

Brands need to explore neuroscience if they want to make their TV and online campaigns remain in consumers' memories, according to research.

By Lou Cooper

Keep in mind how a human brain works

It used to be so easy. Marketers who wanted to make some noise about their brand simply created a great big television ad. But these days it's much more complicated. The growth of online channels has left marketers wondering which direction is most effective for their brand.

A neuroscience study commissioned by television marketing body Thinkbox reveals TV advertising generates greater levels of engagement and emotion, but online generates higher levels of attention.

The qualitative study, which combined two neuroscience techniques, suggests that TV advertising generates a 30% higher level of engagement than other marketing methods because people are better able to immerse

themselves in the campaigns. The study, which monitors brain waves, shows that people feel much more involved in an advert screened on television and are more able to identify with the scenario played out on their television screens, compared with online.

But people pay much more attention when they are online because of how they use the internet, explains David Brennan, research and strategy director at Thinkbox. "Online generates higher levels of attention because it's a lean forward [or active] medium. It's very task-oriented. Whereas TV is very entertainment-orientated and creates emotion."

The study, which examines how different parts of the human brain react to advertising,

also finds that if a brand has exposure on television first, people will engage much more with the ad when they see it online. However, people concentrate much less on the visuals online when they have seen the TV campaign first, compared with how they absorb the same advert on television.

Engagement with that online advert is more than 20% higher if it is screened on television first, according to the study. This is because detailed memory processing, which means that the advert is more likely to be remembered by the viewer, increases by more than a quarter.

Contextual memory processing – which is responsible for viewers remembering the actual brand that is being advertised – doubles when the ad is shown first on television and then online. There is no equivalent effect if you show the ad online first and then screen it on television.

People can be stimulated through most of the senses, not just visual, notes Brennan. Exposing your brand through television and online makes it more likely that one of those senses, or a combination of visual, aural and language, will be stimulated, making the most of a creative campaign, he argues. "TV primes all online, particularly pre-roll. It creates that emotion and engagement."

Different formats of online advertising generate different brain activity, the study has found. Pre-roll ads produce brain activity most like TV, whereas search and website browsing

demand more visual attention from users.

The ability to remember an advert is triggered by a number of factors, such as how engaged people feel during an advert, the emotional intensity that is evoked, the general reaction – either positive or negative – to that advert, and the attention that can be commanded during the advert, according to the study.

"Most people only remember key scenes from the last movie they saw," explains Brennan. These scenes are important because the brain fills in the story in between. The study calls this "information chunking" and shows that brainwaves peak at certain moments, taking snapshots of the movie being watched, and troughs where the detail is lost.

"It's where it peaks that we commit the information to memory," says Brennan. "You've got to ask yourself: 'Do these peaks happen when the brand is an intrinsic part of the ad?'"

"If they do, you'll automatically remember what the ad was for and what brand you associate with it. If they don't, you might think about it as a beautiful piece of content, but you won't remember what it's for."

Small changes to TV creative can therefore make a huge difference to how the ad performs. "From a creative point of view, it's usually just a slight edit here and there to make the key brand moments match the point where long-term memory encoding peaks," says Brennan. The study sees consistent brain movements across the sample of people who took part in the research, he adds.

While the brain is processing an "information chunk", the ability to take in information reduces, so these moments are bad places to put branding, suggests the research.

"Our brains are constantly trying to make sense of things, to work out the story, narrative or joke," says Brennan. The brain tries to work out what is happening in an ad and when it answers the question, the ability to commit information to memory drops significantly. Advertisers make the mistake of putting the brand name in just as people are digesting the punchline.

Brennan suggests that advertisers do not have to make drastic creative changes to make the brand more memorable. "Moving the pack shot 15 frames further forward, for instance, means that advertisers would be able to exploit that peak in memory encoding," he says.

