Media Planning in the digital environment: can one define relative media effectiveness

Abstract

Media planning should be orientated to optimise effectiveness, however the ongoing digitisation of media channels, proliferation of media vehicles and fragmentation of target audiences (Bianco, 2004), continues to complicate the process of selecting media through which to deliver effective marketing communications and has reinforced the complex, silo driven, intra-media planning environment (Assael, 2011) with channel decisions being taken in isolation via unrelated and unconnected media measurement (Schultz, 2006).

But is it possible to identify real media effectiveness? Jenkinson (2007) highlights that planning is often polarised between 'attitudinal' and 'behavioural' paradigms, which view 'effectiveness' differently.

A number of studies have sought to identify the most effective medium, either across an 'all adults' sample frame (Danaher & Rossiter, 2011, Meulders, 2011) or via media usage structures (Grenville & Novak, 2010) but measurement criteria differ.

This study seeks to identify if a common understanding of 'media effectiveness' can be found that enables robust comparison of media. In addition, it looks to test the principle of media usage segmentation and explores whether effectiveness varies by such audience segmentation. In depth interviews with agency and corporate media planners will be undertaken followed by a consumer survey segmented across digital natives and digital immigrants.

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Background / rationale

The ongoing digitisation of media channels, proliferation of media vehicles and fragmentation of target audiences (Bianco, 2004), continues to complicate the process of selecting media through which to deliver effective marketing communications for advertisers and marketers.

This fragmentation of media has reinforced the complex, silo driven, intra-media planning environment (Assael, 2011) with channel decisions being taken in isolation, via unrelated and unconnected media measurement methodologies (Schultz, 2006) and, in many instances, in competition with one another, in the chase for a slice of the budget and income (Jenkinson, 2007). Many advertisers have shifted budgets from traditional mass media to narrowly targetted media (Heo & Cho, 2009) and online media (Edelmann, 2007) lured by the opportunities for increased accountability and measurement, despite being proven to be less effective against a range of brand engagement measures (Meulders & Roozen, 2011).

Good practice argues that taking a holistic view of the audience media consumption and understanding their 'touchpoints' and likely communications journey is important, together with an understanding of media interaction, repetition and synergy (Chang and Thorson, 2003, Jenkinson, 2007, Schultz, 2006; 2009) will deliver the greatest persuasion effect and reach the desired communication objectives (Dijkstra, Buijtels & van Raaij, 2005). Jenkinson (2007) highlights, however, that planning is often polarised between 'attitudinal' and 'behavioural' paradigms, which view 'effectiveness' differently.

A number of studies have been sought to measure perceptions of channel effectiveness and which media channels deliver better engagement, persuasion or brand experience (Bezjian-Avery, Calder, & Iacobucci, 1998; Danaher & Rossiter, 2011; Meulders, 2011), others looked to understand how best to combine media channels to optimise effectiveness (Chang & Thorson, 2003; Edell & Keller, 1989; Kanso & Nelson, 2004), identify the issues of simultaneous media usage (Pilotta & Schultz, 2005) and postulate various conditions for optimising media synergy (Schultz, 2006; 2009). Chaffey (2009) outlines a sequential process, referred to as the 'customer journey', around which planning should be orientated to optimise effectiveness, with clear accountable and measurable KPI's, emphasising the behavioural school of thought.

