Getting to grips with online media planning
Hints and tips for planners new to digital marketing
Digital Insight Report
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Online marketing presents a richer choice of media formats, targeting and messaging than any other media channel. Harnessing this potential involves building on the principles of traditional media planning and using new toolkits, and matching the right formats and sites with the right media properties – all in a market that offers a daunting array of options. There are new metrics to track that transform accountability, and new models for trading media space. This Digital Insight Report introduces some of the trends, frameworks and viewpoints that describe online media planning today to help planners new to digital channels get up to speed quickly.

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Making sense of a digital world

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At a glance

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Analyst's profile:
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Danny has been a researcher and commentator in the digital networked industries since 1995. He managed the UK's first online newspaper and has helped run web businesses ranging from mass market portals and consumer magazines, to online stores, search and email services. He is the co-founder of the UK and European IABs, was their president for four years and has been lecturing on digital marketing for more than a decade. He is the author of the Digital Media Planning Academy.

"Digital media have unlocked new levels of precision and relevancy in media planning, creating the potential for deep customer engagement that audiences seek out. The internet has brought together almost every advertising formats from classic media to offer planners a wealth of choice, while delivering a massive step-change in the accountability of marketing and media. In the digital networked economy, marketing teams can drive business growth in a way previously unseen, and online media planning is at the cutting edge of integration, convergence and accountability in marketing."

Speed read

Planning online campaigns starts with understanding the customer and setting clear marketing objectives. These new channels build on classic planning disciplines.

By starting with clear and measurable objectives, and supporting them with strong tracking systems, marketers can know the exact ingredients that created a campaign's success.

The explosive growth of formats has given media planners limitless choice, with convergence delivering the benefits of TV, software, press, social media and networks.

By adding more websites to the media plan, the campaign will often touch more people, without automatically clocking up high wastage.

Web media are delivering high brand impact as well as strong direct response.

Online advertising operations issues are of rising importance and these teams are key to effective campaign delivery and performance.

Effective project management is key to the delivery of online advertising campaigns.

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1. Getting started: Insights, metrics and objectives

Customer insight: at the heart of online planning

When the internet emerged as a mainstream advertising medium, it drew from traditional practices and then evolved its own additional rules. Since the mid nineties a climate of constant innovation has opened up the web's potential and broadened the choices media planners have, but customer insight remains at the heart of every good online plan.

The technologies, principles and practices of digital marketing continue to evolve rapidly, but every online campaign rests on the truths derived from researching the customer. Only by understanding the customer can planners harness online's full power, and that means going back to traditional data sets and traditional market research techniques. In a medium filled with technology, it's important not to get distracted by the bells and whistles, but instead follow clear, solid principles.

Whatever the nature of the campaign, start with customer insight and build up a picture of the target audiences. Examine where they go on the web, what they do there and how they behave. Work with creative teams from the outset to combine planning insights and formats with the creative energy to let the big idea at the centre of the campaign develop fully. Consider the goal for customer engagement, and the specific experience customers will have from this exposure to the brand. By exploring approaches that engage customers in dialogue, brand communication can be amplified, and the precision of online media planning creates the potential for reaching just the right customers at just the right moment. This heightened level of relevancy can unlock much greater response, and even enable customers to become brand advocates, taking the campaign message into their own social networks. By exploring the customers' expectations and mindset when they are online, marketers can create communication customers want to participate with. Whether the campaign goals are about building brand or generating response, these insights can guide both creative and planning teams to more deliver even more appropriate placements and even higher rates of engagement.

Getting the metrics right

There is an often daunting choice of metrics in online marketing, ranging from the counting of simple advertising impressions and clicks, to the brand engagement metrics developed in classic marketing, to new models that seek to unlock the specific effects of each media channel. While technical metrics such as clicks and visits may be immediately available, the selection of metrics needs to be developed from the business goals of the campaign. In the early days of the online industry, metrics such as click-throughs gave advertisers a reassurance their ads were getting seen and being responded to, but in a world in which everything can be counted, it doesn't follow that everything that is counted actually counts. By

starting with the business goals, a family of metrics can emerge that might combine revenue metrics (such as new sales), with business metrics (such as new leads), with media metrics from the advertising firm's own site (number of visitors in a certain zone or section) and the media metrics of clicks or impressions that brought customers there. Marketers skilled in direct response have leapt at the web for its accountability, and their experience of data analysis can be a powerful foundation in setting and monitoring metrics. By incorporating brand metrics – from brand reach to changes in purchase intent or brand image – marketers can also prove the branding power of online marketing, particularly potent and still often not tracked, within integrated campaigns that straddle online and offline channels.

In a world in which everything can be counted, it doesn't follow that everything that is counted, counts.

Setting your campaign objectives: branding, response, or both?

The nature of the business objectives a brand has doesn't change whether they are advertising online or offline. The web is just part of the media mix, and although it can satisfy more marketing needs than any other media, it's still important to be precise about what the needs are and what success looks like. The closer media planning teams get to the true marketing objectives, the more effectively they can design the right campaign strategy, craft the right media schedule and selecting the right formats.

Marketing objectives typically fall into three categories: brand objectives, acquisition objectives and retention objectives. Being clear about the nature of those objectives creates clarity among all stakeholders. Explore the precise messages the brand wants to get across, and the specific nature of customer acquisition, brand building or retention.

Setting SMART objectives

Like all marketing objectives, those that use online need to be clear and tangible. The acronym 'SMART' remains a useful checklist of what makes for a strong marketing objective: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. It's particularly important in

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In times of huge economic and technical change, knowledge becomes a critical success factor. We created the Digital Insight Reports to bring you insights from a particular part of this fast changing industry. They are independent perspectives on key issues around business or marketing in the digital networked economy. Look out for further reports in the series about online media planning.

digital marketing because sometimes the departments developing these initiatives may be relatively young and not have all of the same business rules and processes in place.

A simple awareness objective could read something like: To raise awareness of our product: We aim to reach 100 000 of our target audience with a message introducing our new product in the first two weeks after its launch.

Digital Media Planning Academy: A quick exercise for planners

A simple way of setting smart direct response marketing objectives involves taking the main steps in the purchase process and calculating the relationship between each. Most firms can readily describe their conversion rates, and by measuring conversion processes at several points, online media planners can more confidently model the relationship between cause and effect in online marketing.

