Communication-Receptive Planning

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Different types of audiences react to media and to advertising in different ways. How people are likely to respond to your advertising is a singularly important factor in your communications strategy. Levels of receptivity towards communication do differ – and this could have major implications for the effectiveness of advertising.

Consumers – many of them, at least – are media-savvy nowadays. As is frequently observed, they have many more media and entertainment options available to them than ever before. They are used to this. They understand what is on offer, and play the field accordingly.

And many of these media options are very knowing. They are premised on the nature of the relationship that the viewer, reader or listener has with the medium, the fact that the consumer knows what's going on, *and the fact that the content-provider knows that the consumer knows what's going on.* Many of the current media successes (think of 'Big Brother', 'The Office', 'Pop Stars', 'Heat' magazine, and so on) work very cleverly from this basis. In the media sections of broadsheet newspapers we can even read about what we're reading about.

Further, we see the fundamental inter-connectedness of all things, or at least all media, by the nature and scale of how the likes of 'Big Brother' are reported in the tabloids. And yet, when does coverage of one medium's "reality programming" by another medium become unreal, or tip into surreality?

Quite a bit of advertising is knowing, too, in a similar way. (list a few). You know we're trying to communicate with you, so if you play the game, as an ad-literate consumer it could be rewarding for you. References or jokes are often part of this.

<u>The need to connect</u>

The need for advertisers today is to engage, to connect with consumers. Put a meaningful and worthwhile proposition in a meaningful and worthwhile manner. Many consumers know you want to communicate with them, and they are willing to be communicated with. So you should be seeking ways to make your engagement with them, and their engagement with you, profitable to both parties.

Yet still much of today's marketing and media jargon is the language of warfare. Campaigns, impacts, strike rates, targets: the implication is that we are going to hunt these consumers down and pick them off. Or, at the very least, shout at them louder than the other guys.

An acknowledgement of the desirability of engaging effectively with consumers is more appropriate than ever in today's marketing and media landscape.

Marketing and advertising professionals are always seeking the best means of communicating, and participating profitably in the continuous dialogue between brands and consumers. We have heard much recently about the state-of-the-art approach of 'media-neutral planning'. It's the concept currently being applied to planning by most major media communications agencies. Definitions of its meaning and application differ, but focusing on the consumer target in as unprejudiced a way as possible, and in the context of brand strategy, is at the heart of it.

How will the consumer respond?

An important component ought to be an assessment of how the consumer might react when exposed to a message. If this isn't taken into account, the execution of the plan and the success of the communication may not be as effective as it should be.

To this end, it is extremely helpful to divide consumers into types, according to the ways in which they consume and react to media and advertising. Understanding these types and their reactions will help the advertiser and the communications agency make the most out of their advertising and the media in which it appears.

We have recently developed at TGI a segmentation which does this. It divides the population into six groups on the basis of their attitudes towards media and advertising. By analysing and understanding them, we can see how marketing and media strategies might be enhanced as a consequence of taking 'receptiveness to communication' into account in our planning.

One finding is that it's a system which works across Europe (we used TGI respondents from 15 countries in forming the segmentation). It was interesting to see the same groups emerging in all the countries analysed. But, given the plethora of media choice that one sees even in the former Soviet-bloc countries, maybe this isn't all that surprising.

Globalisation of media

Take Hungary as an example: twenty years ago there were just two public TV channels, neither being permitted to broadcast on Mondays. Every daily newspaper was run by a political organisation. There were no branded advertisements. Now two of the three nationwide TV channels are commercial, there are 15 Hungarian satellite channels and 273 local cable channels, there is 'ER', 'Big Brother' and 'The Weakest Link', there are 150 radio stations and many major publishers are present.

The countries of central and eastern Europe have the full range of contemporary media options and global media brands (MTV, Cosmopolitan, Reader's Digest, etc) and they seem to be consumed in largely similar ways.

Box 1:

Methodology

TGI studies from 15 European countries were analysed. Each TGI study includes a list of attitude statements – respondents are asked to what extent they agree or disagree with these statements.

17 statements specifically concerned with media and advertising occur across most of these country TGIs. These were the statements used in the cluster or segmentation analysis. For each country at least 10 statements were present.

