

Say goodbye to Media Buying and hello to Audience Buying

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BY JESPER JUHL BROGAARD, HEAD OF STRATEGIC PLANNING, MEDIACOM DENMARK 25 JAN 2017

I recently started teaching an elective course at Copenhagen Business School called 'Media Strategy and Planning'. It has made me consider how much the media world has transformed over the last 10 years.

How do you navigate?

No matter who you are – a media expert, established professor, experienced chief marketing officer or new student of marketing – it's becoming harder to navigate through this ever-changing world of media, tech and platforms. How do you teach, plan and evolve your marketing strategies and marketing mix to meet the ever-changing habits of consumers?

Everything is happening so fast that looking to texts books or published research for answers feels like reading The Old Testament. Often, in these texts, digital, search and social media are mentioned as a side note or not at all. Even new research and literature only provides answers to bits and pieces of the puzzle. It tends to focus solely on either the latest buzzwords or ‘best sellers’ (like [Google](#), [social media](#), big data or AI). It’s very hard to get a holistic perspective.

Trying to get a simple answer from a strategic planner or expert is proving even harder too – sometimes, nearly impossible – because the media world is so complex. We talk a lot about the need to gather insights and to [see the bigger picture](#), so working to a general ‘rule of thumb’ or ‘one size fits all’ channel strategy is very much a thing of the past.

The sticking point

But too many marketers are ‘stuck’ between the old world of media planning (which was more rigidly channel based) and the new world of audience planning and buying (which is more consumer centric and flexible). Our foreseeing [COO of GroupM Denmark & MD of Digital, Paw Saxgren](#), actually made these predictions four years ago.

The chart below describes the three waves of change that have happened to bring us from the golden age of Mad Men in the 1950s, to the world of the [Math Men \(a term coined by Sir Martin Sorell\)](#).

The shift from Media Planning to Audience Planning

	The old world: Media Planning	The new world: Audience Planning	
PHASE	Campaigns	Always on	Consumer Centric
STRATEGY	Campaign Planning	Programs	Journey orchestration
OPTIMIZATION	Campaign evaluation	Real time optimization	AI & algorithmic
DISTRIBUTION	Reservation of media	Real time allocation	Partnerships
CONTENT	Campaign ads	Dynamic ads	Content generating data & native content
AUDIENCE	Consumer insights from panels	User profiling	Segmentation & the Audience of one

How to navigate and plan

In the future, we can expect to see a world where we plan, execute, and measure our advertising and media buying based on audience and customer segments. I personally hope that this transition will not just help students of marketing consider a more customer-centric approach, but will help agencies, advertisers and media owners too. We all want a future that focusses on customers and actually creates value for them. It's time to think beyond broad demographics and mass media exposure.

It's easy to imagine a (not so distant) future where media channels and formats are replaced by segments and messages in an audience-based approach. Because, let's face it, the current, old way of looking at media plans and flowcharts are outdated and perhaps even dying in an agile and real time world.

But we are still not there yet

Traditional media channels are still important, of course, and from an ROI perspective we can't just channel all of our efforts into programmatic. We can't forget the classic virtues of marketing. Mass media can still help us boost sales volumes, increase purchase frequency and basket size, and launch new products. And hey, we still need these channels to promote toilet paper.

Media planners and agencies still need to know their craft and the fundamentals by heart, and some things will always be important: Reach, frequency and cost-efficiency.

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