For example, a financial services firm might know that in order to get 5000 sign-ups to a new credit card, they will be looking at an average cost per customer of £65. They may have a business target for results within six weeks, and from their conversion process they could already have data that confirms that for every 50 visits to their home page or every 20 visits to their offer page they achieve one sale. This 50:1 or 20:1 conversion ratio can be used to set the number of clicks they need to buy to reach a campaign target.

Here is a simple formula for starting that process:

Getting X thousand sales
... from Y leads
... from Z clicks
...at an average price of A
...over a time period of B.

In addition media planners would want to factor in the brand impact of exposures that did not yield a click, and consider metrics such as the share of voice a brand has in the market, but this model is a robust starting point.

Exercise

1. Look back at your last campaign and run through this checklist. List your objectives again and see if they were SMART in every way.

2. If one part of the objective was weak then could it have been improved? Try rewriting it to make it more robust.

3. Think about your next campaign and write the first draft of an objective: are there stakeholders that could review it to give more input?

2. Finding your audiences on the web

Making longlists and shortlists of candidate sites

Narrowing down the sites which you will use for your campaign is where experienced planners quickly start to show their skills. Start with a longlist and include all the sites you think might work for a chosen brand. Then whittle it down to a shortlist, looking at how each site's strengths match up with the brand's objectives. Consider the role of the editorial environment in terms of how it adds greater weight to your messaging as well as guaranteeing the right audiences are looking at it. Think about the quality, volume and reach a site can command. Another important factor is the advertising formats they can accept: if you want to run richmedia, microsites or sponsorships, then can the site deliver what you need? However there will be some factors beyond the issues of price and format availability that can immediately knock a site off any potential shortlist. The professionalism of the site and its team including their account management and advertising operations skills can be critical along with how the site delivered in previous campaigns, the quality of their campaign data.

Source: www.**DigitalStrategyConsulting**.com 2003
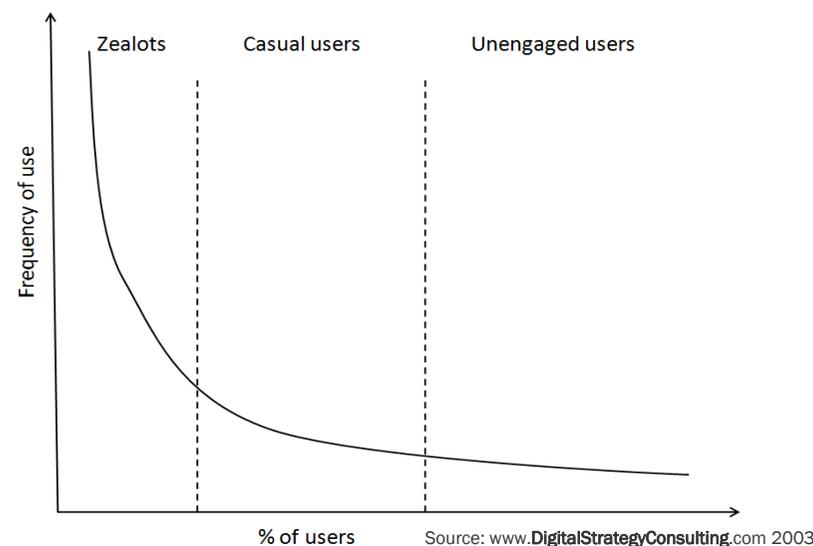
Understanding audience frequency
Remember that all internet users are not equal. Some may visit a given site a great deal and others may only visit occasionally. Because there are rarely cost barriers involved that prevent people from logging in, you may find there are a large number of casual viewers who only drop into sites 'one off' after following a link from a search engine. But there may be other people who clock up very high volumes of page impressions. What is the pattern on the sites you use?

Using panels and site centric toolkits to help build a shortlist

There are many different approaches to the longlisting of websites, but the panel based measurement tools available in many countries provide a fast track to building a refined list and prioritising between larger sites. The panels allow different websites to be compared because they track the online experiences of a large group of users. In parallel the site-centric measurement tools that track the internal activity of users within a given site provide a clear understanding of how audiences behave between different sections of a site and different times of the day. They also deliver a richer understanding of how the smaller websites compare as sometimes these sites will not appear on the radar of the panels. Different countries have different providers and different approaches. Experienced media planners will rightly rely on their intuition from campaigns planned in the past and factor this into decisions.

## Overlapping audiences? Rethink issues of duplicated reach

In a classic approach to media planning you'd start with customer insights and campaign objectives, from there build a target audience profile, and use that to identify possible properties for the media schedule. That's a process that maps neatly into online media planning, and by building on those disciplines planners from print, broadcast and outdoor media can feel confident with the web quickly. Branding campaigns in classic media would typically have objectives for their reach into that target market, and for the frequency of exposures per person. Again, this is a model that transfers well to the web. To maximise the efficiency of the campaign, planners would normally aim to avoid duplication of audiences, so if two potential media properties were identified as having a high duplication in their audiences, then in classic media there would be a strong argument for selecting just one of the properties – depending on those reach and frequency objectives of course. This grows from the reality in classic media that the advertising and editorial content are locked together. Audiences see the same advertising content. If there is a duplication in the audience for a newspaper's editorial content, or a television station's programming, then it follows that there will be duplication in the advertising exposures among people who look at the same content.

But that's not necessarily the case on the web. Graphical web advertising typically relies on a delivery approach that dynamically places the advertising on pages just as the viewer's computer requests them. One of the side effects is that two viewers looking at the same page usually see different advertising content. The ads rotate through a complex carousel and are slotted into the page in a rotation that could draw from dozens, or even hundreds, of different creative executions. The result is that even if two websites have the same advertising content - and the same viewers - then there's no guarantee they'll see the same adverts – which is the cause for a regular question on the Digital Media Planning Academy: "if the audience of two websites overlaps, should I advertise on both?" Whereas in classic media the answer might be 'no', in online media the answer is more likely to be 'yes'. By adding more websites to the media plan, the campaign will touch more people,

without automatically clocking up high wastage through either unwanted duplication or by exposing the wrong people to the message. This process is enough to make planners think about moving budgets from a higher wastage medium across to the web, so more sites can be added to the schedule and more individuals exposed.

