

‘ABSORBING MEDIA’ AND ‘MEDIA-DNA’: CONSUMER-CENTRIC APPROACHES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Media expansion, as we all know, is here and growing by the day. This plethora of choice is changing the way media are approached and consumed. Today, we’re in a “pick-and-mix” world where consumers choose media according to their attitudes, lifestyles and special interests. Consumer magazines, newspapers, television, radio and the internet are complementary media which people can and do use in any combination which suits them.

As the Henley Centre has shown, consumers don’t have time to make use of the vast amount of media now on offer, but instead discriminate more. This discrimination, in turn, means that media owners, advertisers and agencies must present increasingly personalised products, services and messages.

In this new media world, understanding consumer attitudes is paramount. Clients need to ensure that their advertising messages are placed in front of their target audience at the best possible time; and that the advertising is relevant to the individual’s interest or lifestyle. It is then more likely to get noticed and acted upon. Planners need to fully exploit the potential of each communication channel.

Therefore, there is an increasing need for consumer-centric research, which examines how each medium fits in with the others.

The approach we wish to discuss in this paper is single-source, rather than fusing different sources. Within single source, we’d like to review two different types of example:

- first, from a single medium
- second, from a consortium of all major media types

The first example is the UK’s Periodical Publishers Association (PPA), which completed its ‘Absorbing Media’ study in 2002. Its objective was to show how people use and absorb their media.

The second is the MediaDNA study which reveals the image, personality and positioning of brands across media to aid planning decisions.

Out of both studies comes a fresh look at the role played by print, television, radio and the internet in the life of consumers.

To move forward in media-neutral research, we must appreciate that the communication effect of a say, a magazine ad, is different to that of a TV commercial. For true comparative measurement, the measures themselves need to be media-neutral.

The studies in this paper do exactly that and investigate **reception** – synergy, integration, context - of advertising messages rather than **exposure** to them. Through the metrics of reception, we can elicit the views that consumers have about the media they personally use.

2. ‘ABSORBING MEDIA’

The ‘Absorbing Media’ research aimed to address vital and frequently asked questions such as:

- What media do people choose, for what purposes, and in what combinations?
- How do they choose?
- How much attention are they paying?
- How does the internet affect things?
- Where do advertisements work best?
- How do different media trigger ideas and action?

The study comprised a qualitative first stage, using group discussions and in-depth individual interviews, and a quantitative second stage with 2,030 respondents. Both stages were conducted by NFO WorldGroup.

In the quantitative stage we asked questions about the following areas:

- Media exposure: national newspapers & supplements, magazines, terrestrial TV, multi-channel TV, radio, internet
- Attitude statements about the internet
- Topic interest
- Media preferred when looking for information and ideas, on topics in which interested
- Other activities in which engaged, when using each medium
- Actions taken as a result of using each medium
- Attitude statements about media and/or advertising: to which media they apply
- Products bought in last 6 months
- Demographics and other classification

Cross-analysis of this information, combined with the insights from the qualitative stage, enables us to learn or confirm a good deal about the complementary nature of media, and the combinations in which they are used for various purposes. The next few sections of our paper present some illustrative examples of this.

How do people choose their media, and what are they used for?

Different media are chosen for different purposes but they fit together in a logically interlocking way. The survey enabled us to paint a picture of this. While there are exceptions to the following generalised scene, the view which emerged from the data is as follows.

Terrestrial television is, first and foremost, chosen as a medium to relax with. It enables individuals to disengage their minds and switch off from their everyday concerns. People simply let the box do the entertaining for them. As a result, they are more passive using terrestrial television than with the other media we studied. As one respondent in the qualitative study put it,

“It’s a way of switching off from reality and just watching TV for a few hours and forgetting about everything.”

But terrestrial television is also seen as a companion, breaking the silence and making the home feel more lived in. Hence the natural state for the television set in many homes is to be on rather than off – irrespective of whether household members are really watching. Two qualitative informants said

“It’s on 24 hours a day but I never ever watch it. It’s just something in the background.”
“I’m sure ours is on for seven days a week but I’m not sure anyone actually watches it.”

