

# The correlation between emotion and success

OPINION

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Modern marketers are obsessed with driving shortterm sales – their jobs depend on it. But long-term growth rarely comes from shorttermism. To grow consistently, you need to build an emotional connection with your brand – and that takes time, says Unruly's Chief Revenue Officer APMEA Phil Townend

The last 20 years have seen a seismic shift in the advertising industry: huge fragmentation in media channels, the explosion of mobile, search and social, the rise of consultancies and the disruption of traditional business models have all led to a Darwinistic race to stay alive and stay relevant.

In a world where digital has allowed for the measurement and scrutiny of almost any media metric, entire digital economy businesses have been built on SEO and CPC. But what about the role of brands? Has this addiction to instant gratification come at a cost of long-term brand health and even business outcomes?

In their market-defining white paper, *The Long and Short of It*, Binet and Field analysed 30 years of IPA marketing effectiveness data and concluded that the optimum mix of long-term brand building versus short-term sales activation to maximise B2C brand outcomes is 60/40.

“Emotional campaigns, and in particular, those that are highly creative and generate powerful fame/buzz effects, produce considerably more powerful long-term business effects than rational persuasion campaigns. Rational campaigns produce more powerful short-term sales effects and so are very seductive to organisations focused primarily on short-term results. They will not deliver maximum long-term success, however.”

## **MEASURING EQ**

The power of emotion cannot be understated in advertising. As Nobel Award winner, Daniel Kahnemann, explained in *Thinking Fast and Slow*, ‘System 1’, the subconscious, illogical, associative part of our brains, is responsible for 90% of our decision making, including the brands we choose.

At Unruly, we heavily research the role intense emotions and the human subconscious play in boosting consumer attention, memory and decision-making. Our proprietary content testing tool, UnrulyEQ, measures emotional responses to campaign creatives to help brands maximise the impact of their messages.

To see if there is a correlation between our UnrulyEQ testing and real-world business outcomes, we teamed up with Peter Field and the IPA.

We analysed the campaigns using UnrulyEQ to obtain scores for emotional and cognitive

responses, purchase intent, favourability, brand values, social motivations/shareability and negative/primal responses.

The IPA provided scores for real-world outcomes, including market share, fame, esteem, differentiation, pricing and activation, and Peter Field examined the correlation between the two sets of data to identify the key triggers that are linked to real-world outcomes.

Together, we found that:

1. Unruly's pre-testing metrics are linked to real-world outcomes;
2. The Unruly metrics associated with long-term outcomes are very different from those linked to short term outcomes – video content should be designed with one mission in mind;
3. Negative triggers can be linked to short-term sales spikes, but this can be detrimental to the brand in the long run.
4. Positive psychological response, rather than function, acts as a differentiator for brands and is correlated with long-term business and brand outcomes.
5. The positive emotional triggers most closely correlated with long-term outcomes are amazement and exhilaration.

Ultimately, videos which play to the rational and are heavily product-focused may drive short-term sales but rarely drive long-term brand growth. Instead, emotion was a key success factor in almost every campaign which drove long-term gains.

This brings us onto an interesting subject: video copy length – one of the fundamental questions of our time. The narrative goes that 'consumers now have the attention spans of goldfish'. Yet the same person goes home and binge watches four hours of Netflix.

Using EQTrends (our own databank of eight years of video engagement data), we have

been able to look at how metrics are impacted by the length of an ad. What is the optimal length of a video to drive humour, happiness or warmth? Is this different for a mom in the US versus Indonesia? What is the optimum length for recall, purchase intent, consideration and cognitive response? And how does this vary on a market-by-market, audience-by-audience basis?

The simple findings are that complex emotions, such as pride, warmth, happiness and inspiration (where mums over-index), peak at around 90 to 120 seconds. Other emotions, such as humour, exhilaration and amazement, can be delivered quite quickly, within six to 10 seconds. In other words, storytelling videos that drive emotions remain still critically important.

A challenge to these findings is that creativity is being increasingly informed by media platforms, which themselves may be challenged by shorter and shorter user-attention times. It is no coincidence that as investment into social feed video increases, we're seeing an explosion in six-second short-form videos, but they play just a small role – reminder and response. Six-second videos excel in reminding people of the more emotive long-form video they may have watched on another platform, or for the activation element of a brand-building campaign – but it doesn't build the long-term brand.

## WORKING WITH THE DUOPOLY

When we interrogate the product portfolios of the duopoly, Facebook and Google, the lead propositions are search and social. In other words, cost-per-click (CPC) or split-second attention news-feeds and programmatic display ad networks largely drive direct response-focused KPIs.

Take YouTube and Instagram out of the mix and you're looking at two incredibly powerful lower-funnel marketing channels that are best suited to short-term sales activation and delivery of quick, rational, activation-focused ad messages. If 80% of your ad dollars are concentrated on these platforms, then that may in part explain the current rise of short-termism to the detriment of long-term brand growth.

What matters is understanding the role of the platform, the types of videos that are best suited to any given campaign goal and making the creative and media choices that are best aligned to a business's long-term and short-term goals.

YouTube, Instagram and premium media sites deliver dwell times and video completion rates that allow for emotion-powered and experiential ads to create connections and captivate the consumer's subconscious. Mean-while, TV and programmatic 15- or 30-second TV spots are still critically important for building attention and awareness of products or services. Search and social, on the other hand, are absolutely expert at response and reminder ads activation.

The big opportunity is to look at the data signals and harness them in the right way; to reignite our commitment to the human connection and drive long-term benefit for all. All we need to do is be brave enough to take it.

## OPINION