

Houston we have a measurement problem

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Background

Measuring return on investment is important. This is hardly a revelation: brands invest in advertising in order to sell more of their products and services and those that don't do it effectively or profitably won't last long. It should go without saying that understanding which elements of the plan are working better than others - and how they work together - is crucial to improving performance over time. And as digital advertising takes an ever greater share of budget, so does the imperative to measure the effect it has.

So how to do it? In theory, the increase of digital advertising has made it easier to demonstrate a link between investment in marketing communications and results, but demonstrating a link isn't the same as proving effectiveness (and let's not start on whether the ad has been seen by a human or not).

Econometric models are still the predominant industry choice for quantifying the incremental impact of communications and, to a greater or lesser degree, they do incorporate digital.

Isn't that the solution then? Well, sort of, but here's where the problem appears. Digital comprises lots of different content, in lots of different places, consumed on many different devices, all of which give a different experience to the person consuming it. Reporting is usually limited to the return on investment of online display as a channel without separating out its component parts.

We know online display is not an amorphous mass, but it's often treated as such when we're measuring it - partly because that's the easiest thing to do, but also because the ubiquity of programmatic trading means the content the ad is placed next to is typically deemed much less important than "who" it's being served to. Some of that online investment goes to digital newsbrands but typically historic investment in digital newsbrands is relatively low as a proportion of overall campaign budget. Moreover, in Newsworks' ROI study last year, carried out by Benchmarking, part of Omnicom Media Group, there was no way of proving digital newsbrands' effectiveness as separate from the amorphous mass. This study proved the value of print newsbrands as a vital part of any communications mix. However, how could we do the same for digital newsbrands, given the challenges we've laid out?

The challenge

Newsworks set Havas Media Group a challenge: how can we show how digital newsbrands are performing when they are not tracked separately on plans? This needed some creative thinking and a very deliberate approach to measurement.

Firstly, they needed to find and be able to isolate sufficient investment in digital newsbrands and secondly, they needed to ensure we could robustly measure its effect and compare it to other activity.

The overall solution

HMG decided to tackle this question in two different ways:

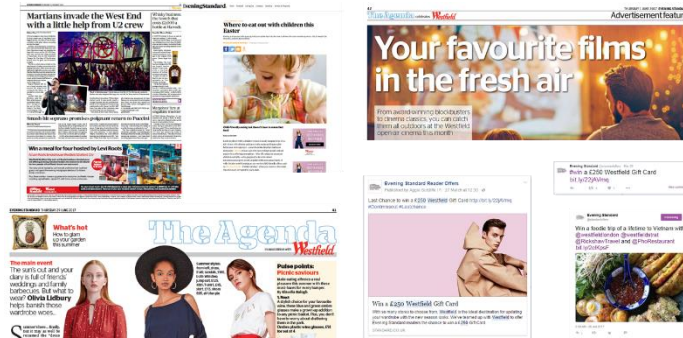
1. Focusing on a **content partnership** which worked across print, digital and social
2. Very deliberately picking out digital newsbrands in a **digital attribution** model

The content partnership

Content partnerships provide an ideal opportunity to measure the impact of digital newsbrands. They typically have a higher proportion of media value delivered digitally, levels of investment are high enough for robust measurement, and the phasing often provides natural variation from other campaign activity. HMG used their econometric models for their client Westfield to allow them to isolate and quantify the business impact of both the print and digital elements of the campaign, and the combined benefit of a newsbrand partnership. Westfield in the UK has two vast shopping centres – Shepherd's Bush and Stratford City, both in London.

Westfield's partnership was with ESI, publishers of the London Evening Standard and had been running since 2014. The elements of the partnership have evolved but include:

- Print ads
- Digital and print content
- Social & print promotions
- Digital display ads on site and traffic drivers



Importantly there was also lots of variation in the data - i.e. changes in the elements over time and not all elements running at the same weight at the same time - enabling robust measurement of different elements

The partnership had a number of objectives:

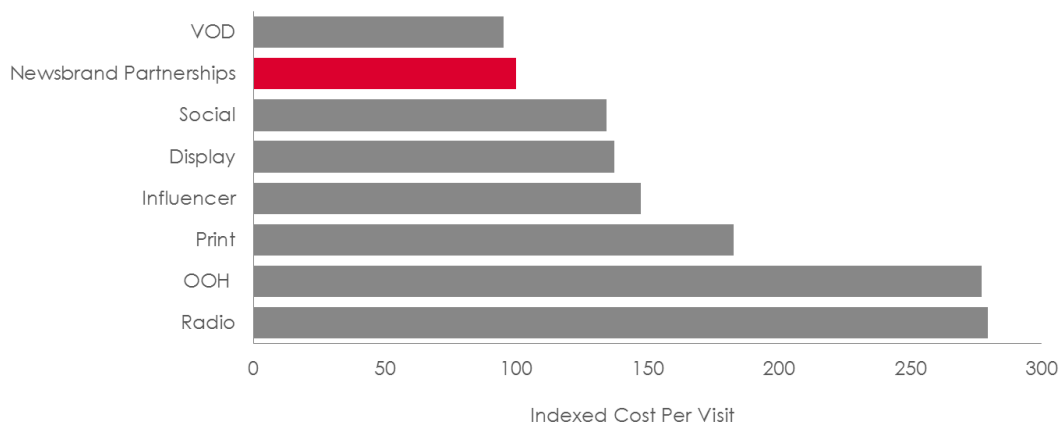
- Reach NEW customers to Westfield, drive increases in new footfall and spend
- Position Westfield as a destination: communicate the breadth of its offering (fashion, food, leisure & entertainment) through leveraging editorial support in print and digital
- Drive credibility through association, positioning Westfield as a multi-dimensional retailer
- Build a brand digitally as well as through offline – not all about short-term response
- Deliver media value, above and beyond a traditional campaign plan

Content partnership results

The partnership has succeeded in increasing mental availability – it's worth noting that it's not all about short-term response. Westfield became the most recognised shopping destination in London, beating Harrods & Selfridges, 1st choice consideration increased from 13% to 25% and 'seriously consider' increased from 17% to 35%. The perception of Westfield as an iconic fashion destination increased from 34% to 79%. Additionally there was a good understanding of the entertainment options at Westfield which increased from 59% to 79%.

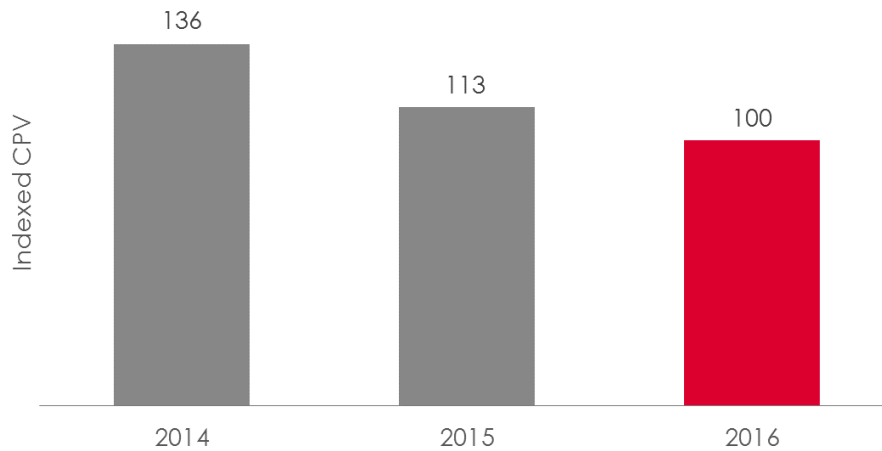
But what contribution did newsbrands make to this success?

Overall, newsbrand partnerships were the **second most efficient channel** when measured on an indexed cost per visit. It's worth noting that the top channel, VOD, has only been used at very low weights.



Source: HMG econometric models
Indexed vs. 2016 Partnerships = 100

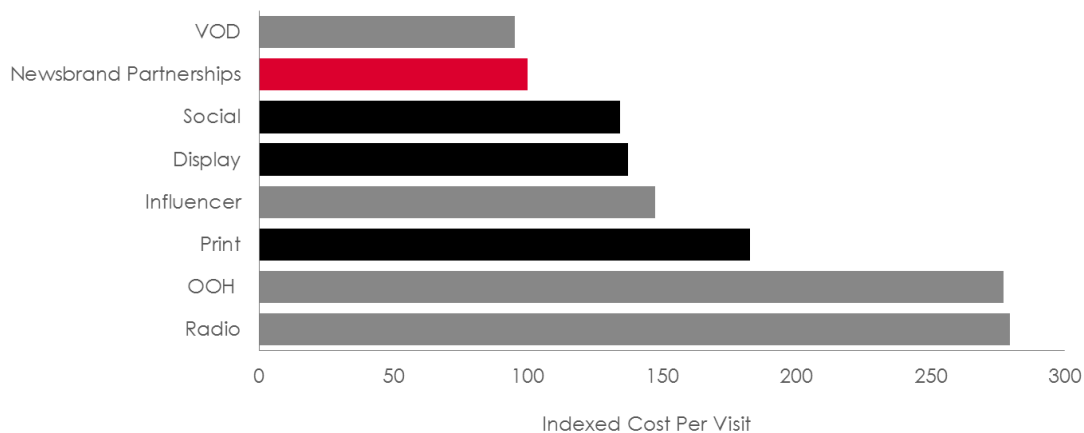
Moreover, the benefits of the long-term partnership are clearly seen in the reduction of the cost per visit over time. The partnership has delivered increasing returns for Westfield.