It's a general principle to factor in to the planning process. For sites that clock up high volumes of views per person, or that have relatively few advertising campaigns, the gain in media efficiency won't be as high, but it is still worth exploring. And as the technologies evolve, new ways to improve efficiency will be uncovered.

The advertising servers that drive the process of ad delivery are already among the smartest and most technically complex tools marketers have access to, and since their creation in the mid nineties, their features have grown ceaselessly. Beyond simple rotations of the creative assets, common targeting possibilities they already unlock include targeting by time of day, the geography of the viewer or by the previous viewing behaviour of the individual. By understanding the principles of advertising delivery and getting closer to the technology, media planners can unlock more ways to increase campaign efficiency, adding more sites to their schedules, and getting more value out of the wider advertising budget.
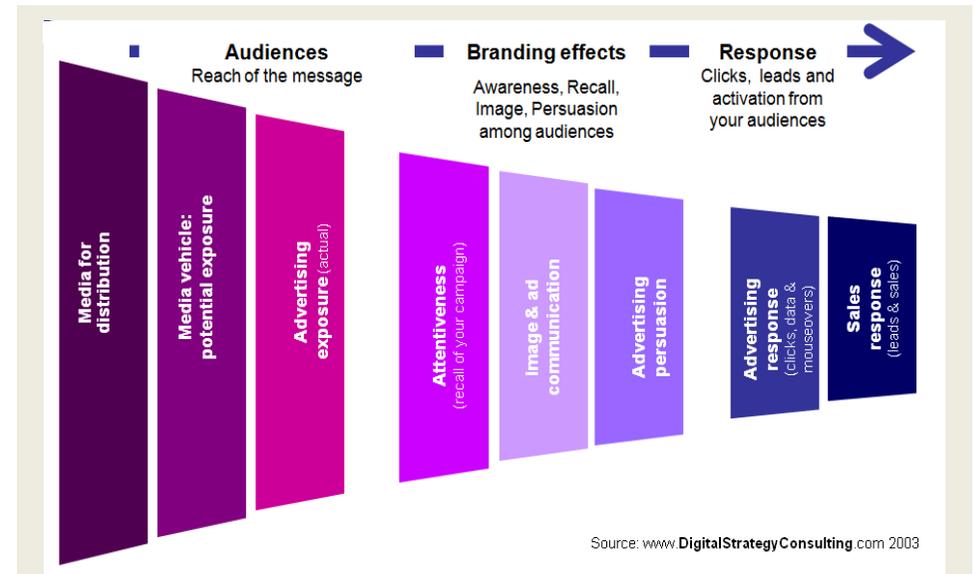
Digital's web conversion funnel: The advertising process from branding to sales
Being clear about the role of web marketing in the sales process is key to setting smart campaign objectives. As you move a customer towards purchase, always check the next steps are in place.

3. Choosing online marketing formats

The right ad formats for the right job

There is a bewildering mix of formats that make up the new digital media mix – from skyscrapers and roadblocks, pop-ups and pop-unders, to contextual formats, widgets or surround session packages. Key groups to remember are the search marketing tools, the graphical formats (which are typically embedded within the fabric of a page or interruptive to the experience as they extend out of the embedded space) and sponsorships (which echo the models of sponsorship from classic media). Brand websites, or paid-for microsites are another core group even though they are often not seen as part of an advertising campaign. Email marketing offers its own choice of formats, as well as being the first gateway into viral and buzz marketing activities

Each format has its own strengths and weaknesses, so before making a selection media planners will evaluate these in the context of the proposed environment. Savvy planners will also explore the relationship between media owner sites, the brand site, and other channels.

Digital's 16 online marketing formats

1. Search - paid for (PPC) and optimisation (SEO) based approaches
2. Text links, directory listings and 'classifieds'
3. Graphical – embedded (banners, skys, mpus etc)
4. Graphical – interruptive (pop-ups, expandables, rich media etc)
5. Audio and video formats (in-stream, in-banner etc)
6. Sponsorships
7. Brand websites & Microsites
8. Email and ECRM
9. Viral & Buzz
10. Affiliates & Syndication
11. Ecommerce placements & Tenancies
12. PR activity & Online events
13. Social media marketing techniques
14. Widgets & Applications
15. Product placement & Advertorials
16. In-game advertising formats

Source: www.DigitalStrategyConsulting.com 2008

Online advertising format choices
This structure of grouping online marketing formats together can be an effective way of clarifying the choices a brand faces.

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Thinking about online media as a mirror to your classic media can help with getting started in format and site selection

There are many different approaches to getting started in selecting advertising formats and channels within an online media plan, but one simple way is to consider all of the formats and channels being used in classic media on a specific campaign, and to look for how those channels and tools are mirrored in the online environment.

The web represents the sum of all other media, and for any classic format – from mail and sponsorship, to in-store promotions and television – there is now a well-established online equivalent. In this way online media act as a type of 'mirror' to classic media, representing similar versions of the formats you are familiar with in classic marketing. If postal mail is the right way to manage customer relationships in a business, then email is worth considering for the customers you have who are connected. If a sponsorship positions your brand in the right environment for the right audience, then a similar sponsorship on a web property can do the same.

The web represents the sum of all other media, and for any classic format there is now a well-established online equivalent.

In the early years of the web there were few formats. The banner is the longest established format, but was only created in 1994 - and then popularised by the IAB in the US as an industry standard in 1996. Since then the volume and choice of formats has multiplied faster than in any other media channel, planners now have the option of thousands of different formats to choose from across millions of websites. With the range of choices continuing to increase as video and audio formats grow, this choice will continue to broaden. That's why seeing the web as a mirror of classic media can be a useful starting point for planners new to the discipline.

The same approach can also work in starting the process of selecting the media properties themselves. If you're new to online marketing starting by looking for the partners you would use in a classic offline campaign and then reviewing their online alternatives can be a fast and effective way to explore the media and maintain the quality of environment the brand is familiar with. Printed consumer magazines, broadcast radio, traditional television, business directories: they all have their equivalents on the web. Then add to your thinking those websites and services unique to online such as high traffic hubs provided by portals (maybe the equivalent in reach to a television station), the sales networks or affiliate networks that unite hundreds of mid-size sites, the niche 'internet-only' services, the massive search engines and the wave of social network sites.

