Chapter 4: Omnichannel Advertising
WINNING CREATIVE STRATEGIES

The goal of digital advertising is to create an experience that engages prospects and customers very quickly -- users now spend an average of just 1.7 seconds looking at mobile content, according to McKinsey & Company -- while still providing them with the value they seek. In fact, 86% of marketers agree that it's become harder to hold a consumer's attention due to the phenomenon of "distracted viewing," where consumers are viewing two screens simultaneously.

In our data-driven marketing landscape, creative assets are often an afterthought to overall strategy. What if creative assets were instead used to build marketing strategy? Compelling, insightful, captivating creative should be one of the foundational pillars of effective advertising. Great creative can lift media performance and help to maximize outcomes. In this fourth e-book in Choozle's series on omnichannel marketing, we explore best practices in digital ad creative, formats and sizes.

What is the toll of distracted viewing on advertisers?

Research by AOL and Nielsen found that only 23% of distracted TV viewers could recall a brand's advertisement, compared to 83% of undistracted viewers.

FULL FUNNEL CREATIVE

Choozle continues to stress the importance of a full funnel approach to omnichannel marketing – and advertising creative is no exception. Content creation should target each stage of the marketing funnel and align with the funnel stage being targeted (i.e., top=branding, middle=consideration, bottom=conversion).

To maximize impact on funnel performance, start by defining campaign goals and building creative assets around them. Campaign goals should be clear to all agency stakeholders, from marketing manager to art director to media buyer. Having creative assets for each funnel stage ready right from the start of the campaign will make execution more seamless. New creative can simply "plug and play" into campaigns as prospects move deeper into the funnel.

With this in mind, the focus should be on [building a library of creative assets](#) and then refining them based on funnel stage. By generating a high volume of creative iterations, marketers can react quickly to market changes, personalize messages for targeted audiences, and include time for testing to optimize media budget ROI. Here are four simple recommendations for asset development across channels that will align brand messaging throughout the customer journey:

Be compelling: Ads should be eye-catching enough to attract attention. Use faces and clear text. The call to action (CTA) should stand out.

Be concise: A prospect can see the ad at any given time for a moment – make the message stick.

Be clear: Don't clutter the ad with too much text – users can click to the landing page for more information.

Be intentional: Think through the behavior or action the end user should take throughout the funnel as a result of the ad message.

While consumer audiences tend to respond to emotional triggers, B2B audiences respond to values. Make sure ad creative contributes to the positive perception of the client's brand in the industry. B2B display, social media or search ads should all demonstrate the brand's expertise, cost effectiveness, and quality. And, the messages and the tactics should complement each other to create a seamless customer experience. Creative messaging can inform channel choices, as well as how to reach target audiences.

Don't overcomplicate the design work, either. It's easy to cram too much into a small space. Simplicity is a better approach. It makes it easier to take in a message, digest the information, and respond to a CTA. Also remember that the B2B buying cycle is longer. A prospect is less likely to click on an ad and convert as quickly as a consumer. Instead, they may see the ad, make a mental note, and keep the ad in mind for when it's more useful to them.

IS YOUR CREATIVE A "THUMB STOPPER"?

Thumb stoppers are social media ads that are so eye-catching and intriguing, that the user stops scrolling to read them. Although there's no surefire formula for creating thumb-stopping content, there are some tried-and-true tactics that can help. Here are three:

1. Be aware of the impact of any photos or graphics used. Make sure design elements naturally draw the reader's eye towards the focus of the ad (e.g., a CTA button or message). Chaotic creative can struggle to convert.
2. Make the next-step action obvious. The ad's goal is to entice the audience to act, whether that's a website visit, download or demo sign-up.
3. CTA buttons should stand out from the rest of the ad. Use a contrasting, eye-catching color and make sure that copy is legible.

AD FORMATS

There are many effective format options for advertising creative throughout the marketing funnel, including:

Audio: MP3 format; 15-, 30- and 60-second lengths (about 70 words).

Digital video: Shorter videos (5 or 15 seconds) lead to higher completion rates – but less time to tell a story. Be quick and to the point. Completion rates can fall as much as 50 percent for a 90-second video versus a 15-second video.