Much of this research draws generic conclusions across an 'all adults' sample frame, however as Chaffey (ibid) highlights it is important to consider different customer segments. In terms of media planning, many studies have sought to explore the media habits of different segments, such as 'generation X' (Dou, Wang & Zhou, 2006) or 'green consumers' (Shrum, McCarty & Lowrey, 1995). Other research has looked to understand the consumption for various media as a predictor to likely interaction, such as television viewing (Frank & Greenberg, 2000; McCarty & Shrum, 1993) or internet usage (Assael (2005). Heo & Cho (2009) describe these various studies as being connected to three key areas: usage and gratification studies, taxonomical studies and media-market matching studies. Their own study identifying three cluster groups (Print-oriented information /surveillance users; mediocre passive users; and sensual video-audio fun-seekers) amongst their student sample in an attempt to provide 'practical guidelines for media decision making in the multi-media environment' but these were not linked back to media effectiveness. In a larger study, Grenville & Novak (2010) surveyed 3000 individuals across UK, Canada & the US and identified five media types, as detailed in Figure 1. This media usage typography is a useful insight into understanding the broad audience, but, as with the previous media study, the clusters are not identifiable within the real world and there is no clarification of implications for

media effectiveness for an advertiser with a specific target audience or communication objectives.

Figure 1: Five key media usage categories (Grenville & Novak, 2010)

	US	UK	Canada
Media Maniacs	14%	11%	14%
Socialites	13%	17%	12%
Broadcast Receivers	29%	29%	34%
Joe Watchers	33%	32%	24%
Tuned-Outs	11%	11%	16%

As practitioners generally centre their planning around a specific target audience to deliver a clear objective (Barker and Roberts, 2010) it is interesting that so much of the academic work that seeks 'to inform advertisers about media effectiveness' fails to look at these factors.

As a result this research seeks to explore this apparent gap in the research and seeks to identify a common understanding of media effectiveness and explore whether it is influenced by the audiences' underlying media consumption habits.

- Media effectiveness can be agreed across the two paradigms
- Media effectiveness, thus agreed, varies by target audience segment
- Media effectiveness is influenced by the audience segments media usage characteristics, in particular their online or offline usage

Therefore it does not only look at the issue of media effectiveness but will apply a simple segmentation approach, exploiting this apparent digital divide to compare findings between a so-called 'digitally savvy' youth group (Referred to by Palfrey (2011) as 'digital natives') and a bunch of 'old fogies' (referred to as 'digital immigrants').

Aims and Objectives

The research is therefore looking at whether the relative media effectiveness of digital <u>and</u> traditional media varies by audience segment, in particular, segments with different apparent levels of online and offline usage.   As a result this research aims to add to the body of research on media effectiveness in general and the issues around segmentation and online vs. offline.

To achieve this there are a number of objectives. Firstly, it is clear that there is more than one view as to what constitutes media effectiveness, particularly between the attitudinal and behavioural paradigms. Therefore it is important to determine what factors are used by advertisers and marketers to determine effectiveness.

Secondly, despite the fact that advertisers' ability to plan media holistically is frustrated by the general disconnectedness of media measurement, systems are being devised within agencies and client organisations to enable integrated communications planning to be undertaken. This research will therefore seek to evaluate how media planning is undertaken by UK agencies to identify the best practice, models and techniques being used to overcome this.

Thirdly, based upon the fact that marketers often target discrete audiences with products and services this research seeks to evaluate the media consumption patterns of different audience segments and how this impacts on media effectiveness. Within the limitations of this research only two segments will be evaluated, selected on the basis of their overtly different media habits.

The core objectives for this research are therefore:

- Investigate the determining factors of media effectiveness
- Evaluate current approaches to media planning undertaken by UK agencies and marketing organisations to identify best practice, models and technologies used to assess media effectiveness
- Analyse if media consumption patterns of 'digital natives' differs from those of 'digital immigrants'
- Identify whether any variation in media consumption found might affect media effectiveness

Study design

It is necessary to consider whether it would be more appropriate to use either Exploratory or Conclusive research to help achieve the objectives (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). The objective of 'Exploratory' research is "To provide insights and understanding", the emphasis being on understanding; were as 'Conclusive' research is "To test specific hypotheses and examine relationships" with an emphasis on measuring (ibid pg 70). In order to understand which would be the most appropriate approach for this research, further analysis of the characteristics of each of these design methods was examined. The Exploratory design has a research process that is flexible and can be of an unstructured basis with a small sample size. This form of research can be either Qualitative or Quantitative (ibid). In contrast conclusive design requires the information to be closely defined, with a very structured research process, a large representative sample size and any sub-groups or segments being analysed independently, so tends to be quantitative (ibid)

