

Incorrect media planning is costly

 By [Tinyiko Maswanganye](#)

9 Jan 2013

Successful advertising depends on several aspects. Among them are appealing creative concepts, proper execution, and delivery. If one part of the chain is broken, the advertising will lose the effectiveness and the money is wasted. The point I want to emphasise is the delivery of the message. This part is called media planning and buying.

The message is wasted when the people who are supposed to hear it do not get hear it. This is often the result of bad media planning. What is media planning? In simple terms, media planning and buying is a usage of exact media vehicle to communicate advertising messages with the target market.

I have observed some billboards and other media platforms in the recent months with apparent media planning flaws. It made me wonder if the planning and buying were done with strict consideration of the target audience or is it impulsive "hit and miss" guesswork? In order for the planners and organisations that do self media planning to apply the budget efficiently they need to appreciate that efficiency is not low cost; rather it is effectiveness married to price and the results they need. They need to understand who will be reached by their advert and what is the likelihood of success and elasticity. By buying in the incorrect media platforms, the planners and buyers are pushing the results to the horizons. Nothing will be visible. At the end of the day it is failure that results.

Use the right medium

A while ago I sat for a brief with a marketing manager of a brand that has Italian origins and high sales among the lower market. He lamented that the sales were "shocking". We asked about the medium of message dispatch, and he mentioned high-end magazines and we immediately noticed that the problem is with his media planning "prowess", which missed the target and potential market so evidently. He asked me what we needed to do. I said we needed to diagnose the problem properly but from what I could see the usage of media is profoundly incorrect. We needed to change it in order to see the results. We evaluated the history of the brand in South Africa, the current sales, their brand presence and other aspects; we established that the market that they are trying to reach or suppose to target was not receiving the message. They, the potential consumers in target market, were not aware of the new products the company was selling. Culprit: wrong media.

Here are more examples: In Limpopo there is a billboard for the provincial Department of Health with the whole paragraph of 31 words. Can you read that driving past at the 100km/h? On another occasion, I saw billboards for a national retailer of shoes - but they have no store within 150km radius. To compound the problem, though the billboard was in KwaZulu-Natal, the language used on the billboards is Sesotho. Who reads that language in KZN?

Understand the demographics - and then use them... properly, of course

Other than that incorrect media planning is waste of advertising budget directly, there is a lot more than this. This includes missed in indirect revenue as a result of not communicating with correct target market. The consumers need to know about the new products and services in order to react to them. If they do not, your brand is likely not to be taken seriously and will be forgotten in the long run. The results are always low sales and competitors taking over. Those who will survive are those who understand that they need external expertise from the specialised team that understands the field. Those are the ones who take time to evaluate the market, which buys their product and are likely to react to the advertising messages. The company media planners must understand the demographics across the board not only the affluent areas. They need to understand that the media audience and sufficient reach of media platforms. Planners need to understand the uniqueness of the different markets.

In a nutshell, for media planning not to result in a waste of money, you should consider the following basic principles:

- Who you want to talk to?
- Where are they found?
- Which media they consume?
- How many you likely to reach?
- How often, etc?

When doing the planning you need to understand the background of the brand, what makes the brand relevant to the target market, the association with certain activities and what sort of people participate in those activities. You also need to know where you appeal the most, what are the specific drives to associate with the target market and the brand, what is the single culture that the brand utilises to align themselves with target market.

Marketing managers who still plan and buy media by themselves need to understand that the brand is not their premises, the people who work for the company, the products or even the CEO; it is the thought that people have about the brand, the knowledge, the emotional connection, the trust they have on the brand, etc. All the people and CEO can leave the company, you can change the address, but based on the thought that the company is still going to exist. Media planning has to ensure that the target market is reminded of the service and products, and the only way this can happen and fulfil the mandate is when media planning is done correctly and properly and gets the message across to the target audience.

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