# Getting Started: How to Measure Ad Effectiveness

FocusVision

Advertising shapes consumer opinion and builds brand awareness. It can also help brands tap into consumer emotion, arguably the biggest driver of brand selection. One of the most iconic commercials ever, Apple's 1984, cemented the company's revolutionary status and cast rival IBM as an imperial villain. The message was clear: Apple had arrived to bring disruption and innovation to the world of technology.
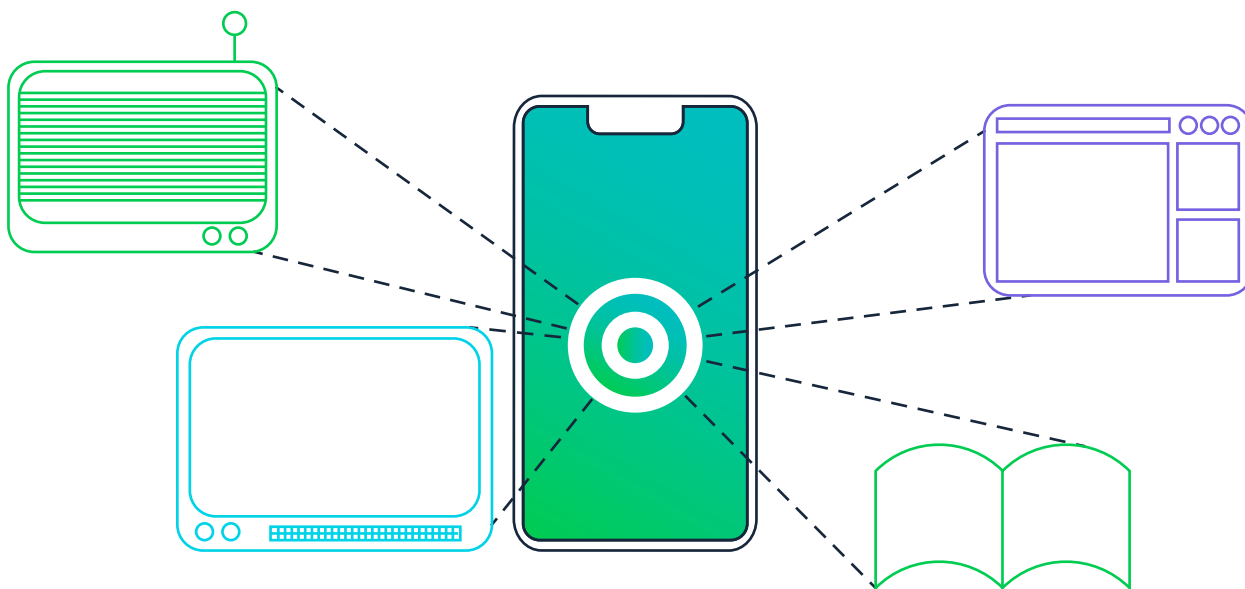
Before you drop big dollars on anything from a local print ad to a Super Bowl TV spot, it's worth measuring your ad's potential effectiveness. That is, testing to see if its intended message resonates with customers, and whether anything can improve its performance.

Copy test and ad tracking surveys are used to cover any medium, including radio, television, digital, outdoor, etc. These tests can help you answer questions like:

- Are people noticing the ads?
- How does the ad impact consumer perceptions of the featured brand?
- Is the ad memorable, and what do people like or dislike about it?
- Is the ad's main message getting through to consumers?
- Does it convince the consumer to act in any way?

With these objectives in mind, let's go through the key elements of ad testing and review some recommended question types. First, we will cover the copy test, which is a way to evaluate the effectiveness of an ad. A copy test allows you to pre-test an ad, so you can gather feedback and make adjustments before rolling it out to the broader market. Then, we will discuss ad tracking. Once the ad is in-market, ad tracking allows you to measure the ad's performance on brand impressions and audience reach.

