

WHY 80% of ADVERTISING FAILS

The purpose of advertising (as well as every other form of communication) is to:

- 1) Create, or increase, AWARENESS
- 2) Create, or shift, one or more PERCEPTIONS
- 3) Bring about required RESPONSES

All three of these factors are measurable, indeed quantifiable. It follows then that quantified objectives can be set for each and every advertising campaign and ad agencies can be measured and remunerated in accordance with quantified measurement in shifts in awareness, perceptions and responses.

But let's start at the beginning. With every communication that lends itself to quantified measurement, we need a beginning. That is the brief to the agency. Each and every brief given to an advertising agency should contain the quantified objectives of the advertising campaign i.e.:

- 1) To achieve x% weight of awareness in a specific target market (s).
- 2) To achieve one, or more, quantified perception shifts - to state the desired standard of performance, i.e. the point of satisfaction, the point of brand loyalty to be achieved.
- 3) To achieve x quantified responses.

So the first reason that advertising fails is the generally inadequate briefs given to advertising agencies by advertisers.

The second reason that advertising fails is that advertising agencies still seldom quantify their own objectives, either as outlined above or by simply stating and quantifying the perceptions they wish to create. Some creative whiz kid comes up with some "creative idea", based on a sample of one, or perhaps a few more in the pressurised "creative hotshop". Another problem with the creative whiz kid approach is that he/she is seldom part of the target market itself.

More of the larger advertising agencies now have strategy, or research, departments that have greater or lesser degrees of influence on the creative people and their strategic output. This is a welcome trend of recent years and has become necessary due to the poor briefs that agencies mostly receive from their clients.

The third reason for advertising failure is the sending of the wrong, or an unnecessary message. Wrong in the sense that the message does not address the most important perception deficiency, and second in the sense that the message addresses a perception that has already been accepted by the target market.

A fourth reason is poor selection of media, which forms a big part of present advertising strategy in South Africa. Of course, budget limitations influence these decisions, but even so, it is better to advertise less in the right media than to get more exposure to the wrong audiences.

A fifth reason is not allowing the campaign to run long enough in the media to achieve the objectives. Too much of the budget is spent on production costs, not allowing sufficient for media exposure. This problem can be overcome through the setting of quantified awareness and perception objectives and the quantified measurement of perception shifts.

Another reason is the weight of the content of the advertisement relative to the weight of cover given to the brand. Creative, amusing or interesting adverts that leave you wondering what happened to the brand. What was the brand? This weakness can be overcome through meaningful pre-testing of the campaign, and regular perception shift measurements.

Lord Leverhulme once said he knew half of his advertising was wasted, but didn't know which half. Today we can do much better than that and, in the perfect scenario, eliminate almost all wastage. Advertising then changes from being a "spend" to becoming an "investment".

Clive M. Webster
Senior Partner at
Objectivity (Pty) Ltd
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