Wear-out detection

White Paper – Methodology

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Summary

Advertising relies on repetition: ads are intended to reach consumers multiple times. But how many repetitions produce an optimal effect on consumers for your brand? After a number of repetitions, advertisements may not affect consumers positively anymore. This is generally understood as wear-out. Wear-out is typically defined as irritation, and also measured as such. However, two important issues arise: (1) irritation is only the final phase of a more sophisticated wear-out process that includes other forms of wear-out, and (2) measures of irritation are typically based on memory, which excludes other indicators of wear-out, such as when boredom lowers consumer attention. That is why DVJ Insights has developed a model that takes into account all forms of wear-out and provides new insights for advertisers to adjust media- and creative strategy during a campaign.

As the frequency of running an ad determines the cost of advertising, it is vital to know when an ad starts to wear out and positive effects on consumers stagnate. Advertisers that integrate wear-out measurement in their tracking are able to realize substantial savings during a campaign period.

In order to obtain the most detailed insights into wear-out, DVJ Insights developed a new, more granular measure of wear-out. Based on academic literature, we have defined three successive stages of wear-out that together form an early stage warning system of wear-out. Our approach to enables marketers to spend campaigns budgets in the most efficient manner, which will significantly increase return on marketing investment.

Background

As all marketers are aware, the intended effects of advertising are never realized after only one contact. But we also know that there is a moment when an additional contact does not lead to additional effects. But the costs of running advertising are strongly related to the frequency with which ads run. Therefore, everyone is looking for an optimal number of contact to realize a maximum effect.

The challenge, however, is to find this optimal moment. In traditional approaches to this issue, studies are carried out that try to determine a campaign's effect based on consumers' memory. Because memory is often not an accurate reflection of reality, wear-out is detected too late and irritation has arisen.

If we look at the academic literature, we see that there is good description of wear-out and some great ways to identify wear-out at an early stage. DVJ Insights has integrated this in their approach and created a specific tool for early stage wear-out detection. A new way to save money and optimize the effect of every ad.

Wear-out

When a campaign runs, a substantial part of (the target) consumers will be expos ed to the ad repeatedly. Academic studies inform us that repeated exposures to a campaign can create awareness, learning, and positive attitudes.[3] However, these positive effects may only take place up to a limited number of exposures. Based on Berlyne's two-factor theory,[4] advertising repetition can have two distinct consequences: wear-in and wear-out. Wear-in refers to the positive effects on consumers once they become familiar with the ad after a number of exposures.[5,6] Ads may wear in after any number of exposures, or they may never wear in.

However, as Figure 1 shows, repeated exposures may only produce positive outcomes up to a point. After this point, consumers typically experience wear-out. Wear-out refers to the point where more exposures to a campaign do not further increase campaign effects.[6] We will elaborate on wear-out below.

After an ad has worn in, it is said to have worn out if, when consumers are exposed to it, it no longer has a positive effect on them, or even has a negative effect on them. Continued repetition may produce wear-out because consumers resist or experience irritation in response to the message.[5] An ad may wear out after any number of exposures: it may happen the second time consumers are exposed to it, the eighth time, or it may never wear out.
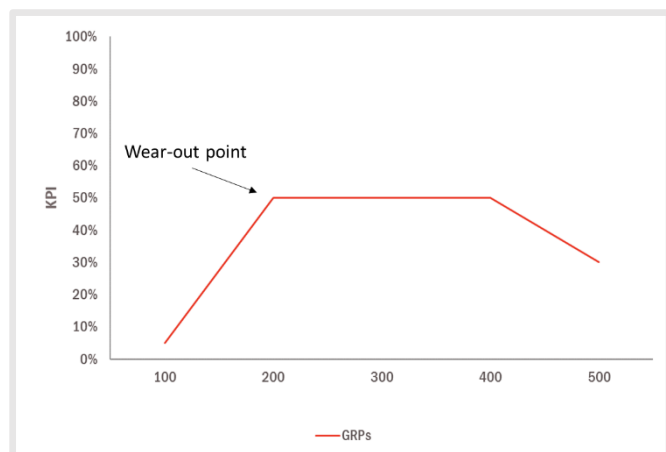

*Figure 1. Advertising wear-out*

Existing wear-out measures are incomplete

Wear-out is usually described in academic literature as boredom, potentially driven by a lower opportunity to learn and resistance against the ad.[5] In contrast, wear-out is typically measured as irritation in business. Two issues arise here:

1. **Measures of irritation rely on memory**: they ask respondents to what extent they felt irritated by a certain commercial during exposure. As emotions are not always accurately retrieved from memory,[7] responses to irritation measures might be invalid indicators of wear-out.
2. Most measures of wear-out define it in terms of response wear-out: when consumers get irritated or bored after repeated exposure to the ad. However, **there are more indicators of wear-out than irritation**. Focusing only on irritation may obscure more detailed insights into wear-out, because many ads never get to the point where they bore or irritate consumers. Sometimes, ads wear-out because they fail to engage consumers' attention after a number of exposures. In this case, a measure of irritation would (incorrectly) indicate that the advertisement has not yet reached the point of wear-out.