Source: HMG econometric models
Indexed vs. 2016 Partnerships = 100

But what about the different elements? Were HMG able to deliver on the challenge we had set them of identifying digital newsbrands as a separate channel?

The approach used by HMG yielded results by each element of the partnership, demonstrating that newsbrand content, in both social and digital, played a key role in the mix. Importantly though, the whole was definitely greater than the sum of the parts - the combination of print, digital and social was 50% more effective than using each of these channels in isolation, showing the importance of the newsbrand portfolio of assets.



Source: HMG econometric models
Indexed vs. 2016 Partnerships = 100

more for you **O₂** **The digital attribution model**

The second solution was to specifically isolate digital newsbrands within a digital attribution model. For this case the brand was O2 in the telecoms sector.

Digital attribution is a perfect way to understand the role of individual newsbrands within a digital consumer journey and the effectiveness of newsbrands at generating a digital conversion, relative to other types of display activity.

While it's possible to debate the pros and cons of attribution models, some are definitely better than others. If they're data driven, take all non-converting journeys into account and include direct site visits and SEO, as well as paid media, then they can clearly provide valuable insight.

Havas Media Group work with Visual IQ - an independent market leading digital attribution provider - to measure and optimise O2's digital marketing activity.

By thinking about the measurement and the data requirements in advance, HMG were able to isolate and compare digital newsbrands vs. other digital display activity.

In Q2 2017, O2 ran a campaign to increase 'in market' awareness and consideration amongst potential new customers. The campaign was across both handsets and SIMs and had a strong value message.



As part of the overall campaign, a digital display plan was created with the objectives of:

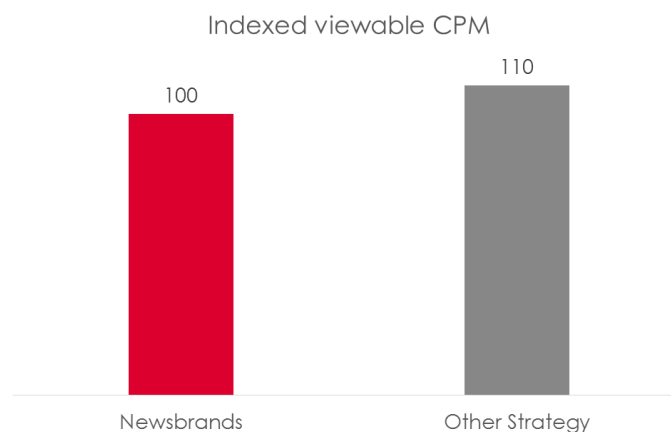
- Delivering a high level of viewability
- Driving scale and frequency across the campaign
- Allowing detailed targeting possibilities
- Delivering an efficient Cost Per Connection

Digital newsbrands were bought in a way that HMG could ensure that all the activity could be isolated within the attribution model. The primary KPI of the campaign and basis for campaign optimisation was “ads in view”, but clearly it was also important to generate sales.

Digital attribution results

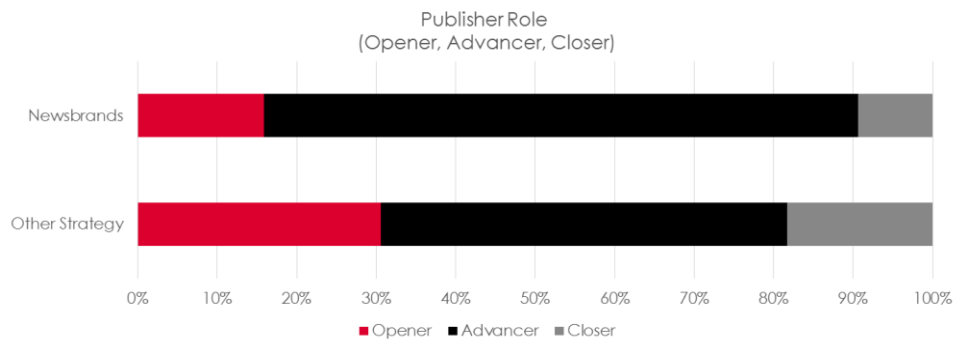
There were four key learnings from the project:

