

IMPROVING ANNUAL MEDIA INVESTMENT

Every year in most markets in Asia, the media planning season is soon to kick off. Once marketing plans are endorsed, the challenge then comes to transfer this to local strategies that can be activated. Below is what we have seen as best practice in this area.

1. Good media strategies only comes from business plans

Too many media plans are developed in isolation, without reflecting the business plan and the marketing plan objectives that have to be resolved. The best marketers involve their agencies fully in this planning process, sharing targets (or a sales index) so that success can be clearly measured. This also gives the best media planners a much better framework to then be creative within. The experts at this are always the best of the fmcg companies – JNJ, P&G and Unilever – who nurture and value the best talent and processes on both sides to make this a reality

2. Insights are Everything

We spend a lot of time analyzing media strategies after the fact. In the best of them, the target audience is truly interrogated, there's a rich understanding not only of when and what media they engaged but *how* they engage with it. In too many cases, unfortunately, the client and agency revert to the same old target audience and the same old approach. No consumer group stays static for so long. Best practice is now to look at primary , secondary and tertiary targets – to help find the true sweet spot and how they spend a typical 'day in the life'. Recently an agency had youths keep virtual 'diaries' for two weeks to capture their inner most thoughts and mindsets.

3. Be sensible on Cost Improvements

In most Asian markets, media cost inflation is a reality that has to be dealt with. The marketers and agencies that keep focused only on cost are buying poorer quality airtime and losing out on engagement and effectiveness. The best relationships are now setting up Media Value Measures – to track value improvement through negotiation and strategy, not just cost reduction. Because of the fickle nature of today's consumers, an Engagement-led strategy will always triumph over a Cost-led one.

4. You can't move what you can't measure

The best strategy in the world though will fail without the right metrics and process to measure its success. If a media schedule happened and wasn't measured, did it really happen? This requires a commitment to some kind of independent measurement of both target audience "think/feel/act" before and after the campaign as well as the actual campaign post buy and strategic approach. Recently we evaluated a years' activity across six markets to endorse an excellent approach to value based measurement, with some improvement areas on engagement. This then also flow through to the agency remuneration – the leading marketers are now rewarding and penalizing agencies based on these pre-aligned metrics. Media agencies are now able to earn far better returns based on research, than just purely on CPRP.

5. Keep flexible

Most media plans laid out in October or November a year in advance are pipe dreams. In many cases, the final rates and negotiations have not happened, the programming and content lineup is unknown. You do not want to be in the position of having no contingency within the year itself to tap into special opportunities. Maintaining a contingency is just smart pre-planning in this area – particularly in an area such as digital. Last year, China added 80m new digital subscribers within a 12 month period – was such an occurrence pre-planned by marketers?

Translating your marketing strategies to a viable communications plan is the biggest risk you will take all year. Make sure you invest time to do it right and set the best metrics to measure your success

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