Television is increasingly employed in this way as an adjunct to internet usage.

Cable and satellite television, on the other hand, tends to be used in quite different ways. Individuals are more likely to select and sit down to watch a particular programme, usually covering a specific area of personal interest. People are thus more actively engaged in their selected viewing.

Newspapers are often used today in a rather different way from their traditional news-assimilation role because of alternative up-to-the-minute news sources, and increased time-pressure. In particular, weekend newspaper packages are regarded as a welcome change from the week’s bite-sized news items – fleshing out and providing an analysis of current affairs.

Magazines are chosen to match and feed individuals’ needs and personalities, something made possible by the ever-evolving range of niche and specialist titles available. But the selection depends very much on the kind of informational or emotional need of the moment. The research proposed three main classes of need, and three main categories of magazine to fill those needs:

Glossies, such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Vogue* and *Marie Claire*, are used to indulge, engage, aspire and escape. Titles are often regarded as more than just magazines but are also seen as brands, with readers seeking to achieve a genuine fit and relationship with the title. People often talk about becoming immersed, engrossed and “you get lost in it”.

Glossy-factuals, such as those covering specific interests like gardening, cookery, motoring and home improvement, provide practical help as well as inspiration. They present their readers with a mix of information and indulgence. One respondent typified this by saying:

“They open your minds a little bit more, because you are thinking and you get the ideas – and if the article is really interesting you ask yourself questions as you are reading it.”

Factuals, such as Loot and AutoTrader, are used with a specific and directed purpose in mind – deliberate information-seeking, such as “general looking for prices on cars and flights”.

The internet is broadly perceived as two distinct media: a communication channel (email and chat rooms) and an information channel (websites).

In its role as a communication channel, email is regarded as a cheap and convenient form of personal contact, and a means of engaging more frequently with a wider circle of people than would otherwise be the case. Chat rooms tend to be especially popular with the young.

The positives of websites as a remarkable new information source emerge clearly from the research. The medium has been an empowering revolution for consumers. People know they have a vast encyclopaedia at their fingertips. The quest for information has become an exciting armchair adventure. It is the most directed and tightly focused medium, in the way it is used.

“No matter what you want to find out, what you want to know, you can find it here. It’s just getting your head round how to find it.”

People are aware of the as-yet unexploited potential of the medium. Relatively few currently make use of music and other download capabilities, or use the web for shopping or trading, but nearly everyone anticipates that this will grow substantially.

The internet does not fully occupy all the senses, so television or radio are often an accompaniment to internet usage.

Commercial radio is essentially a complementary medium, a background, used to accompany other activities like driving, DIY, housework, and internet usage. But it is regarded as rather impersonal and unselective – presenting, for instance, music of which much is not an individual’s premier choice.

The Media Moment

The ‘Absorbing Media’ study showed that people do not usually consume media in isolation. There is usually a lot going on around them at the moment of media exposure. Indeed, two or more media are often used together, with one in a dominant role and the other(s) in a background role, perhaps being monitored for anything really interesting that crops up.

For each medium there is a typical set of circumstances in which it is consumed – it’s own ‘media moment’. Here are three examples.

The television moment. Although nearly everyone sees television and in many households a TV set is frequently turned on, for most of the time most individuals watch it only on a casual basis, with relatively low attention and personal engagement except for certain specific items. When the commercial breaks arrive, the evidence indicates that most people focus on other activities, flick through other channels, or leave the room to do something else. At root, this stems from lack of control over what is available to view at that moment.

The magazine moment. In contrast, the magazine moment is generally an intensely personal one, with the reader absorbed in the title, cocooned from external intrusion. Magazines are often read alone, in a relaxed situation. The reading experience is welcomed both for its undemanding nature and its active input – dipping in, selecting, reading or re-reading. It is a medium which is controlled by its users, and is absorbed in an order and at a pace which suits the individual. The portability of magazines, and thus the ease of picking up and putting down a magazine, means that the moment of exposure can be almost anywhere. Like a good friend, magazines can be called upon whenever needed, and they tend to be devoured with relish as a treasured treat.

