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WHAT ARE AN INTERNATIONAL ADVERTISING AGENCY'S NEEDS FOR MEDIA RESEARCH?

Advertising agency people have the reputation of being the lager louts of the media and research business, but to prove that we are not as anti-social as we are portrayed I will give a quick answer to the question.

The international advertising agency needs everything, and needs it yesterday.

For those prepared to stay the course I should like to take two steps back and look at the context within which we are operating. Some of this may sound familiar from Roger Goodbear's paper. If so, I think that is no bad thing; we are looking at the same valley but from different hilltops.

Advertising agencies used to think they were in the manufacturing business. They were making advertisements. Nowadays we realise that we are probably in the communications business and we are certainly in the service business. One of the prime requisites for a service business is to pay close attention to what is happening to your customers' businesses.

I should like to talk briefly about where we see the '1992 client' being. I use the phrase 1992 because DMB&B is the advertising agency for both the Dutch and the British governments in promoting the 1992 concept to business people in those two markets, and we hope to be doing more work in more parts of the European Community along those lines. 1992 is simply a concept; it is a conglomeration of 300 different pieces of legislation, most of which will be law by 1992. It is a useful tool to build awareness of the changes that are going on; the paradoxical world that is developing, which is a world in which the client's business is going to be trans-national yet more nationalistic.

You will have seen worldwide brands like MacDonald's here in Barcelona, advertising in Catalan. You have more multi media across frontiers yet more personal media. You will have seen on the television here in your hotel rooms that you can see French, German and English language television as well as Spanish language and Catalan language television.

We have seen the reader develop as an editor and we have seen in television the audience developing as programmers building their own medium. We see the magazine world working towards a goal where the magazine will be as personalised as direct mail is now (and hopefully more efficient).

In many business areas the market is more universal, yet there are market niches. This has happened particularly fast in business areas like computers and software. Many of you will be using almost universal spread sheet programs like Lotus 123. At the same time, companies working in software in hospitals are developing niche products for use in medical work that are as local and as specialised as they can possibly be.

The language of advertising is becoming more universal yet it has to be more in the vernacular as well. It still has to be absolutely relevant to the consumer in Barcelona, Lyons, Lille or Brussels.

Production has become more mass-produced, yet there is more customisation; any of the large kitchen manufacturing companies can now manufacture 20 million different kitchens by computer. If you order a new car you will be specifying just about everything in that car and get that customised model. But it is on a mass-produced basis.

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So it all adds up to – it is more of that, yet it is more of 'unthat'; it is more uniformity and yet it is more plurality.

Within that paradox where does that international advertising agency want to be in 1992? Of course, first we want to be very profitable. We want our clients to be very profitable and we want our suppliers to be very profitable. We want it to be a win-win situation.

We have to be where we can tailor our service to any client's needs whether they be strategic, creative, media planning, media buying, direct mail, public relations, product placement, sponsoring TV programming, company magazines, sales promotion, whatever the particular client's needs and the balance of his needs are. We have to be where we can be national or we can be trans-national; I mentioned DMB&B's national assignments for 1992; that is a national assignment on a trans-national concept which we are moving like a brand from market to market through the European Community.

We need to be in a position where the client can originate from Timbuktu to Tring and so can we – tremendous flexibility. But most importantly – we need to be in a situation where the agency is the key communications advisor; making things happen by changing attitudes and doing so within the perspective of the key media trends.

Most of the speakers in this session so far have talked about television; I shall make only one comment.

The liberation of broadcast TV challenges established print media. It happened in France last year, it is now starting to happen here in Spain with three new private national networks over the next two or three years coming in.

There is the growth of multi-national media ownership creating networks, a greater concentration of media ownership increasing the power of these gatekeepers to consumers.

There is the growth of multi-national print formats. *Prima Magazine*, which UK housewives think of as a UK magazine, French housewives think is a French magazine. It is a format which moves from market to market – universal marketing, local adaptation.

There is the growth of multi-centre printing, particularly in the international publications – the *Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times* and the *International Herald Tribune*.

In media buying, there is consolidation of media buying centres; Holland, for example, and recent events in the UK. And there is an increase in negotiated off-rate card media buying, in many markets, at different speeds in those markets. For an advertising agency that means an increased concentration on buying operations.

So how can media research help the international advertising agency?

