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Device Synergy

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A recent study published in the Journal of Advertising Research (1) explores the subject of video advertising effectiveness and how it is impacted by the different devices used (e.g. mobile vs. tablet). While not all marketers are able to afford video advertising, audiences are going to be reaching their digital messaging (websites/social media) via a number of devices and so this is worth considering carefully.



MediaCom, Real World Insight

The article suggests that **format and device** rather than media may be more appropriate to marketers going forward. New devices bring increased message delivery options which mean new challenges when making media planning decisions. But how should a marketer allocate budget with the myriad of devices available?

Which devices and formats are best and are there synergies that can be exploited?

For example, conventional wisdom is that a larger screen delivers better results (frustrating to those of us who don't have budgets for cinema or TV advertising), but this may be counteracted by the viewing intensity or the relationship to the device.

Different devices tend to have different roles as demonstrated at our most recent MediaCom Engage event²; in archetypal terms the mobile is often seen as the 'lover' (we take it everywhere and can't live without it) whereas the laptop is the 'sage' (our route to knowledge).

In order to pick apart these dynamics the study reports on four experiments that look for potential synergy effects across devices and formats. Awareness, likeability, and persuasion are measured across devices when each uses the same (and different) advertising formats.

The authors address three key questions (and yes, video commercials are used as an example, but bear with this):

- Are video commercials more effective if seen on TV, as compared to viewings on PCs, small audio-visual devices, and mobile phones?
- Are there positive (or negative) synergy effects for video commercials seen across combinations of devices, such as a TV, a PC, and a mobile phone?
- What happens if there are differences in advertising format—i.e., interactive versus non-interactive video commercials?

The authors found that the device used makes no difference to advertising effectiveness whether measured by awareness, advertising likeability, or persuasion (brand attitude and purchase intention) - any combination of devices is equally effective.

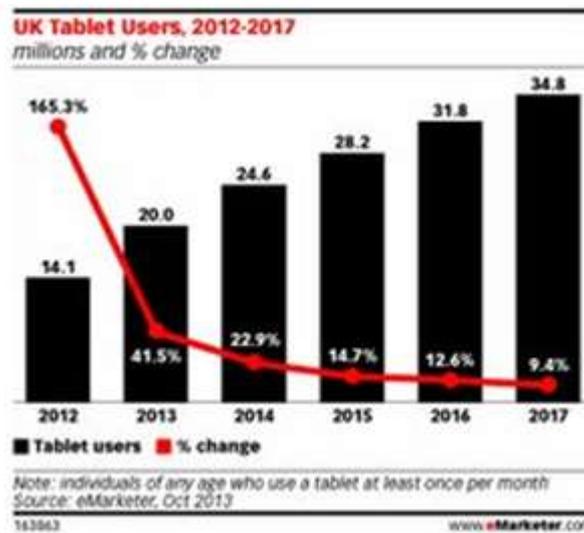
But, if the format is not the same on each device (e.g. interactive vs. non-interactive), there can be sequential synergy effects i.e. synergies that exist in one direction but not another and they can be positive or negative.

This adds a subtle but important nuance to the synergy discussion: that order of exposure is important when using multiple formats. To unravel sequential synergy, the authors admit that more research is required. Nevertheless there are some important planning insights from the work:

- If devices show the same advertising format (e.g. video), under the same viewing conditions, all exposures are equally effective.
- Marketers have the flexibility of using different devices to reach certain demographics, without sacrificing advertising effectiveness.
- Where formats differ, marketers need to think carefully about the laydown as the sequence of communications will matter.

Whilst this all may be true in the lab, marketers need to remember that in the real world different devices tend to be used differently. For example, the role of the mobile differs from the tablet. They are used on different occasions and the emotional relationships to the devices differ. The impact this has on advertising effectiveness also needs to be considered.

And of course the tablet is fast growing in popularity. One in three people in the UK are regular users of the tablet according to research firm eMarketer.



Source: www.emarketer.com

Sequential synergy sounds intriguing but from a measurement point of view (back to my day job) there are many more pressing challenges that marketers face (e.g. the impact of social media).

At the moment, nailing down sequential synergy feels a bit like gilding the lily but it is certainly food for thought.

(1) Title: What Works Best When Combining Television Sets, PCs, Tablets, or Mobile Phones? How Synergies Across Devices Result From Cross-Device Effects and Cross-Format Synergies
Author(s): Duane Varan, Jamie Murphy, Charles F. Hofacker, Jennifer A. Robinson, Robert F. Potter, & Steven Bellman.
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