DEMAND A RETURN ON YOUR ADVERTISING INVESTMENT

Return on Investment (ROI) is a phrase not often heard in the context of advertising, it certainly isn't raised by ad agencies and few advertisers dare ask the question. But are the raised eyebrows and sometimes even ridicule that invariably follow this question, sufficient reason to accept that one can't measure, or shouldn't expect a return on one's advertising spend?

"Certainly not," says Clive Webster, Senior Partner and founder of Objectivity (Pty) Ltd, South Africa's leading perception measurement and monitoring firm. "While it's true that advertising is not a science, that doesn't mean that its effectiveness can't be measured.

"Like any form of communication, advertising has only three purposes and three measurable purposes at that – to create or increase awareness of a brand; to create or shift specific target market perceptions to the point of satisfaction; and to achieve a physical response."

That said, Webster agrees wholeheartedly with those ad agencies that maintain that traditional market research cannot measure these three deliverables accurately, speedily and cost effectively, particularly perception shifts. He explains: "Accurate perception measurement quantifies the qualitative, i.e. the decision criteria, the desired standards of performance and perception shifts."

Originally a cost accountant by profession, it was Webster's need for straight answers that lead him to develop his own unique methodology for measuring perceptions and to establish Objectivity 21 years ago. "You can't tell an accountant that the results of advertising aren't measurable. Not when advertising represents the biggest proportion of your marketing investment. Advertisers spend money because they want a desired result. To accept then that this money will be spent without any measurement of the results or without establishing any expectations for the return on that investment is an abdication of responsibility," he says.

According to Webster, when correctly approached and conducted, perception measurement will yield the following valuable business intelligence:

It will:
1) Quantify and prioritise the needs/wants and/or decision criteria;
2) Quantify the desired standards of performance of the target markets;
3) Quantify their levels of awareness;
4) Quantify the perceptions they hold regarding potential satisfiers of their needs/wants, in comparison with their desired standards of performance;
5) Identify and prioritise the messages to be delivered to the target markets; and
6) Quantify the awareness and perceptions shifts achieved by the advertising/communication. In other words it will track or monitor the effect of the communication in the course of the campaign's implementation.

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This is the approach taken by Objectivity and it is one that not only measures and monitors shifts in perceptions, but starts with developing the strategy for the ad agency from the outset. It identifies the messages to be sent, prioritises them and indicates the weights that should assigned to them, or in other words the frequency and emphasis that should be placed upon them. Then, when the campaign is underway, it measures the receipt of and reaction to the messages and directs any amendments necessary to them or to the frequency with which they are being sent.

Webster concludes: “By measuring and monitoring perceptions, advertising spend can be converted into an investment, and you <u>can</u> incentivise and reward your advertising agency for quantified awareness and perception shifts achieved. This is the ultimate win-win situation.”

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