Copy testing: 4 core elements

A typical copy test is broken down into four key sections:

1. Pre-exposure	**2.** Ad exposure	**3.** Post-exposure	**4.** Profiling questions
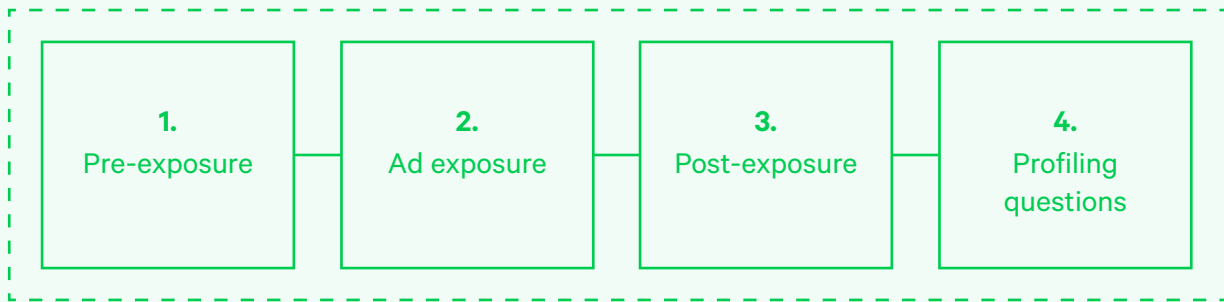
1. **Pre-exposure**

These questions measure consumer attitudes and impressions about a brand before they are exposed to advertising. The goal here is to get a baseline measure of consumer perceptions you want to impact through advertising. For instance:

- What is your overall opinion of the following brands?
- How interested are you in buying the following brands?

2. **Ad exposure**

Next, you want to expose people to the ad itself. Copy tests can be performed on any type of ad or media, including video, sound clip, text, print ad, etc. Here are a couple of different methods for ad display, depending on your goals:

- **Isolation display:** The ad is shown without any other stimuli. This allows the respondent to focus solely on the ad you want to learn about and answer detailed questions about it.

- **Clutter display:** The ad is shown in a realistic context, among other stimuli and advertisements. This lets you measure whether the ad is effective enough to break through the clutter and make an impression. While this method is good for tracking the overall impact of your ad, detailed feedback is often lacking. That's because respondents in this type of setting don't usually pay close attention to a single ad.

Video ad testing allows you to layer in additional techniques to capture respondent reactions:

- **Dial test:** While watching the video ad, respondents can move a slider to one pole or another, indicating how much they like or dislike the ad.
- **Eye tracking:** This technique provides valuable information on which parts of the ads are actually seen and command the most attention. Eye tracking is also a valuable tool to investigate brand placement.

3. Post-exposure

General ad feedback, recollection and reaction are captured. This measures the ad's overall impact and whether it caused the desired changes in respondent perceptions.

- What was your overall impression of the advertising?
- Was it memorable?
- What did you like or dislike about it?
- What was the main message behind the ad? What was it trying to communicate?
- How well do these attributes describe the ad? (selection criteria could include general emotional attributes, key brand attributes related to the ad, etc.)

It's valuable to repeat the pre-exposure questions here as well, to see if responses have changed following ad exposure.

4. Profiling questions.

People generally respond differently to an ad based on their existing attitudes and behaviors. For instance, someone who has just bought a home will naturally be more interested in a commercial about homeowners insurance. Thus, it is critical to understand each respondent's basic buying behaviors for the industry, brand and the competitors in question. Categories and examples of profiling questions include:

To understand general shopping behavior and brand affinity:

- How often do you shop?
- Which of the following brands do you shop for?
- Is buying this category of product currently on your to-do list?

To understand how price plays in purchase consideration:
Which of the following best describes your attitude towards making new product purchases?