First: to evaluate more effectively print buying performance – the need for a currency in which to buy and sell.

Second: to identify more effectively the audiences reached by print, to improve media planning.

Third: to help ensure that above-the-line print advertising remains an important tool for clients' marketing.

I am not going to concentrate on this third marketing need because I think that is a wider perspective than is useful for this print research conference.

I was asked to talk specifically from the international advertising agency perspective but I have to say that in many respects the international needs for media research are the same as the national needs for media research.

When I asked DMB&B's media planning people in London last week, both the international and the national UK people voiced the same concerns:

- newsprint colour versus newsprint mono. How do we evaluate that, whether in the *Wall Street Journal Europe* or in the *Independent* newspaper?
- sectionalisation - how do we plan and buy for a ten section newspaper?
- how do we cope with non-standard publishing intervals? The evening newspaper comes out Monday to Fridays and on the first Friday of every month, lo and behold, it has a colour supplement.
- the pattern of weekend readership - if the *International Herald Tribune* is producing a Saturday/Sunday edition (which it does) and the *Independent* newspaper in the UK is producing a weekend magazine on a Saturday, how do we evaluate the relative impacts across those days? And the feeling we have that they are perceived by the consumer in different lights?

There was one keynote coming through - how to achieve 'stand-out'. This used to be a creative preserve, but from a media point of view it means a media planner/buyer putting his client's advertising in print in a position to be noticed more than all others in the issue. We christened it the Flo-Jo factor. Remember Florence Griffith-Joiner, she is the one who does not just win, she wins in a memorable way.

And that is how we want to place our advertising in print media. That way the client wins, the media planner wins, the creative wins as well - environment, positioning, individuality.

'Stand-out' is this year's buzz phrase, but it is symptomatic of a much more long-term feeling

about the way media planners and buyers want to feel that they are using print.

How about international needs specifically? Here is a real case: a multi-media campaign; TV, newspapers, magazines, outdoor and radio; a mix of European markets excluding France and Italy, including the Canary Islands, Holland, Sweden and altogether about 12 markets - very variable markets with the media schedules in each market depending on the real world availability of media in those markets in 1989.

There is shared creative development on the campaign with international core teams of creatives working on it. There are some shared media costs of course, because we are using international media and we are accounting for spillover from national market to national market. The broad target audience is motorists. There is an international budget which is allocated by market.

What has all this got to do with media research? The advertising strategy is consistent across all markets. There is a target audience which actually travels from market to market;

- are the target audience getting a consistent message across frontiers?
- are we reaching the same kinds of people in each market?
- do we know whether we are reaching the same kinds of people in each market?
- are we spending the right amount of money in each market to reach them effectively?
- how do we divide up that central budget to make sure that our client's investment is effective at the optimum level in each market?

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We really cannot begin to answer these simple questions. I appreciate they are by no means all questions that are answerable by media research. But I think media research, as one of the most active areas of marketing research, could take a lead in helping us help our clients better.

What are the most urgent international things we need?

Comparable census, sample frame data would be a tremendous start for the market research industry as a whole, and media research would benefit.

Standards of quality control on sample recruitment and on sampling methodology. (The word 'random' has almost as many definitions in print research as 'truth' does in philosophy departments).

Standard demographics – simple – start with adults and housewives.

Of course, quality of reading is always a concern.

Consistent definition of reader is one of the most horrendous problems; I was in New Orleans in 1981 when we discussed this topic and we have not come much further since then because it is a very difficult problem to solve.

To finish with three basic needs:

(1) Agencies need full access to survey data. I appreciate this is the democracy both of usage and abuse, but unless agencies have considerably greater access to data than we have in many markets for many surveys, we are not going to use those data and they are going to atrophy.

(2) In these days of horrendous data-handling problems, we need great software and cross-border networking. We would like the costs of cross-border networking to come down, too, but that is not a problem which anyone at this symposium can solve. We already have in the UK market software which allows a media planner/buyer to sit in front of a video screen with his complete print schedule up in front of him and a summary schedule performance running along the bottom of the screen. Using this he can negotiate on rates with a media owner at the other end of the telephone while punching in and out of the system to see what the effect of knocking that publication off the schedule will be on the total schedule.

(3) Finally, the top priority is some commonality of definitions and standards; why not start with adults and housewives to provide an international framework within which diversity can flourish?

After that, we want everything yesterday.