



Luth Research Whitepaper

Are You Seeing The Full Digital Picture?

Find out how monitoring your customers' entire online journey, not just the last click, can change your ad effectiveness measurement. This whitepaper reviews the three compelling metrics that you should be using in order to measure true ad effectiveness.

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Prepared By:
Becky Wu, Ph.D.
Sr. Executive Vice President, Research
Luth Research, Inc.
(619) 234-5884 ext. 8053
bwu@luthresearch.com

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Moving beyond the Last Click

Picture Sean. Sean is 26, a hard core social gamer, and cares a lot about the time and experience he has on the web. It needs to be crisp, fast and seamless. Sean has been using Chrome as his primary browser. A fan of CNET and Mashable, he is almost always up to date on the latest “gadgets” and plug-ins that help make his digital life a breeze. Sean’s curiosity is first piqued when he sees an Internet Explorer ad on Facebook (even though he can’t recall he has been exposed to that ad elsewhere three times before already). He wants to find out what others say about the latest version. With a few key strokes, Sean searches the new browser and clicks on the 3rd link to a CNET review. He clicks through the download link embedded as part of the review.

As Sean clicks through that link in the CNET review, the ad server for the IE browser campaign records that click and reports out to the marketers and researchers who are diligently monitoring. What they don’t see is the 80%, or even greater, part of the consumer journey leading to and beyond that click. Without this knowledge, it is impossible to determine what part of the overall campaign works and what doesn’t.

This is exactly where attribution adds value. Attribution modeling and research pinpoint the precise practices and components that result in success or failure, which then equips the marketers to optimize future performances.

As a new methodology, behavioral tracking of consumers’ activities over time on the web provides unique benefits in capturing insights from the entirety of the consumer journey. Traditional attribution practices suffer from a lack of examination on how consumer behaviors are affected in the order of time. Focus has been on the “last click,” which underestimates the importance of the before and after touch points.

This whitepaper describes a case study using a digital campaign for the IE browser. The case study implements and validates 3 compelling metrics that are essential in order to understand the holistic picture of how the overall campaign works.

New Metrics. Fresh Insights.

The case study begins with a 3-month online campaign for a recent version of the IE browser. While remaining the dominant player, Microsoft IE has been experiencing market erosion slowly from Google Chrome and Firefox. The campaign is a new effort to influence consumer perceptions and ultimately the consumer’s decision to use IE as the primary browser.

The research supporting the campaign includes the usual suspects of ROI metrics such as consumer perceptions. Importantly, the research sets out to leverage behavioral tracking via Luth Research’s ZQ Intelligence™ technology to explore critical consumer activities along the entire journey rather than just a narrow frame in time. This conscious shift to behavior-centric measurement uncovers three compelling metrics that prove to be worthy of advocacy for future attribution investigation.

Before explication of the three key metrics, it is necessary to describe ZQ Digital Tribe™ - the research methodology used in the study. A total of 670 respondents were recruited to include two equally allocated groups: 1) primary IE users and 2) primary Chrome users. Additional criteria were screened to ensure the respondents reflect the target audience of interest for IE. All respondents were asked to install a small, light-weight application on computers that tracks respondents' Internet activities continuously with their consent. The online behavior tracking spans across two months of time parallel to the online campaign.

Ad exposure is tracked by identifying the "ad tags" associated with the ads in the specific IE campaign in the respondents' click stream data captured by the ZQ Intelligence™ web behavior tracking application. Ad tags are generally in the form of alpha-numeric codes assigned to each ad distributed across the ad networks during a marketing campaign. Luth Research's ZQ technology detects the ad tags as respondents browse and surf the Internet. Regardless of whether or not respondents are able to recall seeing the ad campaign, these ad tag exposures are recorded in time sequence and volume, providing a much more accurate measure of ad impact factoring in implicit influence of advertising.

The tracking over two months of time enables an expanded view of the consumer trajectory where the dynamics of consumer interaction with the ads and IE software play out. Respondents' visitation and time spend on all websites as well as their search activities were captured and analyzed. Correlations were examined with the order of events being particularly taken into consideration.