Display: GIF, JPEG/JPG, PNG, or HTML5 for desktop, mobile, and tablet.

Native: JPEG/JPG, PNG, image, logo, header, body, CTA; 1.91:1 aspect ratio.

In an omnichannel strategy, image choices across display, retargeting, social and search include static images or banners, gifs and rich media. Each has its advantages, according to channel and funnel stage (see Figure 1).

AD SIZES

Whether programmatic display, search or social media, there are also clear winners when it comes to ad sizes. Choozle's 2022 Mid-Year Key Findings & Results report found that the ad sizes offering the highest CTR versus CPM across both mobile and desktop devices were 160x600 and 300x600. Other ad sizes that performed well on desktops were 728x90 and 300x50. Some assumptions behind the CTR success of larger ad sizes are that the ads can convey more information or compelling imagery, as well as take up more of the screen's landscape.

When choosing mobile ad sizes, remember that each campaign is unique. The type and size of any specific creative may perform much better in one campaign than another, depending on the tactics used and the goals set. It's important to ensure, however, that creative is engaging and readable across all ad sizes. An ad designed and previewed on a larger desktop screen might look great, but can it be read by customers scrolling through a mobile feed?

The most effective omnichannel campaigns use these ad sizes to scale. Marketers can also maximize ad impact by balancing smaller creative sizes with larger sizes. Larger creatives will drive a higher CTR and that engagement will start to bleed over for other creative sizes once brand recognition is developed.

Figure 1: Digital ad graphics: static image vs. gif vs. rich media

STATIC IMAGE

- .jpg or .png
- Works best for social media, search, email
- Short, direct text
- Strong CTA that stands out from the text
- Include bright colors

GIF

- Animated
- Works best for display/retargeting
- Text that is interesting, informative
- Include logos, borders to stand out from the webpage
- CTA in every frame
- Be aware of site restrictions on strobing or other visual effects
- Consider frame speed for readability

RICH MEDIA

- Interactive
- Works best for display/retargeting and mobile
- Use dynamic and custom messaging
- Interactivity can drive deeper engagement
- Make expand/close buttons easy to use

TEST, TEST, TEST

It is absolutely essential to test and experiment with ad creative and formats across an omnichannel media plan to see what drives engagement and action throughout the funnel. It is the only way to get an accurate impression of what works and what doesn't. Before testing, create a clear testing plan or roadmap that outlines what to test, when to test and what should be learned from the tests. Then, set up A/B tests to compare minor and/ or major alterations between ads. Test copy, fonts, colors, CTA buttons, graphics, photos, positioning, and offers. Try running two creative variations simultaneously to assess the best performance or test multiple ad formats (e.g., static, carousel or video ads).

Experiment across engagement capabilities. For example, test elements that simplify and shorten the marketing funnel, such as fast and seamless connections between mid-funnel social media ads and an online order form.

END-OF-CHAPTER THOUGHTS

Although no two buyer journeys are exactly alike, compelling creative can leverage key moments, when prospects are demonstrating purchase intent, to drive revenue-based actions that really matter. **Screen positioning, size, animation, color, headline, and relevant content all impact marketing ROI.**

Develop a customer-first approach to every aspect of omnichannel advertising. Understand the target audience by knowing whether or not the customer would want this particular ad message and format embedded in this specific channel? Experiment across advertising creative, formats, and sizes. The result will be more relevant creative that increases long-term customer value.

More tips for great display ad creative

- Distinguish display ads from normal webpage content: If the ad has a white background, use a border to ensure it stands out on the page.

- Place rich media or interactive display ads above the fold: You can increase clickthroughs by nearly one quarter of a percent.

- Choose easy-to-read fonts: Sans serif fonts are more web friendly, but be sure to follow business and brand style guidelines.

- Use eye catching animation: But avoid blinking, flashing, fast moving or brightly colored animations – they can be harmful to people with medical conditions.

- Get creative with buttons: Go beyond the typical "learn more" or "shop now" to encourage clicks.

- Utilize a mix of common and uncommon creative sizes: You'll win a wider variety of ad inventory