Another aspect of ad creativity that is shown to influence the way the brain processes advertising is facial expression. Both the FMRI ►

thefrontline

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Jo Davey
Head of marketing
Virgin Media Television

We use TV ads because we're a TV channel. There's the pragmatic view that we have a load of our own inventory – which is free – so we can appeal to our viewers by creating an engaging piece of promotion. We also spend money on competitive channels where we can increase the reach and use that to target light viewers. There's never a plan where we wouldn't have TV, even if we have to pay for it.

We don't buy bulk. We only ever cherry-pick specific slots that we think suit our brand and target audience. That sometimes works out as more expensive, but that's part of our strategy. For the Britain's Next Top Model campaign with presenter Elle Macpherson, we've picked slots by shows such as Desperate Housewives, Big Brother, Vampire Diaries, Sex and the City because we're looking to attract young women.

There were a lot of elements we could have focused on from the new series of Britain's Next Top Model, such as a new panel of judges, a format change (in that it's going to be live) or more shoots abroad. But for us it was about being very singular with what we were trying to say, which was that Elle Macpherson is now on Britain's Next Top Model.

We collaborated closely with Elle on how everything was going to look. We were very clear on the pose, for example. Every element was well thought out.

We've done a lot of econometrics modelling in the last year and online comes up as the most efficient and effective return on investment for us. Young men and women are spending increasingly large amounts of time online. We've shifted a lot of money from direct online ads to social media, be that through behavioural targeting ads or from employing people to go into forums and talk about our shows.



Nick Hall
Head of Marketing
Go Compare

Television engages people in a very different way to online. You're looking for the TV to entertain you. Brands can engage with people visually, which is good for when you want to communicate the more humorous, emotive side of your brand.

We do that using a larger than life brand character, opera singer Gio Compario, and music. We play on the emotional, disruptive side of the way ads work, which is harder to get across in an online environment.

We do some online display stuff, but you're limited in what you can do creatively because you've got banner ads and there are limitations on size. We do pre-roll and run our ads in full on all the major commercial stations [such as Channel 4 Online, ITV Online and 4OD] because we see it as extending the reach of TV.

Insurance is quite dull, so we wanted something that was larger than life, catchy and memorable. Music is a great way of doing that. It's very emotive and it aids brand recall.

Music that is well linked to the brand or message is key, so when you say the words "Go Compare", you hear the tune. The two are inextricably linked. We've done it with a disruptive character; a larger than life singing tenor with music that is an operatic style. The two together give you that cut-through and enable us to gain a lot of brand resonance.

I agree that the genre of programme the ad is aired during makes a difference. There was a recent comment on Twitter about how we'd played our ad during T4 On The Beach. People linked the fact that opera singer Gio was also on the beach. Putting your ad into a genre or programme that links nicely to your ad works really well.

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WHY MAKING CONSUMERS FEEL TRULY SIGNIFICANT WILL PAY OFF



Gaby Bell

Planning director, Draftfcb

Let consumers own brand campaigns

According to "The Lonely Society", which was published by the Mental Health Foundation in May this year, British people are lonelier than ever. Their findings suggest that despite being better connected, we are increasingly isolated and unsupported.

This represents an interesting challenge and opportunity for both clients and agencies. If together they can find a way to fully embrace and truly acknowledge consumers at a community level, there could well be "gold in them hills".

But to really capitalise on this opportunity both parties must push for an entirely new model of communications – one that takes them beyond the four oft-quoted pillars of ad strategy (persuasion, involvement, salience and promotion) to the more relevant pillar of "significance".

"We are living in an age of insignificance and the smart brands are taking advantage of it"

"Significance" supports a changing consumer reality that has long outpaced conventional communications thinking. So far, only a handful of brands have recognised that in this "Age of Insignificance" the new communications model is one about making consumers feel truly significant.

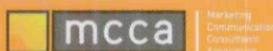
Barack Obama's 2009 election campaign remains a masterclass in significance as a communications model. Obama's highly effective approach was to be among his audience, offer them his trust and a role to play, making them feel valued and acknowledged. Brand Obama became appealing, profitable and completely at home in the social media environment.

