



BEST PRACTICES: WHAT I'VE LEARNED ABOUT COPY TESTING

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There's little debate as to the important role that television copy testing plays in the research industry. Television copy testing was first introduced to the marketplace in the 1950's and over the course of the past 60 years, new techniques have been released that continually improve upon the process.

At PTG, our copy testing solution has experienced a similarly exciting evolution. Since our very first copy test in the late 1970s, we have tested thousands of television ads while continuously advancing the patented technologies that allow us to measure verbal and non-verbal consumer response to brand communications.

Over the years, I've been fortunate to watch the evolution of advertising measurement from a front row seat and this unique vantage point has taught me a great deal about best practices in the field of copy testing. Below are just a few of my thoughts and methodological recommendations.

Best Practice #1: Keep it real.

There's no doubt that consumers make the best and most reliable decisions when they are observed in a real world environment. If respondents are aware they are being evaluated, the revelation can unwittingly influence their actions and, in turn, the data. In order to avoid this pitfall, consider a methodology that uses a highly contextual consumer experience and relies upon unobtrusive and passive technology.

For example, at PTG, we invite respondents to participate in our research under the guise that they are evaluating network television programming – not advertising. Individuals are expressly asked to watch TV as they typically would which allows us to capture their viewing behavior while they participate in normal activities such as changing channels on the remote control and using DVR functions.

By mimicking an actual TV viewing (and skipping) experience, we are able to evaluate whether a respondent is naturally inclined to watch an ad or zap past it with their remote control.

Best Practice #2: Look beyond forced exposure.

High recall scores collected under forced exposure have long been considered the currency of copy testing. However, I would argue that recall measures only provide a portion of the predictive data required to truly evaluate an ad's success. For instance, a high recall score does not necessarily translate into persuasion or meaningful change in brand perception. If the ultimate goal of advertising is to persuade consumers to purchase a product, then why are researchers still clamoring for high recall scores? Especially since, more often than not, recalling an ad's creative details has little influence on consumer purchase behavior.

It's important to note that we don't advise throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Instead, we recommend a two phased consumer research experience in which the first phase assesses an ad's performance in a natural environment and the second phase identifies the ad's performance under forced exposure. We have found that



this comprehensive approach is not only a better predictor of success, but it also provides the insights needed to help clients build upon the ad's strengths and identify specific areas for improvement.

Best Practice #3: Actions speak louder than words.

In life, and in advertising research, people will often tell you what they think you want to hear. This may be great following a questionable new haircut; however, it is less helpful when launching a new advertising campaign. In order to circumvent some of the realities of the human condition, it is important to observe behavior that isn't subject to interpretation.

To that end, at PTG, we incorporate a biometric indicator called saccadic eye movement into our copy testing methodology. In simple terms, saccadic eye movement reflects the cognitive processes the brain uses to capture visual information.

More specifically, in order for the brain to gain a visual picture of a stimulus, the eye must vibrate and provide constant streams of information to the center of the retina called the fovea. The more visual information the brain wants, the more actively the eye vibrates. These mini-movements are known as macro-saccades.

In order for the brain to remember a specific visual, the eye fixates and stops moving for a fraction of a second. These macro-saccades and fixations reflect an objective level of respondent behavioral engagement that is uniquely recorded by PTG's patented Saccadic Eye Movement Recorder. Saccadic e-Motion, as we fondly refer to the technology, measures second-by-second visual engagement as well as element-by-element eye tracking and allows us to pinpoint specific areas where our clients can make small changes to their advertising that make a big impact.

In Summary

From my perspective, the overarching objective with copy testing research is to build on the strengths of a creative execution and identify any potential weakness. In order to reach these goals, it is important to consider a methodology that looks beyond self-reported data and incorporates insights into media placement, emotional response and real world involvement. By addressing all external factors that can lead to the success of a television spot, you will undoubtedly identify opportunities for optimization that far exceed traditional pass/fail systems.