- I only buy when something is on sale or offers a true bargain
- I look for deals first, but can't always wait for them
- I stick to what I need, but I am usually not swayed by prices
- I'm more swayed by what I want than the price tag

Using these basic copy testing building blocks, you'll be able to determine which of your ad concepts are most worth pursuing. In addition to providing excellent insights, this process saves valuable creative and production time. It's a proven technique used by well-oiled marketing machines who want to get closer to their audience and make the most of their budgets. With copy testing, you can better prepare and pre-test your ads before rolling them out to the broader market.
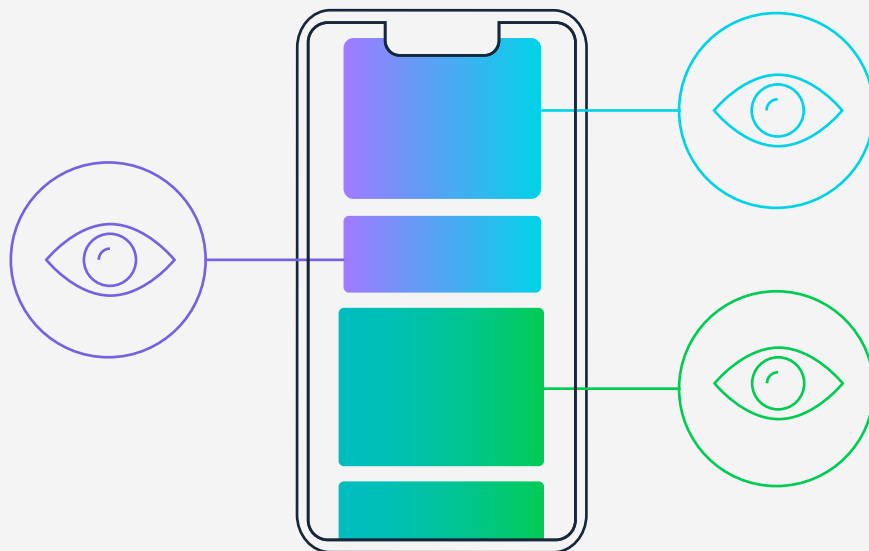
Ad Tracking

Once you are in-market with your ads, an ad tracking survey can serve as a diagnostic tool to measures the performance of your campaigns. Emphasis is placed on gathering feedback from the region and target customers where the marketing and advertising events take place.

Successful branding through marketing and advertising occurs over a sustained period and impacts customers over time. Therefore, ad tracking takes place by periodically surveying customers using a consistent set of ad and brand metrics. These metrics are tracked for improvements (or declines). Typically, advertisers are most interested in learning a) did anyone see the ad? b) was it effective? By addressing and monitoring these two areas of ad performance, advertisers can evaluate and modify their marketing plans to maximize audience reach and brand impact.

Ad tracking: Ad Awareness

An ad must have some measure of market visibility before making an impact. Breaking through the clutter of all the other marketing, advertising, entertainment, and content options available to today's digital consumers is not easy. Increasing advertising spend can improve ad awareness. But engaging and smartly placed marketing also matters.

Measuring ad awareness is done in a few ways ranging from an overall assessment to looking at specific events. A general question can track a company's advertising awareness

> **What casual dining restaurants have you seen or heard advertised in the last week?**

Inquiring about different channels can confirm whether specific sources of advertising are meeting awareness expectation.

> **Earlier in the survey, you indicated you have seen marketing or advertising from Joe's Tavern in the last week. Where do you remember seeing marketing or advertising from Joe's Tavern?**

If your ad budget is large enough, specific campaigns can generate awareness among the broader audience. In this case, it is worthwhile to track the effectiveness and performance of each event. You may have a specific slogan:

> **Have you seen or heard the phrase: "Eat well, be happy." in any advertising?**
>
> **What company uses it?**

Or a specific radio ad:

> **Have you heard of the radio commercial from Joe's Tavern that starts with two men eating a burger? Both argue over which burger they think is better: Joe's Tavern's Deluxe or the Supreme. The commercial then ends with the jingle "Eat well, be happy." Have you heard of this ad on the radio?**
>
> **What is your overall impression of it?**
>
> **How many times have you heard it?**

