Insights from the Festival of Media Global 2015

By John Beale

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The Festival of Media Global 2015 took place in Rome and was awash with the cream of the media crop, media network CEOs, TV conglomerate heads and procurement and media managers from large brands the world around...

The two-day conference saw two main themes emerge. One, that programmatic is still clouded by its own hype and the dust storm it created trying to be more advanced than it really is. The second, is that television (TV) is feeling incredibly threatened in the global media landscape by digital media. (Not so much here in SA, so take this all with a pinch of 20 years from now salt).

International TV execs are really getting nervous as mobile media entices eyeballs away from TV. This is because their once stable revenue is now being carved out by more relevant media such as programmatic, digital and of course integrating TV and other channels.

As the CEO of Fox international Channels, Hernan Lopez said, the demand for great content has never been higher, but we see a few trends emerging. TF1's CEO Laurent-Eric Le Lay, 47, is CEO of TF1 Publicité says TV needs to adapt faster, and needs to 'create a new House of Cards every day'. Local content is king the world around, and so is Live TV engagements (Golden Globes, MTV Awards, Rugby World Cup, and SWC). These categories bring in the biggest audiences, but one thing TV needs to get right is mastering the context within which people are watching for advertisers to take advantage.
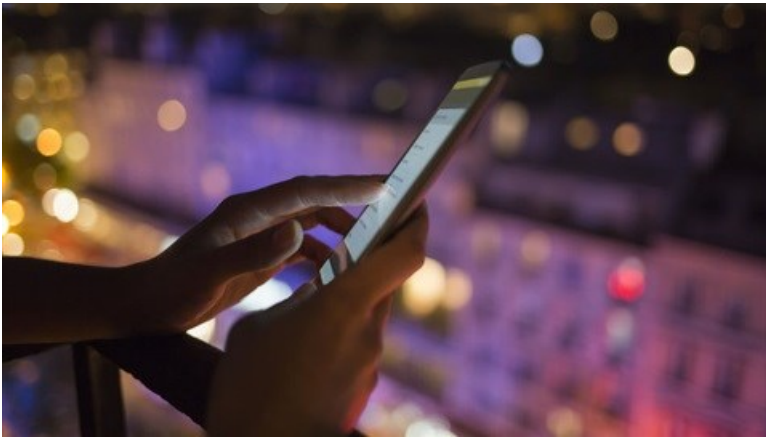

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This is where more effective media advertising came under scrutiny, and was compared, head to head with programmatic buying. Seth Rogan from Mashable named programmatic the tool for the campaign with heart. It used to be all about automation, but what we quickly realised is that it actually still needed people to be brilliant, and that it's more about the precision of the targeting and effectiveness, than the cost of the buy. Programmatic has shown it has immense precision on targeting sets of audiences, understanding context and then placing the right message to them using the right data. This type of understanding is lacking in TV planning, but as Fox CEO, Lopez pointed out, certain categories of shows engage more, for example sci-fi and drama. Live TV engages more audiences than any other show, and reality does the best to engage all the way through the season, where sport engagement is higher post-and pre-event. This type of audience understanding is crucial for better, more effective messages, and is in fact manual programmatic buying!

To be as effective as possible, the key is to focus on understanding the context the target audience is in. Context to consumption has the biggest effect on response rates. Take for example your 60 second epic new launch Ford Mustang brand story being consumed on YouTube by a mid-level executive waiting for the elevator at work whilst on his phone, he gets 10 seconds in, and his patience wears thin as it's 7am and his stress levels are high, so he slams it back into his pocket as he gets into the elevator. We see this time and time again. Understanding the context of the screen, through location and handset data, as well as the human, through programmatic buying data, is going to be essential to the most effective targeting with the least amount of wastage.

For years I've been saying that airport advertising is a waste of money. Consider the high stress levels most travellers are in when travelling, the barrage of advertising before, in and around the airport experience, and you tell me if you're receptive to advertising during the travelling period. I doubt it. A bad mood or highly stressful environment creates 20-30% less receptivity to message. That means it's imperative to understand the context of the human to content even more so than the content around that human.

TV is all about emotion, it always has been, it creates highs and lows unlike any other channel (bar cinema), so if you want to tap into that emotive context to make your brand more relevant, the only way you're going to do that is with the right data (1st party data) from both the networks and the digital buyers.

What we will see is programmatic and TV starting to collaborate, one of the main points of conversation on the stage. Household addressable minds - understanding those data sets or more likely, stacks, will be a huge revenue generator and data whore for TV networks. It's going to mean that agencies and TV networks will work closer together to understand performance, and stacks of audience that can be sold for certain messages. Simple examples of this, is that prime time is still best at building brand (Unilever rejoice), and shoulder time is still best for direct response (Glomail rejoice). Sci-fi and drama based programming produce the best response rates (remember here, response is seen as digital engagement, social interaction and direct product sale).

I believe the success will be in the team that can bring the two planners together, with the right data sets, to provide the best planning, for example, where programmatic and TV can be planned in tandem, and hopefully be planned from one toolset to the same audience. Ah the future of media, that we all thought would be automated, is still thriving with human intervention, on data about humans.

ABOUT JOHN BEALE

John Beale is Head of Communications at Pernod Ricard South Africa. He oversees paid media, digital marketing, social media community management and content; and public relations for all brands and Pernod Ricard Corporate. He was awarded an IAB Bookmark Award: Social Media Marketer of the year 2014. He has extensive experience in the marketing and media industry.
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