

Newspapers: a fresh outlook



In recent years Irish newspapers have invested heavily to provide advertisers and agencies with more communications options and better ways to connect with their target audiences.

In Short

Almost 9 out of 10 are regular newspaper readers

More than 3 million adults or 87% of the population now read newspapers every week, according to the latest Joint National Readership Survey (JNRS). More than 2 million read a daily newspaper while 2.5 million read a Sunday title. Readership in almost all age groups is on the rise, in particular among younger people. "At a time when the economic crisis is generating an unprecedented appetite for in-depth news and analysis, it's significant that Irish newspapers are attracting thousands of new readers every month," said NNI's coordinating director Frank Cullen. "With more than 3 million reading newspapers every week, it makes sense for advertisers to place their product or service alongside the news stories that such a huge percentage of the population is reading," said Mr Cullen.

Irish reduction of paper waste "impressive"

The Irish newspaper industry has received international praise for its environmental efforts, with one of North America's leading conservation firms describing the strategy to reduce paper waste in this country as "impressive". In a report entitled 'Environmental Leadership in the Paper Supply Chain', Canada-based Markets Initiative praised National Newspapers of Ireland (NNI) for "taking the initiative and quickly effecting significant positive change" in the recycling of newspapers and the use of recycled newsprint.

Pressing the right buttons



As the recession continues to eat into advertising budgets, Dave Harland of the Omnicom Media Group says that newspapers are becoming an increasingly powerful tool in the battle for brand loyalty.

MY FATHER, a Belfastman and avid crossword-puzzler, loves his newspaper. He calls it his "daily dose of life" (honestly!), an outlook I imagine that's shared by most of Ireland's 3 million or so regular newspaper readers.

When I was invited to write this article, I rang my Dad and asked him what in particular he likes about 'his' newspaper. After a bit of thought, he told me there are six essential appeals.

He feels that the daily knowledge empowers him and gives him confidence as he feels "up to date" on what's happening.

He loves the relevance and the intimacy of the writers – "they're talking to me in a language I understand" – and this makes him feel both involved and challenged.

He appreciates the convenience and portability of the compact form, which contains such breadth of areas of interest. In addition, the nuggets of political and business analysis, sport and cultural news provide a platform for greater investigation on the web.

He relates to the tone of voice and feels right at home thanks to the familiarity of the layout and the ease of navigation.

He looks forward to seeing if his latest letter to the editor has been published and if, once again, his voice has been heard.

He loves the all-round entertainment and, as I mentioned, he looks forward to the daily challenge of the cryptic crossword.

I was struck by just how strongly he feels about this. He has chosen newspaper 'A' because of the specific reasons X, Y and Z. It's hard to imagine him switching to any other title.

This is interesting because, as a nation, Ireland simply devours newspapers. More than 87% of the adult population read newspapers every week (source: JNRS) – and the numbers are rising all the time.

These numbers, of course, have a significant bearing in the cut-throat marketing world, where the recession continues to force companies, both large and small, to reduce their advertising budgets.

At the heart of the marketing matter is this: newspapers, like no other medium, can cater for the sort of substantial reach and specific audience segmentation that companies as diverse as Paddy Power, Fáilte Ireland and Heineken are after. How?

Well, a surprisingly diverse range of audiences would echo what my father said: that a certain newspaper is "relevant" to them. They can relate. Even the more youthful types place newspapers squarely at the heart of their "sphere of influence" (source: ID Youth Survey).

This seems to be because, within the structure of the newspaper, there are a number of different sections of interest or 'rooms' that provide different types of content, and cater for different consumer needstates.

It's important to appreciate that these rooms are more than a simple noticeboard for an advertiser's message: the language used and the time and place of reading needs to be fully understood to unlock the emotional power of the

communication. For example, Renault's strong message of Safety and Eco-friendliness needs not only a more detailed explanation, but also the 'trusted' environment that newspapers provide.

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A whole range of considerations go into Renault's decision to place a certain ad on a certain page of a certain newspaper. Ultimately, what the company is looking for is effectiveness – that the medium will allow them to 'speak' directly and influence the people they want to speak to.

As the battle of the brands intensifies, there are a number of considerations for advertisers seeking to leverage the power of

press. Consider a regular series of ads. That means selecting not necessarily all, but the right mix of titles and establishing an effective frequency level over time that will help build a sense of familiarity or expectation from the target group.

Be consistent in the ad's design, but always consider disruptive shapes which set the brand apart. Our study into newspaper reading behaviour shows higher levels of appeal and attention for non-standard shapes (source: Clicktracking 2008), a strategy that Tesco has recently adopted successfully to stand out from the competition.

Secure a fixed and regular position in the newspaper and make it yours.

Context is king. Quite often, little consideration is taken over relevant placement as the page number becomes more important. This logic needs to be reviewed as, for example, an early (right-hand) page is only early if you read from the front!

In identifying the role of newspapers within the overall channel

mix, we need to consider the specific qualities of newspapers, e.g. their ability to convey detail, their personalization, their sensory impact and creative flexibility.

Aspire to using engaging language. As Howard Gossage has said: "People don't read advertising per se. They read what interests them. Sometimes, it's an ad." This approach was echoed in Chemistry's award-winning NNI series 'Various Sizes', which uses words, written in the first person, to tell engaging stories. In addition, the language tone or style used should always respect the context, so consider whether it is sensible to have different ads for different titles.