Your ad awareness questions are going to differ depending on the nature of your marketing and advertising tactics. But however you do it, tracking awareness is the first step towards evaluating the in-market effectiveness of your ads. Without awareness, it's not possible to affect change or have an impact on brand perceptions, so tracking, evaluating, and getting this right is important to any successful marketing program.
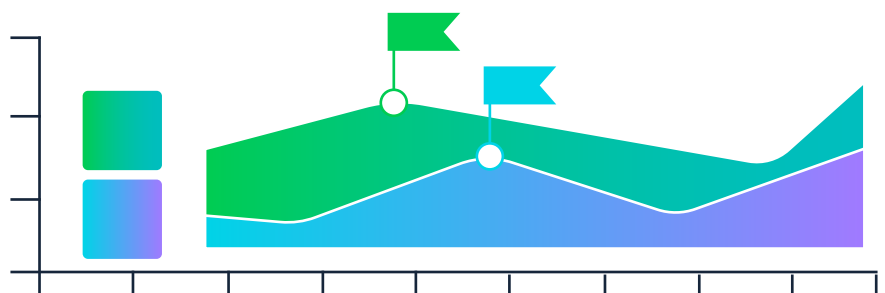
Ad Effectiveness

Beyond awareness, is the ad impacting brand impressions? Are brand perceptions moving in the right directions? Are the desired brand attributes improving or affecting competitors in the desired way? While ad awareness metrics can tell you if your ads are reaching an audience, now you want to know whether they are effective. When surveying customers, ad awareness metrics should be tracked in concert with brand health metrics.


Figure 1.

In a blog, we discussed the importance of regularly measuring your brand's health. Brand health metrics such as brand purchase intent or specific brand attributes (e.g. "Has the best value menu" or "Excellent customer service") are important to track as an ongoing way to measure your business performance. Understanding the in-market effectiveness of your advertising is achieved by overlaying these brand health metrics with your ad awareness metrics. By aligning multiple data points together, this can paint a picture of not only how your brand is performing but what is impacting perceptions (e.g. specific events, advertising or marketing activities)

Figure 1 for instance, shows how brand perceptions for Joe's Tavern have improved in the last quarter of the year. This coincides with their ad campaign "Eat well. Be happy" Not only was the radio commercial well-liked, but also highly recognized during in-market testing. Taken together, this provides compelling evidence that the ad campaign was a successful one, achieving the desired result for the brand.

Putting it all together

Ad testing is a multi-pronged effort of gathering survey feedback from your customers in order to execute and deliver effective marketing and advertising campaigns. Pre-testing your ad concepts using a copy test method can help ensure that you go to market with the best possible ad. Then once you are in-market, you should continue to monitor how it is performing in terms of building awareness and perception of your brand. A survey program that regularly solicits feedback from customers enables you to learn, gather insight, and make in-market adjustments. That way you can get the most out of your advertising dollars and grow your brand.
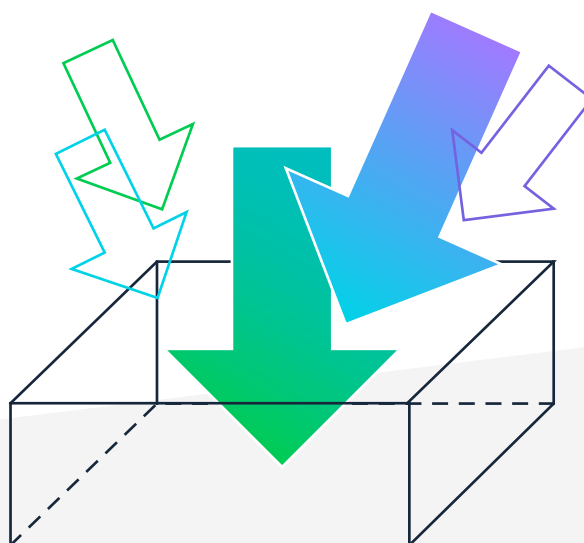
FocusVision Decipher

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