Employing a more sophisticated definition of wear-out should enable us to detect wear-out much earlier in the process. In addition, a more granular approach to wear-out explains why initial positive campaign effects may stagnate.

The early stage warning system of wear-out

Based on academic literature, DVJ Insights developed an early stage warning system of wear-out. In our wear-out analysis, we define three distinct phases in the wear-out process. They are attention wear-out, learning wear-out, and response wear-out.[8]

Attention Wear-Out	Learning Wear-Out	Response Wear-out
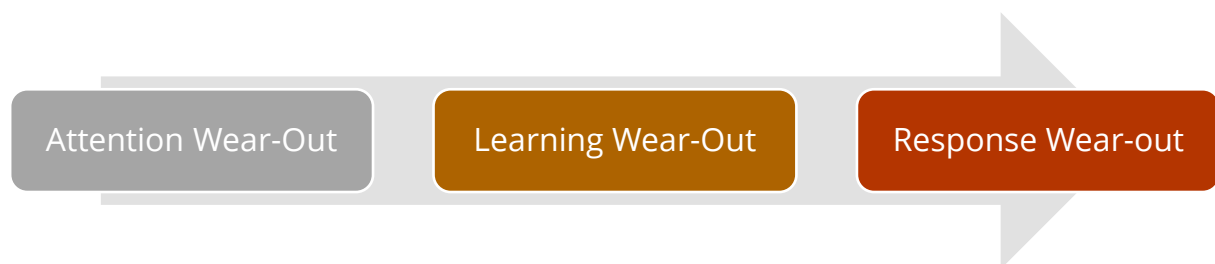
Attention wear-out happens when, after multiple exposures to the creative, consumers stop being engaged with the ad: they stop paying attention to them. The next stage in the wear-out process is **learning wear-out**: lower engagement produces stagnation in memory for the creative and the brand. Finally, consumers move to **response wear-out**: consumers get bored with the creative after repeated exposures.

Following attention wear-out is new and hardly done in marketing (research) practice. The effects of following wear-out, however, are substantial. Attention wear-out for TV and radio happen when consumers recognize the beginning of an ad, which makes them zap away physically or mentally. The result is that consumers do not notice the brand and the message and there is no real contact with the ad. They may remember the ads, but they may not remember which brand is featured or what the message is. According to Byron Sharp,[9] this is one of the most important reasons for advertising wastage. In print we see a similar pattern. As a result of consumers' recognition of the ad they do not read the text in the ad anymore and focus more on the visuals. This behavior is hardly taken into account by advertisers who change headlines over time to convey a new message. Based upon simple human behavior this is the wrong strategy.

By distinguishing three distinct phases in the wear-out process, DVJ Insights adds granularity to the analysis of wear-out. This enables marketing managers to get better insights into the performance of their ads much faster. As a consequence, marketers can make adjustments to the campaign. In doing so, the marketing budget is spent substantially more efficiently, which is beneficial to the ROI.

A typical wear-out analysis for an ad starts with a pre-test and after a number of GRPs we repeat the test. Because the test is based upon the willingness to watch we are able to identify early stage

of wear-out and the effect this has on the impact of an ad. The results will give input to changes in the creative and the media strategy. Advertisers who have used this approach were able to realize significant additional effects with the same amount of media investments.

Conclusion

Advertising replies on repetition: the fact that marketers talk about advertising *campaigns* indicates that advertisements run more than once, albeit in different forms and across different channels. As the frequency of running an ad determines the cost of advertising, it is pivotal to know when an ad starts to wear out and positive effects on consumers stagnate.

Traditional measures of wear-out rely on irritation as an indicator of wear-out. However, irritation is only the final phase of wear-out and may in fact never occur. Other, earlier indicators of wear-out may be present, however.

In order to get more insight into the successive stages of wear-out, DVJ Insights developed an early stage warning system for advertising wear-out. Our unique and scientifically validated distinction between three separate stages of wear-out makes our approach to analyzing wear-out substantially more granular and efficient. Our approach to wear-out enables marketers to spend campaign budgets in the most efficient manner, which will significantly increase return on marketing investment.

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About the company

DVJ Insights is a quality-based research and consultancy agency with a global footprint. we help our clients understanding how to realize growth by identifying relevant drivers, optimizing communication, improving the customer experience and introduce winning products and solutions in organizations.

We believe that research is all about listening. listening to our clients to make sure the research is embedded in the organization and answers the right questions, and listening to consumers by giving them the opportunity to express their feelings and share their stories.

We add value by leveraging the experience and expertise of our seasoned research and consultancy team, and staying true to our innovative mass qualitative philosophy.