



Liam Corcoran

Division director EMEA, digital & mobile
Research Now

160 Queen Victoria Street
London
EC4V 4BF

020 7084 3000
InfoUK@researchnow.co.uk
www.researchnow.co.uk
twitter.com/researchnowUK



Taking the guesswork out of digital advertising

Research Now's Liam Corcoran looks at how live testing is putting the science into online ad campaigns and delivering return on investment for retailers

In 2015, expenditure on digital media advertising in the UK is expected to account for half of all ad spend, outstripping TV, radio, print and outdoor combined, according to AA/Warc. But as the amount spent on online campaigns increases, are advertisers reaching the right audiences at the right time with the right messages? To plan their campaigns more effectively and ensure they generate the best possible results, brands need to completely revolutionise digital advertising and bring a new approach to measuring and monitoring campaign impact through the use of live testing across all devices prior to roll out. This will have the added benefit of avoiding waste and ensuring that their investment in advertising delivers the best possible return on investment (ROI).

> Ask the audience

From our work with media agencies and owners we know that one of their biggest challenges in a dynamic and changing technological environment – where consumers' digital behaviour is constantly evolving – is to plan ad campaigns that achieve cut-through and get their message across to the right audience at the right time and in the right place. Advertisers need to optimise page impressions and budget allocation, and gain real insight into which creative works, with which audiences, on which sites, at what time of day and at what price – and they want to do this in real time. The evolution of programmatic buying makes this even more relevant, as advertisers must rely on facts to ensure all inventory bought is relevant and effective.

Understanding campaign exposure and discovering who sees and, most importantly, responds to each element of an advertising campaign during its lifespan – and in what way – is the holy grail of digital advertising. Yet, for many, it remains elusive. And while a retrospective analysis of performance should be simple enough to

execute, brand owners and planners are all too painfully aware that it's too little, too late once the budget has been committed and spent. Brands and planners need to understand advertising in real time, allowing them to thoroughly and effectively test campaigns before roll out. By fine-tuning advertising to ensure it is reaching the right audience, at the right time and in the right way, they will be able to produce fully optimised campaigns, maximising ROI.

> Live testing campaigns before roll out

By using a large, profiled research panel, advertisers can build a very detailed picture of the target audience's behaviour by using surveys before then utilising additional tools for campaign testing. For example, a beauty retailer could use attitudinal questions to understand its customers' feelings towards prestige make-up and skincare. By correlating this with data about their lifestyle, habits and income level, they could develop a detailed picture of their behaviour prior to live testing.

Imagine that a coffee retailer is reviewing its online ads to plan its ad spend more effectively for the following year. Rather than allocating a budget to its online ads based on estimates and past performance, it wants a more precise understanding of the level of investment that will be required to enable it to plan activities more strategically.

Using the right research solution, this brand has the ability to bring real insight into ad planning to ensure campaigns are on target, on message and on track to deliver solid ROI. Starting with a large panel, the coffee retailer could survey panellists to identify the coffee drinkers amongst them. Once these have been successfully identified, researchers could ask the coffee drinkers further questions about, for example, which websites they visit,



Live testing allows for effective budget management, enabling advertisers to create online campaigns that maximise ROI

what time of day they visit, which day of the week they go online and which devices they use to access the web. With this information, a more detailed picture of the client's target market begins to emerge. You could then use the group to test different creative executions and measure response rates. If required, you could segment the group further, for example by type of coffee drinker or by how they respond to each execution.

The second phase moves into live testing where you see how each of the executions fares in a real-life environment. The coffee brand can, for example, trial ad campaigns for real by buying ads through a demand side platform, enabling it to see exactly how its target audience will respond to its ads once they go live. Ads served to the sample would be tagged so that you could accurately test the people exposed to them. Using this information you can work out the return of different creatives and how this varies by time of day and ad placement within a target audience. As with a real campaign, you would do this per 1,000 impressions on different websites.

> Taking the guesswork out of targeting

Armed with this insight, the coffee retailer would be able to see that its prime time amongst its core audience is on a weekday between the hours of 10am and 12pm and specify exactly which sites will deliver the best overall return. It could also use the deep profiling information from the research panel to identify new

consumer segments that might be worth targeting with specific creative campaigns and suggest which websites and times of the day to reach them.

In this way, not only can the brand ensure that main campaigns are optimised, but it can also uncover new and niche audiences to target too. And, of course, a huge benefit of live testing is that in addition to having a much better understanding of who responds to which executions, where and when, we can calculate an estimated overall budget and ROI to make it a reality with a level of accuracy that until now has been difficult to achieve.

Research Now's ADimension tool takes the guesswork out of online advertising by enabling brands and agencies to plan and measure an online campaign before launch. They can understand the exact profile of who has been exposed to which creative executions, at what time and on what sites. The live testing allows for effective budget management, so advertisers can create online campaigns that maximise ROI. With its live testing and real-time results, we believe the ADimension solution will revolutionise online advertising and improve campaign optimisation and effectiveness.