In total 224,000 TGI respondents across these 15 countries were used in the segmentation, representing a gross adult population of 349 million.

The 15 countries included are: GB, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Greece, Turkey, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic and Russia.

A six-cluster solution was selected as being the most useful.

Attitudes to media

Our segmentation analysis was performed with the objective of separating the respondents into discrete groups, based on their responses to the attitude questions on the subject of media and advertising. (For more details, see Box 1). The resulting solution is a very interesting factor to consider in communications planning.

The six clusters, or segments, emerging from our analysis were of broadly similar sizes. All the groups are represented in all countries to varying degrees, as Box 2 shows. They range from 14% to 20% of the total, or from 50 million to 70 million consumers across Europe:

Segmentation Groups

Group	%	Size (million)
1. Media Literates	15.1%	52.7m
2. Butterflies	19.8%	69.2m
3. Disengaged	14.4%	50.3m
4. Indoor Types	15.7%	54.6m
5. Entertainment Seekers	17.2%	59.8m
6. Passive Absorbers	17.8%	62.1m
	100%	348.9m

Source: TGI Global

It is important to know why particular respondents were put into groups together. The group names were chosen to reflect the attitudes to media evident in each segment. So who are these groups? What typifies each segment?

1. Media Literates

This is the group of media connoisseurs. They are particularly interested in news and politics, and seek information from their media choices. Their attitude to advertising is moderately positive – they like to feel they aren't affected by it, but that they understand what's going on.

2. Butterflies

These people flit from one media option to the next, often consuming each in a rather superficial manner, with little concentration. They are however advertising-friendly. So if you can capture their attention and engage with them, they could be a valuable group for you.

3. Disengaged

This group has the largest number of objections to the media scene. They are strongly negative about many aspects of both media and advertising. They seem to have a particular problem with free newspapers. They are not likely to be open-minded about your attempts to communicate with them.

4. Indoor Types

These people have relatively narrow horizons. Their lives are centred on their home and immediate locality – in which they may play an active part. They are positive about the local media – radio, local papers, free papers – which help them stay in touch. In some respects they are negative towards advertising, yet they confess to looking for price-related advertising when seeking bargains.

5. Entertainment Seekers

Above all, this group seeks entertainment when it is making its media choices. They like going to the cinema, read newspapers for the entertainment content, and find magazines irresistible. They are only moderately positive about advertising – perhaps they feel it interferes with what they are seeking.

6. Passive Absorbers

This group is reliant on, and enthusiastic about, television. As well as getting their entertainment from TV, they use it to keep themselves informed too. Local papers and radio also enter their world. They express the strongest positive sentiments about advertising, which seems to be very much a part of their media (primarily TV) consumption.

A snapshot of each group's receptiveness to communication can in fact be seen in the response to one of the statements: "I find TV advertising interesting and quite often it gives me something to talk about". The variation between groups in the level of positive response to this statement can be used to summarise the overall picture:

"I find TV advertising interesting and quite often it gives me something to talk about"

Group	% agree	Communication Receptivity
1. Media Literates	12%	medium
2. Butterflies	28%	high
3. Disengaged	7%	low
4. Indoor Types	4%	low
5. Entertainment Seekers	14%	medium
6. Passive Absorbers	43%	high

Source: TGI Global

So there's wide variation in the degree to which consumers welcome communication. Some consumers (those in the groups of Butterflies and Passive Absorbers) are much more open to advertising than others. If the consumers with whom you want to engage are already pre-disposed to receive communication, you're in a good position.

Informing your strategy

What you can learn about the pre-disposition to advertising among your target consumers can inform the nature of your communication strategy. Are you better off speaking with a group who are hot for your brand but cool about advertising, or with a group who are cool about your brand but hot for advertising? Or if your ideal consumers are spread across different 'communication receptivity' groups (as they almost certainly will be) how can you best tackle the challenge of connecting with different types of consumers in appropriate ways?

Box 2:

Profile of each country

Members of each segment can be found in every country included in the analysis. This table shows how the respondents from each country were allocated across the groups by the cluster program. Study of the table will reveal, unsurprisingly, that some countries' consumers are more strongly represented in certain clusters, and some in others.

