directiveanalytics
Guiding Strategic Marketing Decisions

directive**TRACK** measures brand awareness, usage, advertising, marketing and/or promotional awareness, recall, and communication, as well as brand and category perceptions for both client brand and competitive brands.

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directiveTRACK is our advertising and brand health tracking tool. directiveTRACK helps our clients establish benchmarks which can be used to monitor marketing and advertising efforts to ensure the dollars they are spending are reaching the right target and communicating intended messages about the brand. directiveTRACK can be used to measure brand awareness, brand usage/trial, advertising, marketing and/or promotional awareness, message recall, and brand perception for both the client brand and competitive brands. Our tracking approach combines the tried and true tenants of advertising effectiveness and brand health research with the strategic and analytic focus we bring to all of our work.

Importance of Tracking

As industries become increasingly competitive, it is even clearer that in order to succeed companies must build strong brands. It is no longer enough to have a new or different product as most innovations are quickly reverse engineered and marketed by competitors. Advertising can be one of the most effective ways companies can build and maintain their brands and consequently, marketers are spending a majority of their marketing budget on advertising efforts. Advertising can help companies build and/or maintain product awareness, brand image, and competitive advantage leading to

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powerful brands. However, advertising can also fall very short of these objectives if it does not reach, resonate with, or create a call to action with consumers. This is why properly designed and executed research is needed to monitor advertising effectiveness.

Many companies fail to implement tracking research to monitor the effectiveness of their advertising and marketing efforts over time. In today's competitive marketplace, it is simply is not enough to pre-test your advertising or marketing campaign and then just let it run. A marketing professional would never launch a new product and not keep a close watch on how it was performing in market. Advertising and promotional efforts are no different. Companies need to monitor the effectiveness of their advertising and marketing to ensure that the communications are working (communicating intended messages), their message is getting through (reaching and resonating with the right consumer), and ultimately, their advertising and marketing dollars are being well allocated and spent.

Sampling Considerations

In order to be a worthwhile investment, research must be executed against a carefully designed sample frame. To achieve the maximum benefit from tracking, interviews need to be conducted among a representative sample of category users (brand and non-brand users), and sometimes these groups are difficult to reach. Samples need to be large enough to sub-segment without sacrificing data integrity as well as to produce statistically valid and stable trends over time. Often times clients will want to minimize their tracking research budgets, but cutting out sample size can often leave you with data that is less than informative.

Methodological Considerations

The intended target will strongly influence the type of methodology Directive Analytics would recommend for your project. We employ both traditional telephone based data collection as well as online and tailor the approach to each project.

As tracking becomes more and more difficult to conduct via traditional methods (i.e., telephone), for a variety of reasons; online data collection presents an effective and cost-saving solution to help combat this problem.

Online research is rapidly growing as the methodology of choice among the marketing research profession, and offers significant cost and time efficiencies over traditional approaches.

A recent report suggests this growth trend will continue. **"In 2001 10% MR spend was online. 23.6% in 2003. It is predicted to reach 33% in 2006"—Larry Gold, Inside Research**

Further, panel companies are taking great strides to maintain high quality, representative panels. As the percentage of consumers increases so too does the representative nature of panels. Recent data provided by Nielsen NetRatings projects Internet penetration to be in the 70-75% range, and growing rapidly.

Conducting tracking studies offline is becoming increasingly difficult for a variety of reasons, among them the following:

- Recent DNC legislation and consumer confusion between research and marketing calls

- Low cooperation rates caused by consumer bombardment from direct marketers

- Increased call screening through caller id, voicemail, and answering machines

- Move to cellular phones vs. landline phones and number portability

Yet, tracking research via telephone continues to be a viable tool in many cases. For example when:

- Trying to reach a target which is not well represented online (e.g., younger groups, minorities, or elderly)

- Conducting research in smaller markets or in markets where online sample is not as readily available

At Directive Analytics we work with our clients to design a methodology, sampling plan, and survey instrument to meet their current and future needs.

Survey Components

At Directive Analytics, every project is custom designed to meet our client's needs and objectives. The effectiveness of a tracking program is highly dependent on both the types of questions asked, as well as how they are asked. Our projects are designed to maximize the usefulness of the information collected while keeping a keen focus of the respondent experience thus ensuring quality data is collected. Key components of a tracking study are:

- Brand awareness (unaided, aided)

- Brand usage and/or trial (unaided, aided; past, present, future)

- Consideration and loyalty metrics

- Advertising awareness (unaided, aided; in aggregate or by media type)

- Advertising message recall (unaided, aided)

- Brand perception (category attributes, brand imagery, and equity)

- Media consumption

- Demographics

Additional areas of questioning that "fit" in a tracking study often include:

- Market segmentation (psychographics, category behavior)

- Promotional awareness (coupons, trials)

Data Collection Considerations

Tracking research can be conducted continuously—collecting a set number of interviews daily, weekly, or monthly over a period of time, or pulsed—conducted in distinct waves at certain points in time (e.g., quarterly).

Depending on the marketing and advertising efforts and objectives both methodologies are valid and highly effective.

Continuous tracking is constantly monitoring the marketplace, a "finger on the pulse" of your (and competitors) brands. With continuous tracking clients can:

- Monitor the effects of advertising on brands

- Measure seasonal changes, evaluate the effect of holidays

- Gauge the impact of unplanned PR, and more

With continuous tracking you are constantly monitoring your brand and the market.

Pulsed or wave tracking (also sometimes called "dip" tracking) is conducted in bursts. With pulsed tracking clients can:

- Often appreciate significant cost savings, it is generally more cost effective to field a wave study as the ongoing monitoring and management costs are lower

- Create strong benchmarks of brand performance

- Monitor health and advertising effectiveness for brands that have seasonal usage or marketing

It is important to note, however you lose the sensitivity and understanding of the cycles the brand may go through between waves.

For more detailed information on how we can help you with your tracking research or other research needs contact us at (203) 855-8550 or info@directiveanalytics.com.