This research is seeking to understand and is based upon a loose hypothesis that media effectiveness can be defined but that it will vary by audience segment. It will definitely require a flexible approach and will be looking to form understanding through the collection of 'opinion' from experts and test that understanding against contrasting segments of media consumers. Therefore the exploratory research design is the most appropriate. The research will use a mixed method, or multi-strategy research design (Robson, 2011) utilising both qualitative and quantitative elements. Robson defines this as a 'pragmatic' approach to research, because the study seeks to identify 'how' and 'why' something is happening. According to Kotler & Armstrong (2005) qualitative data requires capturing large amounts of data on past & present behaviour, attitudes, knowledge and respondent characteristics with a view to gaining an extended sense of the problem based on statistically valid data. It is very much about measurement and the generation of 'hard data'. Qualitative research by contrast uses open ended, narratives taken from field notes, personal diaries, etc., and is strong on 'context' (ibid), as summarised in Appendix 1.

The research will be divided into a number of separate studies to enable the collection of the necessary data to answer the various research questions.

The first study, designed to meet objectives 1 and 2, is essentially exploratory, to find out what is happening (Saunders, *et al.* 2006) therefore the principal research methods will be to review the available literature and conduct qualitative in-depth interviews with experts on the subject. This will generate primarily qualitative data which will seek to shed light and understanding in this area. This is essential contextual data and the research questions will include:

- RQ1: how do advertising and marketing practitioners define 'media effectiveness' ?
- RQ2: how do media planning practitioners decide which is the most effective media to use for a particular campaign?

The second study will be more explanatory in nature (Malhotra & Birks, 2006) seeking to explain whether the relative effectiveness of media varies across different groups when segmented by digital media usage. The key strategy will be to review available secondary data sources and conduct interviews to identify any links between audience segmentation and media effectiveness. The following hypothesis is posed alongside the research questions, however, it is still regarded as an interpretivist study (Robson, 2011) as answers gained are designed to be viewed in tandem with the qualitative study and lead to greater understanding in this area.

- H1: Relative media effectiveness is not affected by the audience segments media consumption patterns
- RQ3: Do consumers who have grown up with digital technology demonstrate different media consumption patterns to older consumers?
- RQ4: Which medium, or combination of media, are most effective in delivering brand and product communication objectives?

Overall this research will essentially be a cross sectional study, identifying the phenomenon at the particular time of the study (Saunders, et al. 2006).

Methods

As detailed above, this research will be comprised of a number of different studies in order to answer the various research questions.

Study 1: The Marketer and Practitioner perspective - designed to meet objectives 1 and 2.

This study will be designed specifically to explore current marketing communication practice from a marketer's perspective and will use secondary research and primary data. Secondary research sources include WARC, Admap, Media Week, Brand Republic, E-consultancy, IAB (Interactive Advertising Bureau), ITV, RAB (Radio Advertising Bureau), thinkbox (the marketing body for commercial TV in the UK), and other sources related to the various institutes and publications supported by marketing and media practitioners. In addition IPA (Institute of Practitioners in Advertising) case studies will be reviewed for evidence of media effectiveness and provide current descriptions of practitioner and customer experience in this area.

