

Two takes on inserts



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Offline inserts, online traffic

Offline inserts are just one of the many channels having to work harder to hold their own against the increasing competition of online media. For instance, the Direct Marketing Association recorded an 18 per cent decline in industry insert volume for the third quarter of 2006.

But the specialist sector of third-party inserts—in which a brand markets to the audience of a complementary brand via product despatches, statements, catalogues and directories—is gaining in popularity. During the same third quarter of last year, third-party insert volume rose about 45 per cent.

And if you take into account additional responders who are driven to the web via inserts, the true performance of the medium is even more positive than many users originally thought. We're finding more and more agencies and clients are quantifying the halo link between online and offline responders in order to better calculate true media performance. We've recently conducted research that suggests that for some clients, at least 30 per cent of insert enquirers are responding via the web.

Match-back analysis can provide a clearer understanding of the impact third-party inserts have on web responses. This type of analysis has traditionally been examined in relation to data; however, by

matching web enquirers back to the net mail file and drilling down to exclude possible duplicates, the results have been encouraging. For example, web responders during a set campaign period who would have otherwise been relegated as "general" web enquirers have since been found to have actually received an insert. While such analysis is still in its infancy, it is certainly suggesting strong correlations between offline campaigns and online responses.

So now is the time to start thinking about just how web-responsive your third-party inserts are. It's essential that your coding techniques start falling into line; provide unique source codes for the inserts, and consider developing unique URLs specific to the campaign and creative. Some of our clients are even testing creative that omits the usual postal tear-off or telephone response coupon, replacing it with a stand-alone URL. Likewise, think about building main keywords and phrases into your copy, which will support your cause when it comes to search engine input.

Certainly the success of a third-party insert campaign is still attributable to innovative buying strategies that maximise implied endorsement and have significantly reduced media rates. But the third-party insert market is evolving to take advantage of the increasing number of multichannel opportunities available through new media. By accurately tracking and measuring their effectiveness via as many web-friendly elements as possible, you may find that third-party inserts are the missing link in your multichannel marketing mix. ■