French and Italian consumers are found in large numbers among the **Media Literates**. We see many **Butterflies** in Romania, Ireland, Hungary and Greece. The **Disengaged** consumer is most prevalent in Spain, Germany and Italy. **Indoor Types** are common in the Czech and Slovak Republics. **Entertainment Seekers** are well spread across all countries, although Germany is something of an exception. Turkey has the highest concentration of **Passive Absorbers**.

(paste Excel table in here)

	Media Literates	Butterflies	Disengaged	Indoor Types	Entertainment Seekers	Passive Absorbers
Total	**15%**	**20%**	**14%**	**16%**	**17%**	**18%**
Germany	9%	21%	20%	28%	9%	13%
Spain	17%	17%	22%	7%	21%	17%
France	27%	14%	8%	14%	23%	15%
GB	16%	24%	11%	15%	17%	17%
Northern Ireland	12%	29%	9%	13%	17%	21%
Republic of Ireland	10%	29%	7%	14%	21%	19%
Hungary	14%	28%	9%	12%	24%	13%
Poland	10%	23%	12%	18%	23%	15%
Romania	5%	30%	16%	13%	18%	18%
Greece	12%	28%	14%	5%	23%	18%
Turkey	8%	24%	8%	10%	16%	35%
Russia	14%	26%	10%	13%	16%	21%
Italy	21%	14%	20%	8%	15%	23%
Czech Rep	17%	11%	12%	34%	15%	10%
Slovak Rep	12%	14%	12%	32%	14%	16%

By conducting more in-depth analysis, of other consumer and demographic characteristics, it is clear that two of the groups – the Butterflies and the Entertainment Seekers – are quite similar in many ways. In fact, the main factor differentiating them is their attitudes to media and advertising.

It's also the case that, as well as in their attitudes to media, we can see differences in the levels of consumption of each medium by the different groups. The attitudes that they express concerning media are played out in the biases in what they choose to consume:

Media Behaviour Tendencies

Media Literates	**Butterflies**	**Disengaged**
* High Quality Press * High Radio * High Internet * Low TV	* High Cinema * Low Newspapers * Some Internet	* Low Direct Mail * Low Cinema * Low TV * Low Radio * Some Internet
Indoor Types	**Entertainment Seekers**	**Passive Absorbers**
* Low Outdoor * Low Cinema * High TV	* High Cinema * Some Radio * Some Internet	* Highest TV * High Direct Mail * Low Cinema * Non-Internet

Source: TGI Global

We can also look at their consumption of specific international media vehicles. For example, in all the countries analysed Cosmopolitan is read mostly by the Butterflies, Entertainment Seekers and Media Literates. MTV also has a fairly homogenous audience, again appealing to the Butterflies and Entertainment Seekers, and usually the Media Literates. However, we find an interesting split in the Readers Digest audience in different parts of Europe. In Western Europe, the Digest is enjoyed by what many would consider its traditional audience, well spread but with Indoor Types and Media Literates to the fore. In the developing countries, however, it seems to be consumed for a more specific knowledge-building purpose, given that the bias in its audience is much more strongly towards the Media Literates.

So, we can distinguish between consumer types – on a consistent basis across Europe – according to their attitudes to media and advertising. We find that some groups are much more open to advertising communication than others.

Target for response

How about targeting on this basis? We ought to consider the way in which people are likely to respond to commercial messages to be an important component in how we try to engage with them.

We can apply this segmentation to communications planning in conjunction with the brand and media information in TGI.

The outcome contrasts with that of a traditional TGI-type analysis conducted for media planning support, in which one takes a brand and looks at the relationship between its users and different media. If we look at people in Britain who have purchased Nike trainers in the last 12 months, for example, and their direct relationship with selected media, we can identify media against which they index strongly, and this will suggest the kinds of media ideas that might be considered:

Nike Consumers and Selected Media (GB): Direct Relationships

	Index
Satellite/Cable Viewers	130
MTV (last 7 days)	210
Sky Sports (last 7 days)	148
Heavy Commercial Radio	125
FHM magazine	226
Heavy Cinema	188
Seen ads in Underground (last 7 days)	140
Heavy Bus travel	139
Heavy Internet	134

Source: TGI GB

However, this pays no attention to Nike purchasers' openness to advertising. If we take this into account, we are obliged to think more deeply about the entire process. With whom do we want to communicate, and how is the best way of going about it?