For sophisticated media planners there is no shortage of choice. The formats are still evolving quickly, with the latest waves in 2008 including a range of social media formats, video and widgets. Because the technologies continue to open up new possibilities, it is clear this innovation will continue, providing planners with new ways to deliver brand communication and drive engagement.

New models of integration between media have emerged, and these are helping marketers explore new relationships between different channels in building a brand or driving response, but the simple 'mirror' is a great way to get started.

4. Trading models: Approaches to buying online media

Buying online media

Online advertising can be bought and sold using a wide range of different trading models. Cost per thousand (CPM) remains one of the most popular for graphical advertising and cost per click (CPC) for direct response, but common options includes: CPM, CPD, CPA, uniques (unique users), time (duration on the site), sponsorship, email, viral production costs, microsite hosting and many more.

A continuum that connects the trading models

At Digital we see a continuum that connects all of these models together. At one end there are trading models that revolve around the space media owners can provide (the number of impressions or views), while at the other there are models which are drawn from sharing the revenues that come from a successful campaign. The various different models like cost-per-action (CPA) or cost-per-click (CPC) that sit between these represent a balance that shares the commercial risk of a campaign between the website and the client (or its agency). The trading model you use should really depend on what your marketing objectives are. If the objective is to boost branding metrics then the sponsorship or impression models are generally most appropriate. If on the other hand the objectives are all about generating immediate leads, then models that pay on a 'per action' basis are probably more appropriate. Complex campaigns may involve several different mechanics all working at the same time and these generate a hybrid model that draws on strands from across the continuum.

There's no precise rule and it will vary between campaigns as well as with the preferences of different media agencies and media owners, but the online platforms offer a much broader variety of trading models than you'll find in any other media channel. Thinking about your next campaign, which trading models would best meet its objectives?

Digital Jargon Buster

www.DigitalJargonBuster.org

CPA – cost per action
A standard industry measure for selling advertising on websites. The advertiser pays for each visitor that takes some specifically defined action in response to an ad beyond simply clicking on it. For example, a visitor might visit an advertiser's site and request to be subscribed to a newsletter.

CPC – Cost per click
A standard industry measure for selling advertising on websites. The advertiser pays for each user that clicks on their advertisement. The model is popular in graphical advertising, but dominates the search advertising market.

CPD – cost per day

CPM – Cost per thousand
A standard industry measure for selling advertising on websites. This measure is taken from print advertising. The "M" has nothing to do with "mega" or million. It's taken from the Roman numeral for "thousand".

Sponsorship
Sponsorship is an association with a website in some way that gives an advertiser some particular visibility and advantage above that of run-of-site advertising. When associated with specific content, sponsorship can provide a more targeted audience than run-of-site ad buys. Sponsorship also implies a 'synergy and resonance' between the website and the advertiser. Some sponsorships are available as value-added opportunities for advertisers who buy a certain minimum amount of advertising.

Uniques / unique visitor
An individual person visiting a website. A unique visitor is someone with a unique address who is entering a website for the first time that day (or some other specified period). Thus, a visitor that returns within the same day is not counted twice. A unique visitors count tells you how many different people there are in your audience during the time period, but not how much they used the site during the period. Because most websites can only identify a person's computer (regardless of who is using it), there may be slight discrepancies between the number of individual people on a website and the number of unique visitors.

Viral marketing
Viral marketing is a type of online marketing that aims to have a message passed from one person to the next under their own efforts. It began with the email based content and after 2000 became synonymous with video clips and photographs. The arrival of social media in the mainstream of digital behaviour after 2004 created a series of new social networks for these messages to pass though.

Get jargon busting: define your terms all the time

- CPC can sometimes be used to mean 'cost per customer' rather than cost per click

- CPA can sometimes be used to mean 'cost per acquisition' rather than cost per action

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5. The impact of web media

Rethinking what online really delivers...

Understanding the impact of web banners, and why online advertising delivers such impact

One of the drivers of online advertising has been the impact that web ads have, over and above advertising formats in classic media. It's a big point, but one people so readily overlook.

From the start the web has been a lean forward medium; users are active and engaged, they are involved in the media experience. This has a different effect on the quality of the communication, and this greater impact is something advertising firms benefit from and then recognise.

Just think about your own personal experience – when you're online the screen in front of you is your world. There's an intimacy because of the proximity and engagement because you are constantly demanded to click, and interact.

> From the start the web has been a lean forward medium; users are active and engaged, they're involved in the media experience.

There's also an immediacy because, typically, the moment you request another web page is also the moment the next advert arrives and gets displayed. This instantaneous delivery of the advertising overcomes the challenge of ad avoidance that has been so clearly demonstrated in other media.

In contrast to the web, think about how you consume classic media: TV, outdoor billboards or magazine advertising. Each channel suffers from some fundamental challenges in avoidance because the marketer's communication can be so easily screened out. Even if the editorial engagement in television or press is good, it's easier for consumers to avoid advertising messages. This is clearly a significant challenge across the media landscape, and yet again the online industry finds itself right at the frontier for a new type of thinking in media.

With the internet industry always looking ahead at the new formats, and major focus on the potential of video advertising formats today, it's easy to lose sight of the impact of the most simple online graphical formats. In the explosion of innovation and new ideas this point about the impact of the medium is so often lost that the industry under-sells its value.

6. Execution and delivery: Online ad operations

How do you get your campaign to run smoothly?

Here are a few hints and tips for making your online campaigns happen smoothly. First up, agree on a legal framework for the contracts before you start, this helps with settling differences in opinion later on. Some agencies and media owners are now moving towards electronic sign-off for campaigns as a way of improving efficiency. If you're in the digital industry then why not harness the full digital toolkit to improve the way your business works?

Process orders and documents clearly; try to leave no room for misunderstanding. It's also good to learn how to manipulate the adserver software that delivers a campaign right from the start. There are many ways advertising delivery servers can report data, and smart media planners and media owners open up access to that reporting so each partner can see how their campaign is performing as it happens. This also means that if there are discrepancies early on between what is intended and what is being delivered then advertising operations teams can tackle them in time to keep the campaign's overall performance on track rather than letting them build up.

