



# HOW ONLINE SURVEY MEASUREMENT CAN IMPROVE ADVERTISING ROI

STEVEN MILLMAN  
SVP, Research & Operations



**dynata**<sup>™</sup>

John Wanamaker (1838-1922) was one of the most famous and innovative marketers in history. He opened one of the most profitable department store chains in the United States, which would eventually be drawn into the Macy's brand. His most famous quote, "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half," remains well known a century later.



Half the money  
I spend on advertising  
is wasted; the trouble  
is I don't know  
which half

—JOHN WANAMAKER

Although the advertising landscape was a great deal simpler in his time, the basic premise of his concern remains largely as true today as it was then. Advertising campaigns can include a great deal of waste, which can come in many forms including poor targeting, fraud, ineffective creatives, and more. Modern marketers have a wide variety of tools at their disposal to combat these forms of advertising waste, and it all starts with measurement. Through audience verification and survey-based brand lift tools, such as the solutions Dynata provides many marketers, media and advertising agencies, and publishers, we can begin to identify the wasteful elements of ad campaigns, versus the impactful elements.

Regardless of which tools you use to measure the effectiveness of your advertising campaigns, here are three simple best practices to keep in mind to help you obtain the highest possible return on your ad spend.







# Start with High Quality Data from Real People

In the diverse world of digital survey panels it pays to dig into recruitment and retention methods before you select an ad measurement partner. Digital respondents are inexpensive, efficient sources of data and collection is rapid compared to surveys via telephone or mail. However, it is much harder to draw samples from digital panels that are completely representative of your desired population. It is vital for an ad measurement partner, with survey-based brand lift capabilities, to ensure that their recruitment methodologies are as diverse as the population you want to represent.

Dynata, for example, explores multiple recruitment methods to ensure a diverse and representative population. These include:

- Loyalty programs, often associated with travel, yield high-worth individuals and are a reliable source for professionals for B2B sample;
- Open recruitment through mass-market digital advertising draws sample from all over the internet and broadens representativeness, nationally and internationally;
- Affiliate networks utilize partnerships with web-centric companies to build traffic and reach innovators, early adopters, and hard-to-reach segments;
- Mobile apps are a valuable source for younger sample and data-sharers – and are increasingly important to representativeness as mobile Internet usage surges past desktop access.

Naturally, the best way to know if your ad measurement partner's recruitment blend is representative of your population of interest is to test it. Dynata compares a wide variety of panelist self-reported data against external sources and known universe estimates to ensure that our panel looks like the populations we represent. These include common variables that you might expect, such as demographics (age, gender, income, education, geography, etc.), but also lifestyle and behavioral variables like pet ownership, media consumption, brand awareness, and so on.

Additional vitally important considerations when selecting your ad measurement partner include:

### **Managing privacy, particularly in light of new laws.**

The European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) have made it doubly important to be completely transparent with the people providing you with data and to protect their privacy. Look for a partner that has an explicit and affirmative opt-in policy like the one we use at Dynata (rather than just providing the opportunity to opt-out, for example) to protect your brand as well as your respondents.

### **Panelist engagement.**

The best panel providers build a relationship with their panelists through multiple touchpoints in order to improve their engagement, retain panelists longer, and thus, increase the resulting sample quality. If your ad measurement partner uses an online panel, ensure they can explain their engagement processes and provide data on average panelist retention.

### **Fraud protection.**

It is an unfortunate fact in today's world that some bad actors have become very good at artificially simulating large numbers of survey panelists to fraudulently accumulate rewards and incentives. One of the best ways to protect against fraud is through consistent panelist engagement along with examination of the touchpoints for discrepancies. Other approaches include deduplication exercises (it's unlikely, for example, that there are 50 legitimate respondents using the same residential IP address), speed of survey responses, cookie matching (with opt-in), and the use of external fraud services. Make sure your partner can properly describe their anti-fraud processes.