The primary research will explore the subjective experience of individuals through qualitative analysis (Burns, 2000) and then consider the differences in understanding and usage between three cohorts to ensure that the key differences in roles and responsibility were accommodated:

- Founders & principals who undertake media planning within specialist digital & social media agencies
- Senior advertising agency communication planners amongst UK's agency groups
- Corporate interviews will be held with marketing directors in both B2B and B2C organisations

The sampling technique is essentially non-probabilistic, requiring purposive sampling, or judgement (Saunders, et al. 2006) to identify the required experts and then the convenience of the individual being available for the in-depth interview. In total a sample of 15 interviews will be targetted to be conducted in the respondent's office or other venue that is convenient to them. Interviews are likely to last between 45 and 60 minutes and will be recorded with the approval of the respondent. Interviews will be constructed on a semi-structured basis enabling data to be categorised and analysed using theme matching techniques (Cooper & Schindler, 2005), identifying key similarities and differences within the survey data and triangulated against current secondary sources. (Appendix 2: Interview guideline for semi-structured interviews).

The reliability of the research will be underpinned through the sample frame. This sample frame will include only principles, founders or those designated with Director in their title to ensure that they reflected a genuine level of responsibility and knowledge within the area. The intention is to build a 'typical case' that will be indicative of behaviour, and will seek to not just understand what and how, but also why. Given that this is an expert panel, respondents will be involved because of who they are, however it will be important to gain their agreement as to whether they are speaking individually or as a representative of their company. In addition, respondents may prefer to be identified only by job title, as detailed in the sampling frame as the information that they are providing may contain elements that they see as being their corporate advantage. The interviewer will exercise a degree of flexibility here to ensure the optimum research result and the maximum ethical consideration to confidentiality. The interviews will be conducted, where possible, face to face. The advantage of this is that the conversation can flow naturally and have the opportunity to enquire and confirm issues where respondents use jargon or unfamiliar terms. The disadvantage is that they will be more time consuming and more costly than say telephone or email interviews, as detailed in Appendix 3. However, telephone interviews are not seen as being optimal for this study due to the length of time that it is thought to need. In addition, the lack of visual cues could be a handicap. By contrast, emails would be the most time and cost efficient, with the ability to conduct them concurrently, but again they would limit the potential information flow and the level of detail that could be gathered (Hunt & McHale, 2007, pg 1716-1418, as cited by Robson, 2011). Original transcripts will be stored securely on the university computer system, with password protection. Data will be analysed using theme matching techniques. According to Proctor (2008) qualitative research aims for a holistic interpretative approach and involves making judgements about the data from the moment

the first piece of information is learned, with each successive piece of data informing the next and focuses on relationships within the data. Proctor proposes a loose framework of Data Assembly, Data Reduction, Data Display, Data Verification, with these elements being highly interrelated and highlights the need for flexibility in the process, with the results evolving out of the research objectives, the responses from interviews and the patterns, themes and relationships that emerge. Miles and Huberman (1984) also expressed it as a highly iterative process as detailed in Appendix 4. This study builds on the author's previous research in this area '*Consumer Centric Marketing Communications Models: Does web 2.0 demand a new one*'.

Study 2: The Audience perspective: designed to meet objectives 3 & 4.

This study will be undertaken via interviews and will in part replicate the media effectiveness study undertaken by Meulers & Roozen (2011) to enable comparison and triangulation. The research will use a mixed method, or multi-strategy (Robson, 2011) research design utilising both qualitative and quantitative elements. To reflect the need for evaluation of clear segments, two distinct research samples are identified using the age ranges of 16-24 and 45-54. The younger group is representative of the Digital Natives and the older, not only being 'digital immigrants' but also sufficiently distinct from the first group to enable a clear demographic segmentation to be identified. According to NOS (2011) the population sizes are 6.3m and 7.1m respectively and they are split almost equally between men and women (See Appendix 5). The sample will be selected on the basis of a non-probability sampling technique. To undertake a probability sample would necessitate accessing the electoral register database or one of the large lifestyle databases held by the likes of Experian or Acxiom, which is outside of the current financial scope of the researcher. In terms of sample size, previous studies in this area have used samples of 170-3000 individuals. For this study the sample needs to ensure that both target segment age ranges are equally represented. Saunders, *et al.* (2006, p219) suggests 384 respondents for populations of between 100,000 and 10m, as delivering 95% confidence level, giving a 5% margin of error. The sample needs to be balanced in terms of age and gender for each group and therefore a minimum of 400 respondents will be sought.