Adserver data can be used in more advanced analysis as well; helping teams see the bigger picture of how a campaign is performing and how that performance translates into business results. Reporting the data clearly to stakeholders may mean more than copying and pasting from one screen to another. Many less digitally experienced marketers will struggle with the jargon and need to have the context explained to them about the nature of the metrics and their meaning for the business. Boiling down the numbers to meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs) is essential for helping stakeholders focus on the issues that matter. Be transparent to help all parties quickly see what works and what doesn't, then you can make crucial adjustments along the way and ultimately achieve a better result.

> By 2002, sadly, it had become the norm that the majority of creative assets would rarely arrive with a media owner until the day before they were meant to go live.

Agree from the outset how discrepancies between reports from media owners and media agencies will be reconciled. If there is a late copy penalty framework in place then agree the responsibilities and liabilities. And from the start agree a clear hierarchy for communication and who has control and authority (think about delegated authorities too if the primary contacts are unavailable).

Getting the creative assets to the right place on time

What is it about the internet advertising industry that makes doing everything at the last minute so acceptable? That last-minute culture created some massive workflow problems in most countries. This matters to media planners, because it causes knock-on effects that can seriously hurt the value and quality of the whole campaign, as well as the advertiser's experience of trading online. The problem is much smaller today, but looking back into the history books gives some lessons and shows how, by 2002, sadly, it had become the norm that the majority of creative assets would rarely arrive with a media owner until the day before they were meant to go live.

Part of the problem was there wasn't very much discipline in a young industry that was still finding its feet. Another part is the complexity of online advertising artwork, something that isn't readily apparent to many stakeholders. In many cases the ads themselves are complex software programmes that need testing, careful management and configuring before they go live – something that just doesn't need to happen in classic media.

The journey from when the advertiser gives the creative agency the go-ahead, to when the media agency hands the assets to the media owner, can take quite some time. If the assets only go from to the publisher the day before going live, then that leaves an unmanageably short timeframe for testing and resolving any problems. Depending on how complicated the media schedule, tracking and other elements, it may not even leave enough time for loading and scheduling the artwork into the ad trafficking systems that will handle delivery.

The more marketing departments can appreciate that what is often complex software takes time to rebuild and rework, the more tolerance there will be to acting earlier.

So what are the effects?

If campaigns don't start on time, then they risk failing to perform as planned. The perishable nature of media space means that if campaigns don't go live when planned there may not be a way to bridge the gap, and with a large portion of campaigns landing in the inboxes of media owners well after the launch date, the industry had created some massive problems for itself.

Sure, online media has the power to be incredibly flexible, with campaigns changed once they are live, the choice of creative executions optimised, and new types of targeting layered in. But that flexibility should be something 'above and beyond' the basic standardised approach of how artwork is normally delivered. All other media have standardised working practices for when advertising copy arrives, so why not online?

The answers lie partly in the enthusiasm of online's early pioneers to break new ground in media, and in the tough dotcom years when media owners would agree to almost anything.

They also lie in the unique nature of online creative, and a young industry's failure to appreciate what it holds in its hands. The more marketing departments can appreciate that complex software takes time to rebuild and rework, the more projects will deliver on time.

Solutions?

It's not a problem limited to one country, but a universal challenge that creates inefficiency in the industry almost everywhere. Different markets may have a different scale of problem, but increasingly - country by country - attitudes are changing. Setting up the principle for managing the delivery of late copy is key, and typically this demands some form of penalty structure. Penalties often hinge on the 'use-it-or-lose-it' principle, and although these models may take several years to bring in, they really improve the efficiency of the industry. In 2006 the UK industry began an implementation that really reduced the scale of the problem, proving that even if the fines are not constantly used, the framework can trigger a behaviour change in an industry.

But under-delivery is a risk too...

The footnote to the late copy policy is that in parallel with this, media owners need to ensure that they too deliver on their promise of inventory, matching the volume of ads delivered to the volume of ads booked. In spite of the smartness of the advertising operations systems that handle this process, there is always a risk of delivery not going to plan, especially when dealing with more complex artwork and targeting criteria.

What are the key elements?

Check that you have all the main elements of your campaign lined up well before the launch date. These include the primary artwork, and supporting artwork if you are using richmedia formats. They also include the clickthrough address(es), scheduling details (volume, targeting, pages etc), the start and end dates of your campaign. The all-important contact details for all involved, and other tags for counting and research will need to be part of the same communication. Complex campaigns may include further scheduling or reporting information and instructions about data captured.

Best practice tips

- Check that the deadlines are clear: map the timeline and communicate with stakeholders

- Anticipate problems: look out for complex artwork and complex scheduling

- Lead by example: ensure you hit deadline

- The complexity of digital ad campaigns can create risks of under-delivery, so monitoring the delivery speed during the starting phases of campaigns is key to keeping on track.

- Be clear from the start about how disputes would be solved if they arise

When sending rich media artwork, widgets, and applications, always ensure the ad has been tested thoroughly and that testing reflects the environment for delivery as well as the agreed browser compatibility. This is particularly important if the creative assets are mini software applications rather than static artwork. And all of this is in addition to the regular approval process by the stakeholders that all media are subject to. A model that works well within the digital industry is to ensure a single project manager or campaign manager is in charge of pulling all the elements together so the ad arrives on time and to specification.

7. Integration

Integration in strategy and process

Integration means much more than just getting the web ads to follow the style of the press, TV or outdoor work. That's the starting point though, and your campaign will be more effective if you integrate your marketing messages and design so the communication endorses the key points across each channel. This builds impact among viewers and gets your creative working harder for you.

However, linking your online work back to the rest of the marketing messages is only the start. Smart marketers let online go further in delivering greater interaction with audiences and greater impact through the extra scope all this technology brings you. Harness the advantages of online to let your campaign do more than simply replicate the design of another channel.