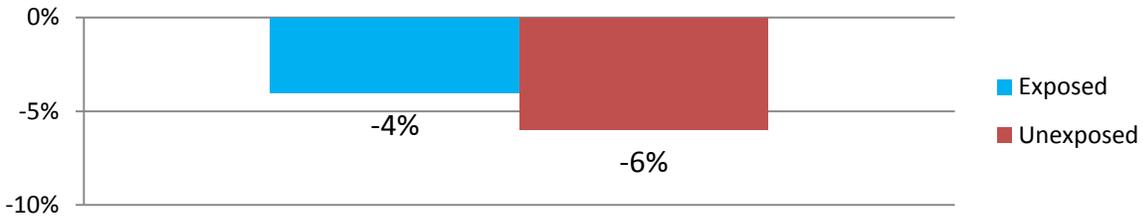
In addition, a total of three surveys were administered at key milestones during the tracking. The surveys were designed to monitor changes in respondents' perceptions of IE and its competition.

Metric 1: Ultimate Performance Behavior

An ultimate performance behavior (UPB) should be established early on in the research process. An UPB is a clear consumer action that the marketer intends to change or induce. It serves as a concrete, unquestionable reflection of the impact of the marketing or advertising efforts. The UPB for this study is the change in the amount of time using each available browser among tested respondents. This metric is made available thanks to the ability of the research to track the test respondents' actual browser usage on their computer.

The results showed that the usage trend for IE is declining at a slower rate among those IE primary users exposed to the ads than those unexposed to the ads. While the ad campaign was not able to reverse the overall downward usage trend for IE, it demonstrated a positive intervening effect.

Figure 1.0. Change in Actual IE Browser Usage within 30 Days



The value of tying ad exposure with tangible behavioral changes is traditionally not easily attainable. With behavior tracking, behavioral changes are observed for the same respondents before and after ad exposure, which provides the much needed methodological rigor to determine the causal effect.

Different UPB metrics should be considered in the context of campaign objectives. Other relevant UPB metrics may include online purchases made after ad exposure, incidences of downloads, or activities to share content or information promoted by the ad campaign. Furthermore, it remains paramount to leverage the advantage of behavior tracking in differentiating UPB activities before and after ad exposure for optimal impact measurement.

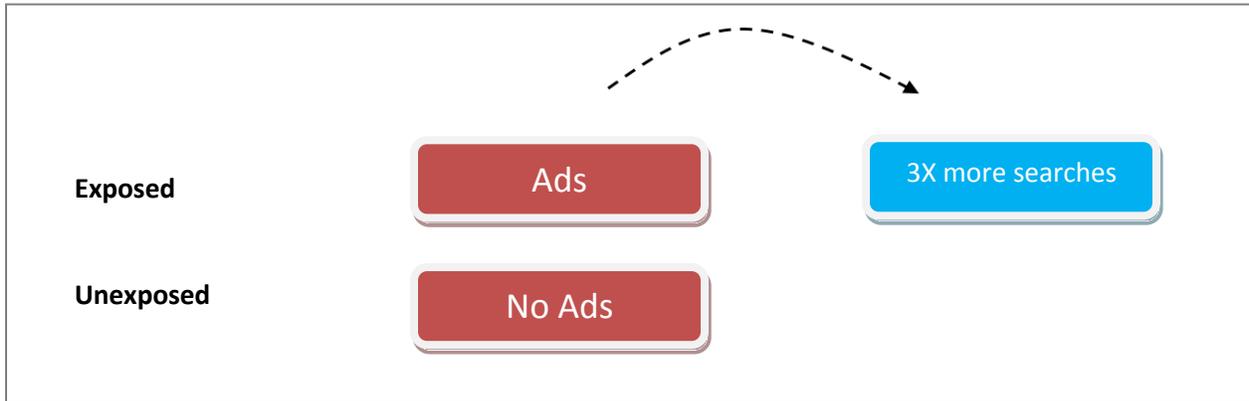
Metric 2: Relevant Search

A second important metric is relevant search activity related to the brand or product of the campaign. Search manifests clear consumer interest. One effective, yet often overlooked approach to measure the influence of the display campaign is to examine ensuing search activities.

The research separated out searches pertinent to IE browser information and downloads from all search activities performed by the test respondents. Time order was established for each search and each ad exposure. The volume of relevant searches was compared between the exposed and unexposed respondents.

The comparison revealed that exposed respondents performed 3 times as many relevant searches as unexposed respondents.

Figure 2.0. Search Volume as a Result of Ad Exposure



This discovery highlights an important benefit that display ad campaigns bring about but rarely get credit for, which is inducing consumer interest and actions. Display ads are often thought to serve a branding purpose. Impressions are the default metric widely accepted by marketers to measure success. In the digital world, search activity is a fully trackable data point that is extremely underutilized in attribution for display ad campaigns.