The research method will expose the respondent to a variety of advertising executions that will include both digital and traditional media. The materials will comprise four different sets of advertising selected from campaigns, although avoiding current activity. This should help overcome any issues of bias that might be created through members of the sample being more familiar with some executions than others. The four sets will use the same brands but in different media to enable comparison of the media channel whilst minimising the effects of brand knowledge or brand preference (Keller, 2009). The research design will use a Latin square of four groups, each reviewing the four different touchpoints across four different brand names as outlined in Appendix 6. As a result the groups will see different execution from each advertiser as replicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Group allocation of brand advertising by media type

Group 1	TV-Brand A	Mobile Apps B	Print C	Social Network D
Group 2	Social Network A	TV-Brand B	Mobile Apps C	Print D
Group 3	Print A	Social Network B	TV-Brand C	Mobile Apps D
Group 4	Mobile Apps A	Print B	Social Network C	TV-Brand D

Respondent will be surveyed in relation to the criteria identified as amounting to media effectiveness; this might include the degree of interest, brand knowledge, entertainment value, intention to purchase or other criteria. However, this will need to be formulated coherently once the first study has been conducted to ensure that it is measuring the 'media effectiveness' as determined by media and marketing practitioners.

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Appendices

• **Qualitative Research**
  – small no. of respondents
  – long interview time-span
  – asks "why" of behaviour
• **methods:**
  – group discussions
  – in-depth interviews
  – small scale observation
• **techniques**
  – discussion guide
  – unstructured
  – open ended
  – projective
	• **Quantitative Research**
	  – large no. of respondents
	  – short interview time-span
	  – "what" is happening & "frequency" of occurrence
	• **methods:**
	  – surveys
	  – simulations
	  – experiments
	• **techniques**
	  – questionnaire
	  – structured
	  – closed questions
	  – scales

Appendix 2: Study 1 Interview guidelines for Semi Structure Interviews

Introductory comments

1. Thank you for agreeing to this meeting
2. Copy of confidentiality agreement
3. Resume of context
4. Would like to discover three things
   o How you define media effectiveness?
   o How you measure media effectiveness?
   o How you approach media planning to select the most effective medium for the marketing communications?

List of topic headings:
   o How would you define media effectiveness?
      ▪ Academic research findings – TV to be one of the most effective
      ▪ Media spend – money still migrating to digital channels
   o Do you have different measures for different objectives?
   o How do you measure media effectiveness?
   o Do you judge digital and offline media differently?
   o Do you use qualitative or quantitative measures?
   o Do you use secondary sources?
   o Do you use TGI or touchpoints
   o Could you tell me about your approach to media planning
      ▪ Do you use computer optimisation
   ▪ What role does intuition play in planning

Closing comments

Thank you very much for helping me with this and giving up your time. Can I finally ask you if you think there are any aspects of your experience with selecting media for advertising and marketing communications that has not been covered in this interview?