Source: www.DigitalStrategyConsulting.com, 2003
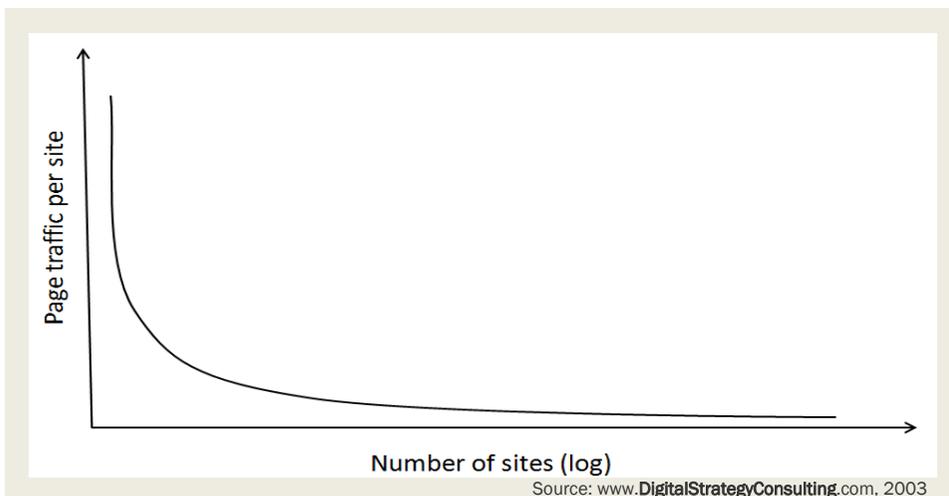
Harnessing the long tail – the sleeping giant of inventory
A large volume of advertising views are clocked up on very small sites. Reached through networks.

Look for ways to go deeper, further and more interactive in the messages. Harness the return path to capture customer data and look for ways customers can interact with your messages.

Finally there's reporting. This is a tougher nut to crack because the metrics for online don't readily blend with metrics for offline channels yet in most countries. Align your campaign strategy, creative identity and campaign reporting so that they complement and reinforce each other. You should also integrate between each of the different online formats.

Get off to a good start

Half the battle is won by building the integration into the team itself – creative agencies online and offline working closely with the media agencies and internal teams. And of course integration between media channels must be well thought out. Customers don't sit in a vacuum; they consume media from all channels. Your expanded team should tackle the key issues together. They should look at consumer insight – what the customers are doing and where they are, market insight – what the competitors are doing, and business insight – what the smart business objectives are for the campaign.

Come together

It helps immensely to have good organisation right from the start. Successful campaign development increasingly relies on strong process management, bringing creative and media teams together from day one. If campaign teams don't work like this, they risk will wasting time cobbling together different ideas later on, and miss out on harnessing all the combined strengths. Remember that because online media offer so many more choices than traditional channels and media properties, there's huge scope to go beyond previous campaign models. Also consider your online and offline strategies as a coherent whole rather than as separate projects. Play up the unique strengths of each channel while making sure all elements are focussed on the big idea.

New horizons

There are many other areas to look at if you want to squeeze even more out of your campaign. Harnessing the long tail of websites that stretch beyond the largest of the professionalised media can be hugely rewarding. Some planners routinely start by thinking beyond the portals, or the top 50 sites, into the thousands of niche sites: the sleeping giant of web ad inventory.

Also think about how fine-tuning your targeting strategy can help you get even better results. As online fuses with direct marketing you're able to talk cost-effectively to ever-smaller market segments. Another idea is to find ways of increasing 'dwell time' and customer engagement in your campaign. Here, interaction, novelty, and community could provide some of the answers. The good news is these are things the web can do very well. Auctioning and electronic trading are further ways to take advantage of online. And when you've run out of ideas, go back and integrate your existing strategies even more deeply.

8. Research insights: Exploring the media mix

Multiple media in a single campaign? New insights around Europe reveal frequency for each channel

Getting the frequency right in each channel demands a deep understanding of how online is working to build brands across many channels, and let's be clear: this is not an easy one to crack. The groundwork for measuring how to combine media channels together was only begun back in 2001 with a cross media analysis of a North American launch by Dove. The study, sponsored by the US IAB and MSN was a landmark in quantifying the effects different media within a specific campaign. This is a massive research challenge, but since then dozens of studies have added greater understanding to how media combine to build brands.

2+2=5

The theory goes that if people see a message in one channel such as newspapers, and it is echoed in a second channel such as the web, then the combined effect is much greater than the exposures in isolation. A first exposure in an additional channel often delivers a bigger impact than a second exposure in the same channel and sometimes this is shorthanded to the 2+2=5 effect.

Add to it the fact that different channels talk to our senses differently, and you start to appreciate the complexity. Then factor in the differences in the nature of the impact - for example how radio needs a high frequency to build recognition, but cinema needs only a few views to do the same. On top of this there are the differences in the price of each media channel, the targeting, the wastage levels and the calls to action: no, being a strategic media planner is no easy task.

And the web just complicates it all further by creating a marcoms channel that can address pretty much any part of the advertising process a brand needs; from awareness, through brand activation to delivering the sale. You'd need some cutting edge econometric modelling to read this landscape and distil the rules for an effective campaign.

Research insights: Metrix Lab

Their landmark studies in strategic media mix modelling in Europe showed planners not only which media channels to use, but the exact frequency of exposures needed to get the best results for a campaign.

How does the research work?

Metrix Lab looked at which media channels people were viewing and from that learned their behaviour and the type of advertising they were exposed to. This forms the basis of an analysis of advertising effectiveness. By marrying up media channel consumption, advertising

exposures, and the viewers' attitudes to these brands, they're able to start unbundling cause and effect.

"For me it's all about opportunities to see (OTS): when have people actually confronted media" explained Metrix Lab's Roy Patel when I quizzed him on their approach. "The real challenge is that it's tough to really test the effectiveness of advertising across different media. This type of econometric modelling needs big samples and a powerful methodology, but get it right and it changes the way a business behaves."

Key takeouts

- The weight of each media channel in a campaign needs to be changed

- New research techniques are unlocking the answers

- When they're run they typically reveal classic media are over used, with such a high frequency of views per person that the final few exposures do almost nothing for the advertiser

- If budgets are moved into the less used media - typically including the web - then the uplift in the campaign's results are significant

- To advertise smartly online advertisers don't need to create new budgets, just move the budgets they have around and they can enjoy better results

Case study: Spain

"In Spain the challenge for the industry was really clear: how do you get the big spenders to change their use of the media mix, upweighting online", explained Patel. "On the McDonalds campaign we worked with MSN and OMD Digital to gain the insights, taking large samples of more than three thousand people to look at the impact of the different channels."

The research explored the branding effect of online: awareness, image and purchase intent. The objective most under the microscope was purchase intent because McDonalds were looking for the link to sales.

Results

In terms of the campaign, there was an integrated look and feel in the creative work across all media, but with very different messages carried in each of the media channels. The web looked like press, but different calls to action.