The internet websites moment. There are strong positives about the circumstances in which people surf the internet. There is concentration as specific information is hunted down, and a sense of adventure in seeking knowledge. Indeed, the adventure and the anticipation of what will come on-screen next can make the medium addictive. The research also found some concerns coming through. The internet moment is not treasured in the same way as the magazine moment; instead it is characterised by a relative lack of relationship with the medium. The internet moment is more about the user’s very specific needs at that time than about a comfortable relationship with the medium. There is widespread concern about it being a rather lonely, time-consuming and sometimes antisocial experience, and often frustrating when the desired information proves elusive. For many, it seems expensive and costs more the longer they stay online.

Specific information-seeking

When it comes to needing information on specific topics, consumers turn to certain media more than others, depending on the topic. We asked respondents questions about six media: television, magazines, newspapers, newspaper supplements, commercial radio, and websites.

Media chosen for specific topics

“And which of these media do you prefer when you’re looking for information and ideas on ...?”

	Magazines %	Newspapers %	Newspaper supplements %	Television channels %	Commercial radio %	Websites %
Beauty, personal app.	72	10	8	26	1	6
Fashion, clothes	66	13	10	27	1	9
Celebrity news, gossip	61	37	9	43	4	7
Cars, motorbikes	60	30	7	25	2	21
Baby/childcare	56	16	11	35	2	13
Health, fitness	53	19	7	29	2	9
Photography	48	14	5	20	*	18
Food, drink	46	21	14	55	2	8
Home improvement, DIY	43	13	9	53	2	7
Computers, internet	43	14	6	15	1	64
Gardening	41	16	11	61	1	5
TV programmes	40	43	18	42	1	3
Travel, holidays	32	23	14	47	2	29
Science, technology	31	24	7	51	2	34
Sport	29	44	8	66	8	15
Music, cinema, theatre	27	47	12	33	12	17
Items for sale	26	64	8	8	1	30
Personal finance, investmt	20	54	16	19	2	30
Business, company news	19	62	12	28	4	35
Jobs, appointments	12	70	9	5	2	37

Base: Those interested in each topic

* means less than 0.5%

On nearly all topics, the most popular choice of medium came from three of these media: television, magazines and newspapers. Websites were the most common first choice only for computers and the internet. Commercial radio and newspaper supplements scored poorly in almost all areas and are not widely used as first choice sources for information and ideas on specific topics.

Television is the prime reference source for sport, gardening, home improvement, travel, science & technology, and food & drink. Newspapers were the main stopping point for jobs, business and finance, items for sale, TV programmes, and the arts. For most of these – largely factual-based topics, listings and classified ads – it is websites which now hold second place. Magazines are the number one source for beauty & personal appearance, fashion & clothes, celebrity news & gossip, cars & motorbikes, childcare & parenting, health & fitness, and photography.

Actions taken as a result of media exposure

All media can trigger ideas and action, but not all to the same extent. One way in which ‘Absorbing Media’ examined this was through a question asking “Which, if any, of the following actions have you ever done as a result of ... (reading/watching etc)...?” The four listed actions were: picked up ideas, followed some advice given, tried something for the first time, and bought something.

Significant proportions of users of each media channel readily admit they have taken action as a result of something they have seen or heard in a medium they have used. On the whole, the media most effective in this were magazines, commercial television - and websites. The latter new medium is making a big impact very rapidly.

Picked up ideas

% of users who have picked up ideas

Magazines	68%
Commercial TV	62%
Websites	60%
Newspaper supplements	52%
Newspapers	50%
Commercial radio	33%

Followed advice given

% of users who have followed advice given

Magazines	43%
Websites	37%
Commercial TV	35%
Newspapers	35%
Newspaper supplements	30%
Commercial radio	24%

Tried something for the first time

% of users who have tried something for the first time

Magazines	36%
Commercial TV	33%
Websites	32%
Newspaper supplements	24%
Newspapers	23%
Commercial radio	16%

Bought something

% of users who have bought something

Websites	43%
Magazines	41%
Newspapers	29%
Commercial TV	28%
Newspaper supplements	26%
Commercial radio	16%

Helpfulness and relevance of advertising

Another approach adopted by the survey was to devise a number of statements probing attitudes to advertising in each medium, and for each statement to ask respondents whether or not they agreed with it.