(Source: Malhotra & Birks, 2005, Kotler & Armstrong, 2005, Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009)		
Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Face-to-face Interview	Allows good interaction between interviewer and interviewee Gives far greater flexibility to follow up on answers to questions The interviewee has the opportunity to provide additional insight or commentary Is not prescriptive and can be adaptable to circumstances Can pick up on body language or facial expressions	Can be very time consuming for interviewer Meetings can be throughout the UK There is a need to ensure that the interviewer does not influence the interviewee's responses The interviewee may feel intimidated or not able to say exactly what they think
Telephone Interview	Allows a reasonably good interaction between interviewer and interviewee Gives far greater flexibility to follow up on answers to questions The interviewee has the opportunity to provide additional insight or commentary and could feel less intimidated than in a face-to-face interview Is not prescriptive and can be adaptable to circumstances Can be less time consuming as interviewer does not have to travel	Cannot pick up on body language or facial expressions There is a need to ensure that the interviewer does not influence the interviewee's responses The interviewee may feel intimidated or not able to say exactly what they think
E-mailed Questions	Allows potentially faster interaction between interviewer and interviewee The interviewee has the opportunity to provide additional insight or commentary Can feel less intimidated than in a face-to-face interview Can be less time consuming as interviewer does not have to travel	Does not give so much flexibility to follow up on answers to questions It relies on the interviewee interpreting the questions correctly Could become prescriptive and not adaptable if interviewee merely responds
Postal Questionnaires	Is not time consuming for the interviewer Very cost effective method as reduces the cost of using research personnel	Does not give the flexibility to follow up on answers to questions The response rate may be lower than by arranged interviews No interaction can be achieved between interviewer or interviewee It relies on the interviewee interpreting the questions correctly

Appendix 4: Components of data analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1984)
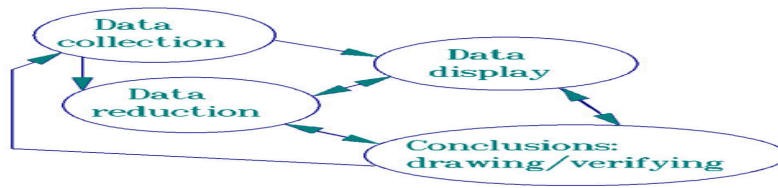
Appendix 2 : Population Statistics for England as at Mid 2010 (NOS, 2011)

	0 to 15	%	16 to 64	%	65 and over	%	16 +	%	16-24	%	45-54	%
Males	4,998,700	51%	16,960,600	50%	3,798,400	44%	20759001	49%	3,219,100	51%	3,526,500	49%
Females	4,767,600	49%	16,900,800	50%	4,808,000	56%	21708800	51%	3,037,800	49%	3,602,100	51%
Persons	9,766,300	100%	33,861,400	100%	8,606,300	100%	42467701	100%	6,256,900	100%	7,128,600	100%

Appendix 3 : Latin Matrix of Brands by media type for four sample groups

	Brand A	Brand B	Brand C	Brand D
Television	1	2	3	4
Mobile applications	4	1	2	3
Print (Magazines & Newspapers)	3	4	1	2
Social Network sites	2	3	4	1

Media Planning in the digital environment: can one define relative media effectiveness

Name and contact details and their doctoral supervisor(s).
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Doctoral research – Early

1. The conceptual domain (the central ideas, concepts, frameworks, conceptual models, theories, etc of the research)

- Media planning, media effectiveness, effectiveness, segmentation, media consumption /usage, digital natives
- This study seeks to identify if a common understanding of 'media effectiveness' can be found that enables robust comparison of media. In addition, it looks to test the principle of media usage segmentation and explores whether effectiveness varies by such audience segmentation.

2. The methodological domain (including some or all of the following: method(s) for making observations or manipulating variables, research design, research philosophy, underlying assumptions about knowledge)

- This research seeks to understand and is based upon a loose hypothesis that media effectiveness can be defined but that it will vary by audience segment. It will require a flexible approach to form understanding through the collection of 'opinion' from experts and test that understanding against contrasting segments of media consumers in digital natives and digital immigrants. It uses an exploratory or a 'pragmatic' approach to research with a mixed method, or multi-strategy research design (Robson, 2011) utilising both qualitative and quantitative elements, because the study seeks to identify 'how' and 'why' something is happening.

3. The substantive domain (covering the context in which the research will take place: behaviours in temporal/ spatial/ situational contexts (events), patterns of events, real world systems and phenomena)

- The first study in the research will seek to take place in the real world, interviewing practitioners in their work place about their work. However, the second study of consumers may have to be more situational interpreted as it is impractical for this study to believe it will reflect every consumer interaction.