Let's see how this applies to Nike buyers, by filtering them through our segmentation. We find that two of the groups are of huge importance. 58% of Nike buyers are either Butterflies or Entertainment Seekers.

Nike GB Consumers

Group	GB adults	Nike buyers	Index
1. Media Literates	16%	14%	85
2. Butterflies	24%	33%	137
3. Disengaged	11%	7%	66
4. Indoor Types	15%	10%	71
5. Entertainment Seekers	17%	25%	144
6. Passive Absorbers	17%	11%	64

Source: TGI GB

This pattern for Nike applies across Britain, France, Spain and Germany. In all these countries we find that Nike buyers are consistently more likely to be Butterflies or Entertainment Seekers. For an advertiser who is present across several markets, and perhaps considering a multi-country marketing strategy, this kind of knowledge could be immensely helpful:

Nike Consumers: Index

					4-country Total		
Group	GB	Fra	Spa	Ger	**adults**	**Nike**	**Index**
1. Media Literates	85	100	126	75	**17%**	**17%**	**101**
2. Butterflies	137	127	112	117	**19%**	**24%**	**126**
3. Disengaged	66	67	65	116	**15%**	**12%**	**80**
4. Indoor Types	71	87	68	74	**18%**	**13%**	**72**
5. Entertainment Seekers	144	117	122	166	**17%**	**23%**	**138**
6. Passive Absorbers	64	77	92	77	**15%**	**12%**	**76**

Source: TGI Europa

The planner's choice

So these two groups should equally be our targets then? Not necessarily. That is the decision we must take. These two groups, similar in many respects (including their liking for Nike trainers) are not equal in terms of their communication receptivity.

The Butterflies are intrinsically more open to receiving communication messages. The Entertainment Seekers have only a moderate level of openness. So perhaps the Butterflies are the better target upon which to focus.

On the other hand, the Entertainment Seekers would perhaps be more likely to focus on the message, especially if it were put across in a way that entertained them. The Butterflies tend to be less likely to concentrate – and maybe their lower level of loyalty to media could apply to their brand choices too.

Which group to prioritise is for the communications strategist to decide. But there are many factors to be considered here, and it will be greatly to the benefit of the brand's communications success if this decision is informed by a clear understanding of how effectively the message is likely to work, given how consumers are pre-disposed to respond.

The media impact

The conclusion about which is the key target can impact markedly on some of your media decisions. It's not an exhaustive list, but in this example for the GB market, prioritising the Butterflies could lead you to one set of media choices; going with the Entertainment Seekers might lead you to a very different set.

If you decided the Nike-wearing Butterflies were your key audience, you would be considering GMTV, magazines such as FHM, and outdoor and ambient ideas. If you wanted to connect with the Entertainment Seekers among your brand purchasers, you would turn your attention more to satellite and cable broadcast options including MTV, commercial radio and The Sun.

Even if you were to decide you wanted to target both groups, you would need to develop quite different strategic and executional plans for each one. That's because not only does the communication receptivity of different groups among your customer base vary – they also consume different media.

Which Channels for Nike?
Based on Nike penetration and communication receptivity

	Butterflies Index	Entertainment Seekers Index
Heavy TV	82	119
Heavy GMTV	120	91
Heavy Satellite/Cable	90	119
MTV (last 7 days)	107	120
Heavy Commercial Radio	91	117
The Sun (average issue)	86	127
FHM (average issue)	134	109
Seen small street posters (last 7 days)	114	86
Seen ads in Underground (last 7 days)	124	96
Seen ads at an airport (last 7 days)	121	100
Seen product ads in pubs/clubs	131	98

Source: TGI GB

In conclusion, each type of audience interacts differently with media and with advertising. It is vital to understand consumer reactions in order to make the most out of both media and advertising. How people respond is a very important factor in communications strategy. Applying a technique such as this, which allows you to include communication receptivity into your thinking, could have a major impact on what you do, and on how successfully you do it.