In terms of results, the campaign proved that online built the brand. The uplifts in brand image were a massive 19% across the overall campaign, but the role of the internet was even greater. With some of the campaigns Metrix Lab researched, the frequency of TV campaign topped 22 views per person, suggesting that there could be significant wear-out. Crunch the numbers and it revealed those last few views were doing almost nothing to boost brand metrics. In fact, after the first 20% of the TV budget had been spent, there was hardly any

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incremental reach on the campaign: more spend wasn't touching more people, it was just hitting the same people again and again.

Study conclusions

With web advertising running at much lower levels (not much more than an average of 6 views per person), raising the frequency of the campaign would still deliver a significant uplift. And for younger audiences who were less exposed to classic media, it would also reach new people. That was a finding echoed from US research for McDonald's where it had also become clear that a large segment of 18-34 year olds just couldn't be reached cost-effectively through television any more.

In Spain, Metrix Lab's analysis proved that the last 10% of the budget spent in TV delivered no significant change in purchase intent. Conclusion? Ditch the final part of the television budget and switch it into online. The findings for the media planners were that the optimal media mix for this campaign should have had the web on around 9% of total advertising spend rather than the 2% actually invested. It's a dramatic change, but it echoes the cross-media optimisation research IAB US started back in 2001. The wider implications are even greater. This campaign was a brand building campaign for a product that couldn't be bought or even researched online. In sectors like finance, motoring and travel, where the web now forms the main place for purchase research, the mix should clearly be even higher.

Research summary

*   Campaign frequency in TV was more than 22 vs just over 6 for web ads

*   Media wastage was high in television

*   There was a 51% increase in message association

*   New research proved that media mix should have been 9% in online, not the initial 2% for McDonalds

*   Other studies from Metrix Lab have placed online even higher, with best results at 14%

*   And online with offline is a big boost: same budget, better results

*   McDonald's has now changed its marketing mix as a result of the work

9. Hints and tips: For brands, their agencies and media owners

The client

Smart clients learn about the new media and really challenge their planning teams. They lead from the front; bringing their media, creative and website teams together right at the start of the campaign discussion. Smart clients are quick to react to questions from their agency. And they take a proactive approach internally, joining up their teams from IT, marketing, direct marketing, website and procurement. Smart clients have realistic expectations of the campaign's results. They get more value by adjusting their overall business processes to support their digital marketing.

But don't rest here. A smart marketer will do simple audits of the customer's sales experience: what happens when the customer comes to your website? If they are not converting, find out why. Perhaps your landing page is confusing, or the link is broken, or the page takes too long to load. And finally, integrate, integrate, integrate!

The planning agency

Media planners are responsible for formulating the media strategy, and development of specific deliverables. Channel selection should be objective and draw on a wide variety of research to justify the schedule. Campaign planners should always be media agnostic, both within the channel mix and within interactive media. The agency should decide on digital channel selection, choosing between search, banners, viral, email CRM and others in the context of the rest of the firms marketing communications, both in digital and classic channels. They also need to look after development of the channel plan – including the specifics about sites and sections, timing, formats, as well as targeting techniques.

The media owner

A good media owner responds to briefs quickly, and looks for ways to add more value using the insights it has about its audience. They use their forecasting tools to project available inventory as a good investment. Media owners should provide account data in a timely and accurate way, and if any discrepancies arise, tackle them in a proactive fashion. And as always, never forget the importance of clear communication.

The last word: watch the jargon

Every industry has its jargon, but the digital marketing sector inherited all the language of media, marketing, IT and telecoms. The jargon acts as a barrier to those new to online marketing, and can still confuse those with experience. It helps if everyone uses the same language for all materials and communications, and if that language is as clear as practical. If you use many of the technical terms, then take a moment to make sure all stakeholders are clear on what they mean in this context.

10. Advanced techniques: Maximising budgets

Smart techniques for getting more value from online media

Using regional targeting

Online targeting enables planners to be very specific about how or where potential consumers see their ads. Like TV, users can be targeted by region but the web can be far more specific – the UK can be divided up into much more than the 15 TV regions.

Day-parting: A lesson from broadcast media

Another key element of web targeting is dayparts and many brands have found it useful to serve ads at certain times of the day. The internet is the key media for many office workers and potentially the only way for brands to reach them during the day.

For example a fast food brand could serve up a special offer banner just before the morning break – a time when many companies allow more general surfing – to drive customers to its stores at lunch time.

The internet is the key media for many office workers and potentially the only way for brands to reach them during the day.

Similarly a retailer with a one-day price promotion might look to hit local offices with a message about some of the offers available before lunch. This brand could also benefit from an afternoon targeting on days when the shop was open late.

Getting the right data

The web is the most measurable medium around. It can tell you more about how consumers interacted with your brand than any other medium and that rich source of understanding could transform what you know about your target audience and also inspire you to test new ways of reaching them.

However, that promise is only valid if you have the right metrics that tell you exactly what you need to know. A key part of the planning process will be to determine the precise numbers that will help you assess and review the campaign. Make sure the media owners you select can record the data you want and provide it in a manner that is compatible with your systems.

The issue of evaluation is also closely linked with what are dubbed "hygiene factors", the resources devoted to servicing clients' needs.

Hygiene factors are a big area that many media owners underestimate the importance of and significantly under resource. The importance of providing accurate campaign data and having the structures and workflow processes that allow error free scheduling and analysis are key to retaining agency and client relationships.

With the growing complexity of scheduling we predict that media owners will need a ratio of one sales support person for every 2 or 3 frontline sales people. This area is often under-resourced as media owners can easily underestimate the challenges of providing accurate campaign data.

Using standard shapes and sizes effectively

Just as with any other medium, online has a standard set of media options that planners can use. It is possible to negotiate integration deals with individual media owners but there are six standard formats that all media owners should be able to carry.

These were introduced across Europe in 2003 and 2004 by the IAB across Europe and North America and are known as the Universal Advertising Package. Standardisation enables planners to compare cost easily and also transfer creative executions from site to site without having to worry about re-formatting.

In essence there are two banner formats, the traditional 468 by 60 banner and a larger, elongated banner, which is 728 by 90. There are also two skyscraper formats, again the traditional size of 120 by 600 and a wider option 160 by 600.

The final elements of the package are the rectangular blocks, a smaller 180 by 150 ad slot and the larger 300 by 250 format.