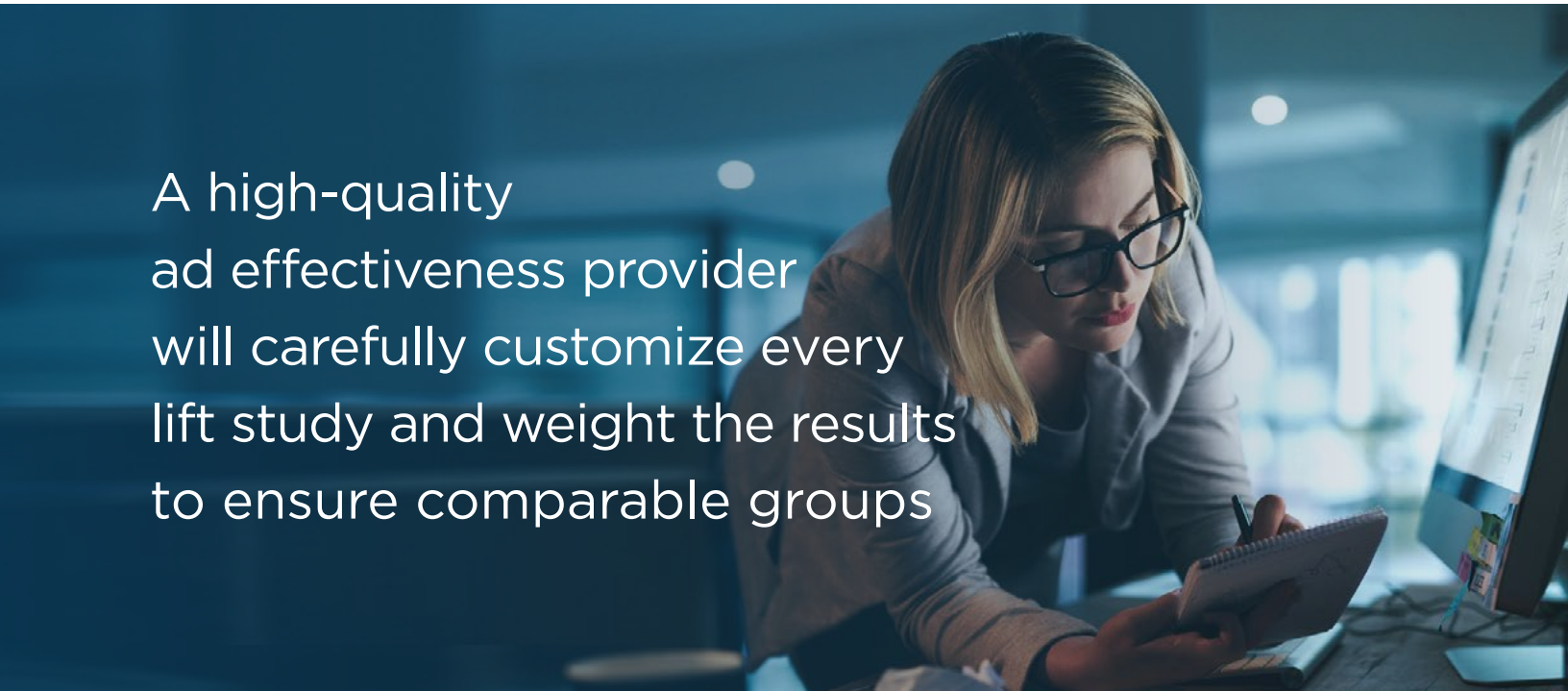




# Properly Balance Your Exposed and Unexposed Samples to Improve Ad Effectiveness

Test and Control methodology remains the gold standard for ad effectiveness testing, but it only works if your exposed and unexposed comparison groups are largely identical. In laboratory experiments this is accomplished by randomly selecting people from a common sample, dividing them into two groups, and “treating” only one of the groups. In this case, by definition, the only difference between your treatment and non-treatment group is the presence of the treatment – such as giving one group a medication and the other a placebo. With ad effectiveness, your media plan will largely determine who is exposed, so a group of unexposed individuals needs to be carefully collected to mirror the characteristics of the exposed. It is not enough, unfortunately, to simply select a control group from your campaign’s target (e.g. women 18-35) because targeting is also not a perfect technology. Every study must select a control group that looks demographically similar to the exposed respondents as they are collected.

Additionally, many studies will also have psychological or behavioral differences that need to be accounted for along with demographic differences. As an example, consider a major ad campaign for a Japanese automotive brand whose intent is to drive consumers to one of their locations. If the ad campaign has been targeted accurately to people who intend to buy a car in the next six months, that could create a difference between exposed and unexposed that will skew the results unless respondents are asked about such an intent. Further, if the two groups had a substantial underlying difference in their feelings about foreign vs. domestic automobiles, that would also cause discrepancies in the two groups that would obscure the measurement of the effect of the ad campaign itself. A high-quality ad effectiveness provider will carefully customize every lift study and weight the results to ensure comparable groups. That, in turn, will mean that the differences between the two groups will be primarily the effect of your ad campaign.



A high-quality ad effectiveness provider will carefully customize every lift study and weight the results to ensure comparable groups



# Measure Advertising Exposure Correctly for Better Insights

If your exposed group has unexposed members, or vice versa, your ad effectiveness study will give you poor results. In the digital advertising world, and increasingly with some forms of television, it is a relatively straightforward exercise to passively measure exposure to an ad campaign through the use of tags. Tags are short bits of code that fire when your ad is rendered on a screen, which can be identified to a specific respondent if that respondent has explicitly permitted us to do so. Ad campaigns often look very similar across different media, and peoples' memories are imperfect, thus direct ad recall has a fair amount of measurement error. Where it is possible to collect exposure data passively, that should always be done.

Where passive ad exposure collection is impossible, for example with cinema ads, care must be taken to write the best possible survey to reduce that measurement error. In this example, rather than just asking about what film was running you might also ask if the viewer was seated by the time the previews began and how engaged he/she generally is with preview ads.

**Where it is possible to collect exposure data passively, that should always be done**

When measuring exposure passively, it is also vital to consider time. The exposed group should receive their survey link within a few hours of exposure to limit the degree to which the exposure's effect may have worn out prior to taking the survey. Conversely, unexposed control sample may not have been exposed when selected but might receive an exposure directly after they receive a survey invitation, prior to taking the survey. In very large impression campaigns with great reach and high frequencies, this can be a real problem. If your control group has a substantial number of exposed individuals, it will result in underestimating the effectiveness of your ad campaign.



# Conclusion

While the topics covered here are certainly not the only factors to consider when conducting ad effectiveness measurement using survey tools, they combine to create the foundation necessary for high-quality, professional research. No advertising research that ignores any of the elements above is likely to be successful. Some other areas that will impact your campaign's performance include viewability (what percent of my impressions were seen?), targeting efficiency (what percent of my impressions were delivered to my intended audience?), and proper inference (do my data justify my claims?). Dynata has conducted thousands of advertising effectiveness studies and carefully considers these topics and more for each and every study so that we can deliver the best results possible for our clients.