The general pattern was that the most positive attitudes were attracted by magazine advertising, followed by television advertising, and then newspaper advertising.

A typical example is the statement 'This medium has advertising that I find relevant'. The proportions of users of each medium agreeing with this statement were:

Magazines	34%
Commercial television	23%
Newspapers	18%
Websites	10%
Newspaper supplements	9%
Commercial radio	5%

Summary on 'Absorbing Media'

Our paper can only give a brief summary of a few of the aspects covered by the research, but more extensive information about it is available on the PPA's website at www.ppa.co.uk.

Our main purpose here is to show that a rich array of valuable information can be collected about all the major media, among the same sample, providing not only medium-by-medium information but also insights into how complementary the media are to each other, and how they fit together.

3. 'MEDIA - DNA'

Concept

"Consumers have a stronger relationship with media than they do with brands. The key is to harness that relationship to the brand" - according to Oliver Cleaver, European Marketing Director of Kimberly-Clark.

Furthermore, a recent survey of senior agency personnel in the UK found that brand strength is of growing importance in media decision-making. The ability to build strong relationships with consumers will drive long-term brand value, and media is one key way in which a brand can build these positive and powerful relationships.

The conclusion of both of these being that what people think of the media brands they consume has a substantial and growing role to play in the media selection process. An understanding of media as brands, of how their readers, viewers and listeners perceive them, can help advertisers tune into the mindsets of consumers when they are exposed to advertising. MediaDNA provides us with such a research tool. It fills an important gap, to guide and support decisions made to align advertised brands with media brands – previously based on a mix of inspiration, personal experience and raw gut feeling. The research aims to supplement experience and common sense judgement with robust research to help guide better media selection decisions.

MediaDNA provides directly comparable, apples-to-apples, planning data for a set of media brands, across media. Imagine for a moment that there are two media options available to advertise a brand. Both deliver the same audience for the same price, but one seems to 'fit' better with the brand. The premise behind MediaDNA is that the fit between advertiser brand and media brand can be optimised. This intuitively makes sense – people with the same language, values and beliefs communicate more effectively than those without that rapport. Advertising in the right context enhances that effectiveness by raising receptivity to advertising, boosting recall and response rates.

The MediaDNA consortium has joined together to establish a method for measuring the 'fit' between advertiser and media brands to truly empower media-neutral planning.

Methodology

As a consortium project, MediaDNA is supported by companies from all the main media, united with a major international agency, ZenithOptimedia. The other members are News International, Sky, Capital Radio, Yahoo and IPC Media.

The study was commissioned through Millward Brown, whose BrandDynamics research technique has been used to determine the brand equity of over 15,000 brands in 35 countries. BrandDynamics will help form media briefs, which typically talk about brand equity, brand essence, image, personality, positioning and synergy. It is therefore only appropriate that media research seeks to match these descriptors of advertiser brands.

Following a pilot study, the first wave of research took place in July and August 2001, with 5,100 CATI interviews amongst a nationally representative sample of adults aged 16-64. Each respondent was asked about their perceptions of three media brands recently used. So, importantly, the results relate to the perceptions of users of media brands rather than those of a wider general public. Therefore the respondents are the people who will be seeing, hearing or using the advertisements hosted by that medium.

A total of 85 media brands were examined at the first stage across television, national newspapers, radio and magazines, with a robust sample of 150 users for each brand. The questionnaire had three key parts : positioning, image, and personality. A further wave has taken the sample size up to 11,000 and the survey now covers 176 media brands from all main media again, but now including the internet.

The media covered in the survey are :

- All the main terrestrial TV stations including BBC1 and BBC2.
- Sixteen major satellite and cable stations, including UK Gold, MTV, Bravo and four Sky channels.
- In total these stations attract over 80% of UK television ad spend.

