionable insights regarding how specific media/creative now driving the highest brand ROI should receive higher allocation.

Engagement

If ever a word meant different things to different people, Engagement is such a word. Briefly eclipsing the ARF Model a couple of years ago, Engagement is now being subsumed into the ARF Model by the ARF 360 Council, and in the process different types of Engagement are emerging – physical, mental, emotional, etc.

To us, the greatest value of this concept is to get the industry to do work linking the step by step processes within the human psyche that need to be elicited in order to cause purchase behavior change. Our hunch is that brainwaves are going to be an important contributor in this quest. But remember that the highest form of engagement is the purchase action, something TRA is all about.

Hispanic

A large and growing segment of the U.S. population is automatically a priority. To the Spanish Language media of course this has to remain the highest priority *a priori*. The real question has always been "What is the psychological benefit of using Spanish Language media and how does this translate to ROI?" Because we tend to measure what we can measure and that has always been eyeballs, the question was diminished to "How much reach do these Spanish Language media add to the general market media we are already using?" That somewhat more irrelevant

question was easily and quickly and repeatedly answered in a way which has limited the growth of Spanish Language media.

TRA today is able to answer the ROI question about Spanish Language TV. In May 2009 for example, TRA has a sample of 125,160 households that had at least five minutes of contiguous tuning to one or more of the 4 Spanish language networks AZA, TEL, TLF, and UNI. More than enough sample to nail the ROI question.

In Conclusion

These are some of our thoughts about five of the media research priorities for the coming age of improvement. We humbly submit these thoughts in the hope of provoking a dialogue among us through this column. What is your priority?

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