Within these sizes you can also add a variety of rich media options.

The web is the most measurable medium around. However, that promise is only valid if you have the right metrics that tell you exactly what you need to know.

Consider who to target and how often

The reach of a campaign is about the number of people it touches; that's true for all media. We normally express it as a percentage of a target audience rather than the total population. If we have a campaign aimed at mothers with young children then the reach of that campaign is the number of those people we touch expressed as a percentage of the whole group within the target geographic market.

Each media has its own way of calculating audiences and typically online is more precise because of its ability to trace each person's actions, but remember it is still a young medium. In most countries there are several approaches and tools rather then a single media planning currency, so the precise way you calculate the reach in a campaign may vary. There are several currencies and several research methodologies in measuring audiences and only in Germany, Italy and the Netherlands does there seem to be one single approach the whole industry has adopted.

A separate point to consider in the measurement challenge is the common discrepancy between the media owner's numbers and the media agency's accounting of a single campaign.

It is quite normal that on any media campaign you have overlap, with the user of one media property also seeing the same advertising on another media property. When media planners are considering a media schedule they will try to calculate the impact of these duplications.

Because of the nature of impression-based advertising in online media you will often find that a campaign has highly unduplicated reach. Unlike a print magazine we know that not every viewer sees every ad running on the site.

It's important digital marketers recognise just how far ahead of other channels they already are in raising effectiveness and reducing wastage in their client's media budgets.

The first ad a customer sees has the biggest impact. That's true for any campaign. The trick is figuring out how many times they should see the same message before the effects tail off.

In the early days of online the common misconception was that the frequency should be set at one; if the user didn't click immediately then the campaign was thought not to have worked.

From the late Nineties, expectations began to move and the general rule of thumb of three views per person took over. These days the picture is more complex, as planners' experiences have revealed the different ways that different formats and creative messages work. Individual campaigns have different optimal frequencies.

What's key to remember is that outside the digital bubble, setting frequency is a real hit and miss game. Other than direct mail, no other media channel can control the frequency of advertising exposures with any accuracy, and it's important digital marketers recognise just how far ahead of other channels they already are in raising effectiveness and reducing wastage in their client's media budgets.

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Alex Burmaster: European Internet Analyst: Nielsen Online

Making sense of the ad opportunity today

The recent press and debate about what and how we measure in the online landscape have been particularly welcoming to me. The recent furore around the 'death of the page view' certainly seems to have put the publishing and ad worlds in a collective spin. The metric that has been held, dearly or not, as the most relevant gauge of the advertising opportunity online has come under threat - and everyone is scrambling to make sense of what happens now. The other issue that has thrust measurement science into the spotlight concerns the debate between the Telegraph and the Guardian about the former's claim to being "Britain's number one quality newspaper web site."

The page view debate highlights what you measure and the Telegraph issue highlights how you measure it - areas we've been trying to educate the industry about for years. Unfortunately, measurement science isn't the most glamorous topic when trying to engage publishers, advertisers or agencies. However, these issues have changed things completely.

Firstly to the page view issue and what you measure. A page view, in simple terms, reflects an html or text page download in response to a user request. Consequently, it's always had shortcomings when reflecting user engagement and ad opportunities in areas like web applications, online games and streaming video or audio – where content is refreshed without downloading a new html/text page. The increasing use of AJAX programming, which improves web page usability by avoiding the need to reload an entire web page following a user request, similarly erodes the relevance of the traditional page view. This has resulted in a perverse situation, where publishers might be reluctant to improve the user experience of their site as it could be detrimental to their ability to maximise ad sales on it.

It's important to remember, however, that the page view still measures active engagement on the majority of sites so it will remain a relevant metric for a while. Our goal is to work with the industry on developing a next generation 'page view' that is relevant to the whole online experience today. One that supports, for example, partial page refreshes (AJAX), pre-loaded pages (Flash) and streaming. However, what are advertisers and publishers to rely on in the meantime?

Popularity, of course, is a benchmark that tends to stand the test of time but one that doesn't give the advertiser a sense of how visitors interact with a site. Engagement, if it is possible to truly measure such a thing, can be indicated online by a variety of metrics – not just the number of pages a visitor views but the amount of times they visit a site or how long they spend there.

Of course, all these metrics can paint a wildly different picture of where might be best to advertise. Pages viewed per person tend to show social networking sites as the best bet, whereas the portals – with their variety of offerings - come out well when looking at sessions per person. Conversely, the online games sector tends to perform most strongly in terms of time per person.

In the short term, and for simplicity's sake, time spent is probably the best indicator of user engagement today and as a proxy for ad inventory, as it covers all web environments and provides an accurate trend in a pre- and post- Web 2.0 world. However, this needs to be analysed with care, as longer doesn't always mean better. Companies involved in search, such as Google and Cheapflights, are likely to be much happier with lower time figures per visit than other sectors as their aim is to help people find what they're looking for as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Popularity is obviously still a key metric in gauging the ad opportunity and one that is illustrated by the Telegraph vs. Guardian debate I mentioned earlier. This is issue number two and concerns how you measure. When it comes to the broadsheets, our January data showed the Guardian as the most successful in every metric – popularity, total page views and pages, sessions and time per average visitor. It was also the leading broadsheet in terms of both Unique Audience and total visits during the period that the Telegraph claimed to be "the UK's most visited quality newspaper web site".

Just as there are many ways to measure success, there are many ways to measure the same thing. Different approaches can lead to different results as the debate between the Telegraph and Guardian so publicly shows. This proves how important it is that you, whether an advertiser, publisher or agency, understand what your research company can measure and exactly how they go about measuring it.

If your research company uses panels, you need to know how they are recruited so that they are as balanced and representative of the entire population as possible. For example, are they recruited online or offline or both? It is vital to ensure the panel you are receiving information from and, consequently, basing your strategy on, isn't dominated by heavy Internet users. This is a major problem with many online panels and one that causes data to be over-estimated. After all, making sense of the ad opportunity today depends on the data being representative of reality.

As European Internet Analyst, Alex Burmaster is responsible for identifying key trends from the Nielsen Online and the internet research suite and conveying the impact these Internet trends have on society today – both from a commercial and sociological perspective. Alex has six years of experience in Internet research with specialist knowledge in online sectors including communities, retail, music, search, gambling and sport.

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