Thirty-five major TV programmes including soaps: Coronation Street, Brookside and The Bill; major sports programmes such as The Premiership and Champions League Football, and top satellite programmes like The Simpsons and The X Files.

Thirty-eight consumer magazines from Marie Claire to Loaded to Now. These titles account for a third of total advertising spend in UK consumer magazines.

Radio is a difficult medium to cover as there are now over 260 stations in the UK. However, almost all of them are included by grouping results for individual stations into major radio networks. National stations are on the survey such as Classic FM, Virgin Radio and three BBC stations. In all, mediaDNA explores 21 radio brands.

Every national newspaper is included from the tabloids to the qualities, so 19 newspapers in all. And each of their supplements, another 21 print media.

For the first time in 2003, we have internet brands represented on the survey.

MediaDNA is thus a truly multi-media survey.

For each media brand we asked respondents to evaluate it in terms of positioning, image and personality – producing a total of 50 criteria for each brand.

Positioning

MediaDNA's positioning statements illustrate the relationships consumers have with their media brands. Fifteen criteria are used to build the positioning profiles for each brand. They explore how the users of the brand relate to it. For example, whether it lifts their mood, if they can lose themselves in it, or whether they specially choose it, and if they feel that the brand talks to them at their level. Crucially, these statements were chosen as media-neutral and therefore most likely to generate insights into how planning across media can work hardest. This can be done at a brand, genre and media level.

Certain statements cause media to cluster by type. For example, most of the brands that respondents "specially choose" to consume are paid-for media, particularly newspapers and magazines.

Other statements do not cause media to cluster. For example, there is a mix of different media among the top scorers for the attribute "it cares about its audience". By taking a selection of top brands across each media type, it is possible to construct a candidate list of media brands that will synergise with this aspect of an advertiser's brand positioning, offering a potential multi-media solution from the start. Analysis on this statement would lead to considering Woman magazine, Capital Radio FM and Coronation Street soap opera for the campaign.

Furthermore, MediaDNA is used to identify the consumers' relationship with media. It gives us a measure of the strength of that bond which advertisers can tap into, to enhance the relationship with their consumer.

"I'd be lost without it" reveals which media are most important in consumers' lives. Some of the top brands are TV and TV-related media which help viewers find their favourite programmes, and the programmes themselves, particularly sports-related ones. But this relationship isn't isolated to television, it can be equally found in other media. Hotmail users say they would be lost without their email. And Radio 2 listeners would also be at a loss without it.

However there are TV programmes that viewers wouldn't really miss at all. Only 1% of V Graham Norton and Blind Date viewers would be lost without them!

As well as identifying which brands across different media types deliver the best opportunities for advertisers, we can also use this to differentiate between very similar brands.

For instance, Friends and Sex and the City are two television programmes that at face value are very alike. Attributes that they share include the fact that they are both "badge" brands, with their viewers liking other people to know they watch it; both are strongly "mood lifting"; and both have "strong identities". But there are differences which MediaDNA identifies. The appeal of Sex and the City to its viewers which Friends viewers don't share are that it is considered trend setting, time well spent, and a programme that can influence opinions.

Examples in the magazine medium show that women's weeklies are the media sector to appeal most to all ages, one which readers would be lost without, influences their opinions and is time well spent. Celebrity weeklies add to this by lifting mood, being talked about with friends, trendsetting and having a strong identity.

Understanding the bonds that consumers have with their media can help identify the best-fit environment for an advertiser. Together with reach and frequency data, this information can help plan the most effective campaigns, which deliver the right message, at the right time and in the right environment.

Image

MediaDNA's image statements show how consumers perceive their media brands. The statements are employed to describe the media brands people read, watch, listen to or use. The words chosen often appear in media briefs as descriptors of advertiser products making this a very practical planning tool. So here are words such as responsible, bold, controversial, innovative and glamorous. While they are individually valuable for brand rankings, in combination they can provide powerful planning insights. Image personifies a brand, leaving its consumers with a mental picture of what the brand stands for.

