

Media score cards - so wrong

 By [Chris Brewer](#)

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Last week I discussed [media planning bias](#) and it appears to have hit a few raw nerves, judging from the emails and phone calls I received.

Well, if the existence of "bias" upsets some sensibilities, then the subject of "scoring" media (which I'm writing about today) might result in a little frothing at the mouth in some offices.

I've said many times before, on different platforms, that judging a media schedule on numbers alone is basically unsound and that there is something fundamentally wrong in trying to "score" the performance of a particular medium as you would a cricket match.

Every single medium brings its own values to the party. For example, one medium may not have a huge following yet possess massive influence within the exact Target Market Group (TMG) you wish to reach.

There is also an extremely unhealthy attitude in South African media circles, which assumes that a well-scored media schedule is doing a better job than one with a lower score. It doesn't matter which method of scoring is used - GRPs (Gross Rating Points), OTS (Opportunities To See), ARs (Audience Rating point), amongst others - to deduce that one schedule is better than another based purely on numbers is clearly absolute nonsense.

Well, perhaps not **absolute** nonsense, but certainly of little value **when it comes to decision time**.

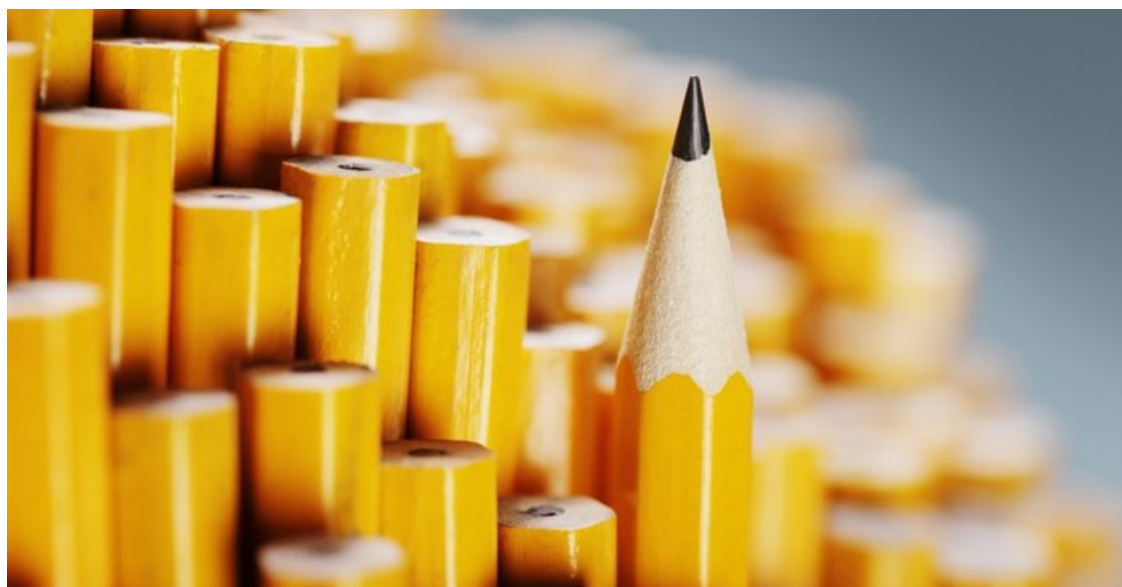
The only "score" that really matters is the amount in the cash register. That, and only that, should be the concern of planners and buyers.

Therefore, during the planning process, the smart people look at the total audience (reach) and will also drill down through whatever information is available and pertinent at the time, to discover the **relevance** of that audience to his own defined TMG.

They will also summarise a whole host of other factors, such as how much frequency can be achieved within the budget, the psychographics of the audience, how many readers are "wasted readers", the promotional opportunities or availability of editorial support, and so forth.

It's not just about a "score" - that's the point.

Sadly, in many cases, it's clear that sometimes we don't have the sharpest pencils in the box working on our side.



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For example, recently (many times, actually) the AMPS report has revealed that audiences were, in fact, lower than previously stated. This prompted all kinds of silly responses.

One well known media director was quoted as saying "...decreased audience levels will mean increasing the media investment to maintain previous reach levels." How this chap was ever promoted beats me, because it's absolute twaddle.

What was confusing him was that the **score** had decreased. The audience hadn't changed at all, it's just that the collation of data had been adjusted so the numbers of readers were published as being lower - **but they were the same as before, and after, the survey!**

Surely that's not a difficult concept to grasp?

But he was so wrapped up in the "media plan score" that he missed the realities of life.

He also missed out that the ABC (Audit Bureau of Circulations) certificates showed no substantial decrease in printed/sold copies - it was just the readership calculation that had been incorrect.

Research will ALWAYS be wrong - but it is of enormous importance if we can keep it **consistently** "wrong" because then, guess what, it will be "right"! It sounds stupid I know, but just think about it.

In other words, if we measure data in the same way every year we will be able to monitor a **trend**. This trend will tell us all kinds of things and (this is important) it doesn't matter if the actual number of readers is inaccurate - provided we collect the same information in the same way every time.

This kind of "performance myopia" will always occur when planners live in the ethereal world of number-crunching. Where do these so-called "experts" come from? Beats me.

But while they persist in this stupid game, a great number of extremely worthy media will be overlooked (and even forced out of business) because "they don't have the numbers."

This kind of attitude is extremely bad for the industry. It stifles growth and diversification whilst denying us the ability to take advantage of improving technology and highly-specialised media.

It has to be stopped.

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