

Cutting Through The Clutter

Advertising is everywhere. From buses, to trains, to subways one may find themselves sucked into advertisements after a long day's work.

A person can only absorb so many messages. Out of the hundreds of ads they are bombarded with each day, people are only going to truly process advertisements and signs that they need for personal importance or information.

Clutter is the “noise” created in the environment by so many ads. Ads on top of ads clamor for the consumer's attention. Clutter can also be created when similar brands make similar claims in too close of a vicinity of each other, which consumers won't be able to clearly differentiate between the advertisements or the brands. For example, two ads for two different types of body soap make similar product claims within the same commercial break.

The advertising industry has been struggling with finding new ways to break through the clutter, yet ironically through my research it seems that they are adding to it.

The issue of clutter is very frustrating for the media person trying to plan or to buy space. There is an excessive demand for advertising space and only a limited supply. Advertisers seem to find ways around the limited supply, but this does not mean that they are necessarily getting their message heard.

To make room for more spots in the television commercial break the soon to be extinct 60 second spot was split providing the space for two 30 second spots. As if that

does allow for enough commercial space, 15-second spots have made room for ads but also have added to the clutter.

A viewer's ability to recall an advertisement goes down by about 45% in commercial breaks with seven or more spots. Advertisers can expect better consumer recall if their commercial spot is shown first, second or last. Even so, consumers become frustrated with commercials, at which point advertisers then have to compete with channel surfers and the growing trend of commercial free programming and the hundreds of channels to surf on satellite television.

Fortunately, the media buyers and planners have the option to choose from the growing selection of media alternatives, so they can create more ads to break through the clutter, which ultimately creates more clutter.

Clutter exists no matter what form of media is used. It is a challenge that media planners deal with constantly. From an abundance of direct marketing that quite often is just thrown in the garbage, to flyers to magazine inserts, advertisers must constantly compete and be creative in placing ads that will truly be seen as well as properly represent the brand.

Clutter puts a strain on the creative to create advertising that stands out. Ideas need to be fresh and unique. It is only a matter of time before ideas are recycled, and consumers draw comparisons between ads that represent ideas that have already been seen before.

Clutter may take the appreciation out of creative ideas. People are often so bombarded with advertising, that creative may go unnoticed and unappreciated.

With all this said, it is not to say that clutter is evil, creating so many obstacles that advertising may not be worth the effort. Clutter has created an environment that requires creative strategic media planning and outstanding creative that will demand the attention of consumers no matter how many ads they have seen today.

Sources

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