For example, the image profile for CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (a successful American drama series on television's Five channel with a cult following) is fairly positive. Its viewers deem it to be innovative, bold, informative, responsible and entertaining. It's also interesting to compare this profile against the other brands in the survey.

Take the word "innovative". American dramas akin to CSI all score highly here - The X-Files, Stargate and The Simpsons. Similarly, satellite channels with an American feel are dominant - Discovery, National Geographic. The only non-TV media brand which scores equally on "innovative" is Friends Reunited, an internet site.

Each medium as a whole presents an image to its users and mediaDNA can help us identify the similarities and differences of each. At the broad brushstroke media level, this can help spot opportunities for cross-media promotion. For example, the most informative media are newspapers, their supplements and the internet. TV channels such as the History Channel, Discovery and National Geographic also score well.

Newspapers and radio are seen as very British media, and both TV and radio are seen as the most entertaining. TV is also perceived as being the boldest. When it comes to glamour, then magazines have the advantage. Magazines are also perceived as inspiring.

Further examination of the image statement "glamorous" through mediaDNA means that we can show what consumers defines as a glamorous media brand. They are trendsetters, have a strong identity, are bold, lift mood, and people talk to their friends about them. When combining these, we can add other media to the magazine list, perhaps "inspiring" TV programmes or "bold" newspapers.

Image is vitally important to the strength of a brand and mediaDNA has a role to play in ensuring the image of a product is enhanced by the media, and hence media branding, in which it is advertised.

Personality

The brand personalities in MediaDNA were based on Millward Brown's Brand Dynamics methodology. This particular tool has been used on over 3,000 brands in 19 different countries in the past decade. It provides positive and negative aspects of six personality dimensions : extroversion, intellectualism, stability, conscientiousness, sensitivity, and playfulness. These are powerful descriptors and discriminators of individual media.

Within these six personality dimensions the users of each product were asked to assign to it one of four words: two of the words are negative and two positive. Two sit at one end of the dimension and two at the other.

For example, within the "conscientiousness" dimension, the negative words are "careless" or "fussy" and the positive words are "easygoing" or "thorough". The words that reflect a low level of conscientiousness are "careless" and "easygoing" while "fussy" and "thorough" suggest a high degree of conscientiousness.

Personality is discriminating because respondents are asked to make an exclusive judgement about their chosen media. By selecting the word "carefree" for a brand, that brand cannot be scored as "conscientious". The research technique imposes an "either / or" on the brand personality

Assigning words in this way means we have 24 personality criteria for each brand.

Radar diagrams provide a useful way to compare personality profiles and can illustrate profile matching against advertiser brands. Each personality type sits on a line that has its reverse characteristic on the opposite side. So "extrovert" is opposite "restrained" and "playful" is opposite "rational", and so on.

Since personality characteristics can be viewed as negative as well as positive, it is necessary to ensure that an advertiser is tapping into a desirable combination. Take Blind Date (a well known UK household TV favourite) – it is "extrovert", "playful", "carefree", "practical" and "sensitive" at the top level of analysis. However, when we plot the positive and negative responses a new picture emerges. In the eyes of its viewers Blind Date is in fact "overbearing", "immature", "careless", "simple-minded and "too sentimental" - not the most attractive personality traits with which to associate oneself.

MediaDNA shows that broadcast media brands are the most extrovert and carefree, while broadsheet newspapers are seen as the most assertive, rational and stable. The personality of the average magazine is extrovert, practical, sensitive and rational. Magazines and radio are the most sensitive media, with women's weekly and women's glossy magazines scoring particularly high on this front.

Further genre analysis in the magazine medium shows that TV listings feature highly as the most practical brands. Men's magazines are generally seen as extrovert, playful, carefree, assertive and excitable. Conversely, women's glossy monthlies are more sensitive, stable and rational than their male counterparts.

Case study : HP Foods – The Full Monty

Over the last year or so, ZenithOptimedia have employed MediaDNA in planning many campaigns. In fact, ZenithOptimedia say they now turn to MediaDNA before using traditional reach and frequency tools.