This finding also affirms the interconnectedness of the search and display ads in overall marketing efforts. The fact that exposure to display ads has a material effect on consumers' likelihood to search for the target brand or product calls for a conscious integration of these two lines of advertising spending. For example, SEO efforts can be planned out in concert with a display ad campaign to maximize the possibility to convert the ensuing search activities into actual sales.

Metric 3: Impact of Individual Behaviors vs. Combined Behaviors

The third metric is derived from the intent to understand the isolated effect of individual behaviors vs. combined effects of select behaviors. If we look at how consumers come to be in contact with the ads, the brand, and the product, the journey is far from a linear progression. There are unexpected influences and distractions, which need to be acknowledged and identified.

For the research, five specific consumer activities were selected and examined:

- 1) Ad exposure
- 2) Visits to competition websites
- 3) Visits to IE downloading websites
- 4) Visits to Microsoft websites
- 5) Searches related to IE information and download

When individual consumer actions were investigated, three of the five actions were found to yield a significant impact, which included ad exposure, visits to competitor websites, and IE related searches. Specifically, ad exposure and IE related searches brought positive influences on many of the key performance indicators in IE brand perceptions such as being perceived as innovative, best browser, outdated, fast, and so on (see Figure 3.0). On the other hand, visits to competitor websites posted

negative impact on these perceptions. Interestingly, visits to Microsoft websites and IE downloading websites didn't produce any meaningful impact as a standalone action.

Figure 3.0. Individual Effects of Consumer Actions on Brand Perceptions of IE

Consumer Actions					Key IE Brand KPIs							
Ad Exposure	Visits to Competitor Sites	IE Related Search	Visits to MSFT Sites	Visits to Download Sites	Innovative	Best Browser	Secure	Outdated	Fast	Good Value	For People Like Me	Compatible
+					↑	↑		↓	↑	↑	↑	
	+					↓		↑	↓		↓	
		+						↓				
			-									
				-								

Taking one step further, analysis is performed to explore the interactive effects between these five consumer actions, exhausting all possible combinations of these actions detected among the test respondents. The combinations of actions found to yield significant influences are shown in Figure 4.0. The various combinations without involving visits to competitor websites played a significant role in reducing consumers' perception of IE as being outdated. Visits to competitor websites tended to dilute the advertising message, especially for IE's positioning as a browser for "people like me." Particularly noteworthy is the added effects from visits to Microsoft websites and IE downloading websites once combined with IE related searches; these two were previously not a source of influence.

Figure 4.0. Interactive Effects of Combined Consumer Actions on Brand Perceptions of IE

Consumer Actions					Key IE Brand KPIs							
Ad Exposure	Visits to Competitor Sites	IE Related Search	Visits to MSFT Sites	Visits to Download Sites	Innovative	Best Browser	Secure	Outdated	Fast	Good Value	For People Like Me	Compatible
		+		+				↓				
		+	+					↓				
+	+	+									↓	
		+	+	+				↓				

The third metric here is a powerful illustration of two key takeaways. First, the moment of ad exposure or the "last click" is not the sole influencer in bringing about changes in consumer behaviours or attitudes. Second, the synergistic interactive effects across multiple consumer actions have a tangible and measurable impact on marketing outcomes. Gaining clarity on what consumer actions matter most ultimately helps focus on the most effective call to action as well as reduce spending waste in marketing.

So What for Your Next Campaign?

Digital measurement of online behaviors has been in evolution for some time. Marketing practitioners have seen clear benefits and abundant metrics. Then, what makes these three metrics compelling and essential? It is their ability to offer insights on the many steps leading to and following the last click. The underlying ZQ Digital Tribe research approach is unique and rigorous in that it makes it possible to examine a single consumer's entire journey, and also do so for a large number of target consumers. By observing what the person does most naturally in his or her digital life over time, the research approach captures the 80% of the data traditionally lost, an omission that could lead to false attribution and undermine marketing effectiveness.

Another key element that distinguishes this methodology from other digital measurement is the recruitment of the audience of interest in advance. Unlike most of the available services on the market, the behavior tracking of ZQ Digital Tribe allows marketing practitioners to target individuals using criteria far richer than mere demographics. This advantage guarantees the relevance of the data collected for attribution and ROI measurement. Otherwise, how can we be sure the clicks and impressions are even generated for the audience we want to pursue in the first place?

For your next online campaign, incorporating these three metrics via behavior tracking will not only gain significant accuracy in attribution, but also benchmark best practices in the areas that matter the most for your on-going marketing operation. Now that the measurement tools are available, it is time to truly challenge our thinking and desire to give credit where it is due and do more of what makes marketing successful.