1. In terms of the key success metric, newsbrands delivered ads in view 10% more cheaply than the rest of the campaign



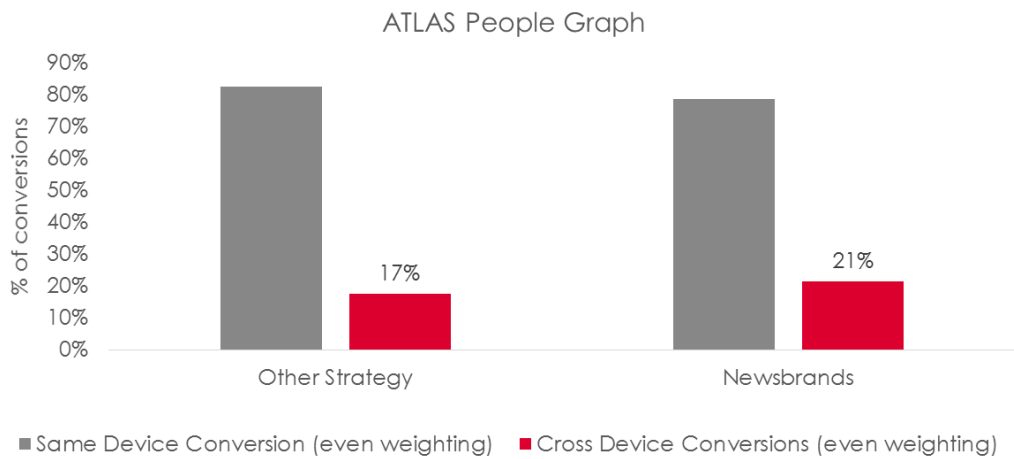
Source: IAS viewability

- 2. Newsbrands predominantly affect the middle of digital consumer journeys. They are an important and vital part of the conversation with prospects, moving people along the purchase process



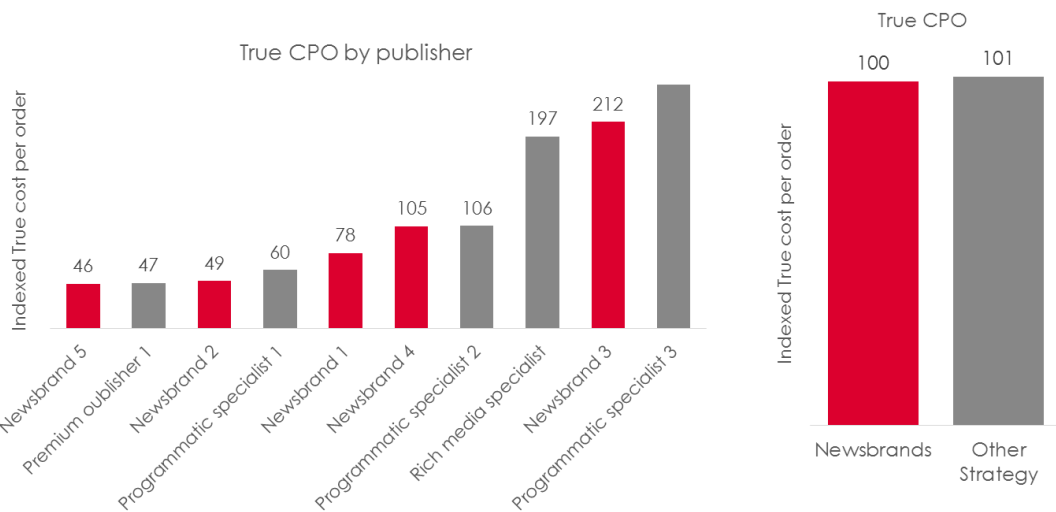
Source: VisualIQ

- 3. Newsbrands are more likely to be undervalued if cross-channel effects aren't accounted for. This suggests that the devices people are consuming newsbrand content on are less likely to be the devices they purchase on.



Source: Atlas People Graph

- 4. Overall Newsbrands are equally as effective as other campaign elements



Source: VisualIQ



Conclusion

We work in an industry which is rightly obsessed with measurement, but how can you measure something if you don't think about it in advance and put the time, effort and data in place to make it happen? This project served as a reminder of getting that right - and that difficult questions can be answered with a bit of creative thinking and rigorous analysis.

Both these case studies demonstrate that digital newsbrands can be effective and should be considered as part of a marketing plan. They also show that if we stop thinking about digital as that amorphous mass then we can learn new things, demonstrate value to brands and make their communications more effective.