One ZenithOptimedia client is HP's the Full Monty, breakfast in a can. Its marketing objective was to drive awareness from a low base and to sustain sales momentum week by week. ZenithOptimedia decided this needed strong frequency aimed at the right people even at the expense of large-scale reach.

The key question was which media partners had characteristics that closely resembled the Full Monty and which could make their limited resources go a long way.

The Full Monty's mediaDNA was plotted first, and the best media fits sought. In this instance the closest two media vehicles proved to be The Daily Star newspaper and Talksport radio. Intuitively these seem similar brands but for ZenithOptimedia, mediaDNA gave them the evidence to go forward with a high frequency campaign in both the newspaper and radio brand.

Summary of MediaDNA

MediaDNA provides insights into the image, positioning and personality of 176 media brands, in a form which makes it possible to compare brands across media, based on equal criteria.

For media owners it is an excellent sales tool because it identifies the strengths of our brands in the eyes of the consumer, and it does so in advertiser language. We can use it to sell the strengths of a medium, a genre of products or a specific brand. For example, The Sun has a strong identity, xfm is innovative and trend setting, Soccer am talks at people's level, Ideal Home is the UK's most inspirational brand and Friends Reunited the most unisex in its appeal.

For agencies, mediaDNA presents a credible cross-media planning tool, which substantiates the best media-fit choices made. It helps planners select media brands that most closely mirror advertiser brand image, personality and positioning objectives. It provides quantitative data to ensure that connections between brand and consumer are as powerful as possible across multiple media.

MediaDNA is accessible through a software tool, which provides quick and easy analysis of the results. Planners, sellers and researchers can rank brands against any of the mediaDNA criteria and instantly match advertiser brand profiles to media brands with the most similar profiles.

MediaDNA can help us make what were once very subjective choices both more accurate and more defensible to ever more demanding clients, in an age of ever increasing accountability.

The study's credibility and success has been recognised through receiving a Seal of Approval from the IPA (Institute of Practitioners in Advertising - the UK advertising agency body), which examined its validity and results. It also won the Agency Research Project of the Year at the Media Week Awards 2002.

And what of the future? The profiles for most brands need only be updated when their content or their consumers change significantly. For most media brands, we believe the 'shelf life' of the MediaDNA results is at least three years. This means that annual waves are primarily used to add new brands and categories to the survey, enhancing the value to planners in each. In the MediaDNA 2004 survey we plan to add more media brands, specifically investigating smaller brands, especially in the magazine medium, non-terrestrial channels and websites.

MediaDNA is a study that is not only one of the most interesting pieces of research in the UK today, but also one of great practical use. MediaDNA can fight against the growth in non-display advertising, such as sponsorship, by guiding planners to choose the most appropriate brand – either to match the product's current image or to reflect the desired one. Media brands can now be cherry-picked on their proven ability to support a brand proposition, regardless of type.

4. CONCLUSION

These two studies show that single-source research which takes a consumer-centric, media-neutral perspective and covers all major media can teach us valuable lessons for media planning.

References

The 'Absorbing Media' report published by PPA is available on the PPA website at www.ppa.co.uk
Further details, highlights and presentations of mediaDNA are available on its website www.mediadna.co.uk

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APPENDIX

MediaDNA Profile Criteria

Image

Innovative

Family oriented

British

Bold

Glamorous

Sexy

Controversial

Responsible

Inspiring

Entertaining

Informative

Excitable

Positioning

It has a strong identity

It talks to me at my level

It's a trendsetter not a follower

I talk about it with my friends

I specially choose it

It lifts my mood

I would be lost without it

I like people to know I read/watch/...

I can lose myself in it

It can influence my opinions

I can always rely on it

It's time well spent

It cares about its readers/viewers/...

It appeals equally to men/women

It appeals to people of all ages

Personality

Reserved

Outgoing

Introverted

Overbearing

Firm

Kind

Uncaring

Overly sentimental

Sensible

Playful

Unimaginative

Immature

Spontaneous

Calm

Rash

Too predictable

Easy going

Thorough

Careless

Fussy

Straightforward

Clever

Simple minded

Over complicated