It may be obvious, but make sure that your creative team have been well briefed and resourced, and are allowed to produce pioneering advertising. A fine example of this is the 'Stains don't stand a chance' series of ads for the detergent Tide Ultra, which illustrates that even the more mundane product can shine in print – it won the 2008 World Press

Awards. Finally, the best ad campaigns will not only match the different contact points with different messages, they will also inspire conversations. As such, the real challenge for the marketer is to establish new ways of measuring effectiveness.

In Ireland, around one million newspapers are written, printed, packed up and distributed to every corner shop in the land, every single day, and all before dawn. If you stop for a moment to appreciate the logistical skills involved, coupled with the fact you get all that news and entertainment for less than the price of a glass of stout, you can see why every reader rates the value he gets in his daily dose of life.

Dave Harland is CEO of Omnicom Media Group (Ireland), the parent company of the two media communications firms OMD and PHD. Omnicom Media Group is the media services division of Omnicom Group, the leading global advertising, marketing and corporate communications company.

Advertising studies provide food for thought

A project conducted by the Newspaper Marketing Agency (NMA) in the UK has echoed the findings of a recent advertising effectiveness study carried out by NNI in Ireland – that "all major food brands should be using newspapers to build brands and drive sales".

The NMA's 'Stirring Stuff' project found that newspaper ads significantly boosted sales while promoting "emotional engagement" with a range of UK food brands including Shredded Wheat, Walkers crisps and Muller yoghurt.

In 2007, NNI's 'Press Builds Brands' study showed that press advertising increased brand awareness and retail sales of a range of small, indigenous brands including Glenisk and LifeFibre bread.

'Bad news' is not so bad as agencies continue to spend big

DAVID POWELL

ON THE surface, the news that Ireland's 18 national newspapers shed more than €50 million in advertising revenues last year could hardly be described as a shock.

Compared to other sectors, a decline in revenue of just 14% compared to 2007 is exactly as

one industry source put it: "not that bad, considering".

In fact, trapped inside the ostensibly negative advertising figures released by National Newspapers of Ireland (NNI) for last year is a good news story just waiting to get out.

The figures show that overall ad revenue dropped from €367 million in 2007 to €314 million last year. Direct (i.e. non-agency)

advertising was hardest hit, with the slump in the traditional 'cornerstones' of property, financial and recruitment ads contributing to a decline of 24% or €38 million.

While direct advertising – property mainly – took the proverbial hammering, the good news is that ad agencies are spending almost as strongly as ever. Indeed much to NNI's satisfaction, agency spending remained positively buoyant in

2008, with through-agency revenues of €192 million representing a drop of just 7%.

That newspapers are getting such a large slice of the agency cake reflects a greater appreciation of the strengths of the medium, particularly in the current climate. Agencies and their clients are tuning into the fact that newspapers have changed – more content and more colour means more

ways of connecting. "Agencies now account for more than 60% of our total advertising revenue, and the fact they spent more than €190 million on behalf of their clients in 2008 is very encouraging for all our titles," says NNI Chairman, Maeve Donovan.

"A strong agency spend suggests that more advertisers are turning their attention to newspa-

pers to fulfil a brand-building rather than selling role," she says. "More companies are recognising that press has the technological capacity and, more importantly, the emotional ability to establish personal contact with consumers."

"No other medium can provide advertisers with the same level of meaningful customer interaction, and that bodes well for us in these challenging times," says the NNI

Chairman. NNI is the representative association of Ireland's 18 national daily and Sunday newspapers.

Meanwhile, the big spenders in the annual NNI 'agency league table' for 2008 were also revealed, with Aegis Media once again coming out on top. Having spent a whopping €44.5 million on newspaper advertising last year, Aegis came in ahead of Group M

(€27.2m) in second place and Magna Ireland (€24.5m) in third spot.

Other strong performances were recorded by Publicis Groupe Media which upped its press spend by €3.6 million, OMD Ireland which increased its spend by 21.8%, and Focus Advertising which almost doubled its spend on press advertising to €1.5 million in 2008.



BIG SPENDERS: Last year Aegis Media invested more than €44 million on newspaper advertising, more than any other agency in Ireland. Pictured here is Maeve Donovan, Chairman of National Newspapers of Ireland (NNI), presenting the NNI 'Number 1 Agency' award for 2008 to the management of Aegis Media including (left to right) Gavan Byrne (Vizeum), Michael McCabe (Brindley Advertising), Liam McDonnell (Aegis Media) and Ciaran Cunningham (Carat Ireland).



FOCUS ON PRESS: Frank Cullen (right) of National Newspapers of Ireland presents the 2008 NNI award for Highest Percentage Increase in Spend to Daragh Cafferky, Managing Director of Focus Advertising. Focus Advertising spent almost €1.5m on press advertising in 2008, an increase of over 90% on its previous year's spend.



HIGHEST INCREASE: Eddie O'Mahony, Director of Publicis Groupe Media, accepts the award for 'Highest Increase in Spend' from NNI Chairman, Maeve Donovan. Publicis spent a total of €24.4 million on NNI advertising in 2008 – an increase of €3.6 million over the previous year.