Cadbury's Wispa "resurrection" campaign, Walkers ongoing "Do us a flavour" campaign and a recent example from our own Draftfcb stable with the Cannes award-winning Radiotjänst web campaign are all fantastic examples of brands looking to the audience not only co-create, but to take ownership of the campaign for themselves, influencing its form, outcome and direction.

Brands like this have recognised that the world has changed – and so must they. They realise that inspiring and allowing the most committed fans to evangelise a brand leads to a greater return on investment and creativity than shouting to the unconverted.

Significance as a communications model requires a step-change in thought. Agencies and the brands they nurture must move from interactivity to consumer co-creation and ultimately to a place where they actually hand over a clear and relevant proposition to their consumers and let them make it their own. ●

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trends neuromarketing

The left side of the brain processes detail. Its roles can be characterised as:

- Picking up detail
- Sequencing and processing
- Language and words
- Cause and effect
- Abstracts and symbols
- Organising information
- Recalling complex sequences

The right side of the brain processes more "global", contextual stimuli. Its roles can be characterised as:

- Picking up "bigger picture"
- Simultaneous processing
- Images, music and colour
- Seeing connections
- Senses and images
- Recalling complex images

METHODOLOGY

Thinkbox employed two global neuroscience organisations: Neurosense in the UK, and Australia's Neuro-Insight. They conducted a study of 120 people in June 2010 to determine how TV advertising was working in isolation and in conjunction with internet-based media. The two neuroscience techniques employed were FMRI and SST.

FMRI is already used in the advertising arena. The Functional MRI scan monitors blood flow throughout the brain, providing a complete three-dimensional picture of all brain activity. SST is a new form of EEG that detects electrical changes in the brain, showing what is happening within key parts of the brain on a second-by-second basis.

Eleven different advertisers were recruited from the FMCG, pharmaceutical, financial, durables and telecoms sectors, including Mastercard, Tropicana and Philips. They provided real-life examples of both their TV and online campaigns.

▷ and SST (see methodology box, left) approaches reveal that facial expression drives empathy and people reflect back the emotion depicted in the advert. This is described in the research as "mirror neurones".

The "wrong" face in an ad can act as an "off switch" to our memory processing, says Brennan. "Not surprisingly, when we see someone smile, we smile and feel happy inside. That is an association that will work for most advertisers. Where we had smiling faces in this study, there seems a real uplift in engagement and emotion."

Brennan adds that this doesn't mean you can't use scowling faces to provoke a negative reaction, but you need to do that early on in the narrative, such as setting up a conflict and then resolving it at the end of the advert.

"We found examples of negative processing towards the end of the ad. For example, there was a woman shot in one [unnamed] ad who looked quite haughty and disdainful and the drop in emotional approach and intensity and engagement, especially among young women, was quite stunning."

If that's the point where the branding comes in, it is less likely that the advert will be remembered. And if it is remembered, it will be with a negative association.

Emotional salience

Music is also found to increase emotion and engagement. Ads with music significantly increase emotional salience and engagement, according to the research, which also reports that an advert is more likely to be enjoyed if it is accompanied by music.

"It's something that advertisers can add to the toolkit to say we know how to use this to really drive the emotion and engagement, which in turn increases your chances of getting bigger peaks for long-term memory encoding," says Brennan. If viewers commit information to memory when music is playing, it's more likely to be a positive memory, he adds.

The effect of the programme next to which the advert is being screened is also significant, he says. "If people are engaged with the programme, they're likely to be more engaged with the advertising within it. This is particularly true of the ads that are first, second and third in the break because you've got a kind of halo effect from the programme itself." The programme can have an even greater effect on the memory of an advert if it is in tune with the style of the programme, he explains.

The way people process television and online advertising may be different, according to this research, but if an advertiser combines the power of television advertising and online, then it is more likely to stay on a consumer's wavelength. ●

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