

From shotguns to snipers: The move to individualised targeting

By [Quinton Jones](#)

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Much like the gamer playing the latest in the *Call of Duty* franchise, marketers today are able to change between weapons, moving from shotgun to sniper capabilities with ease.



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The shotgun has always been available—it has been the weapon of choice. It did the job, but was clumsy and at the same time came with a considerable amount of wastage. With the development of digital and mobile it has brought the sniper rifle into focus. Marketers now seek to refine targeting at scale and cut down on wastage.

As media strategists, we've always been talking about the individual. He has always been the average of a very broad market. Most often, we knew what he was like. We gave him a name—"Meet Gary", and we showed our understanding of who Gary was, what he consumed and his habits, through a very thorough, but often generic "Day in the Life" depiction. We didn't always know if it was actually Gary responding, but it was someone like him, someone in LSM 8–10.

The approach has always been horizontal—use television, OOH, radio etc. Reach as many people as you can. Drive awareness, drive the funnel, and the more we reach in a particular market, the more likely we will deliver sales/results. (That is of course the targeting and the message are right.) Hmm, this was seemingly very much more art than science, methinks!

Vertical and predictive targeting

We have quickly moved to vertical targeting. We are now targeting individuals. The end goal must be to have so much intelligence through relationships and continual learning that we know what you want before you want it, and are able to deliver it to you with ease.

Mobile and location tracking have brought us precise targeting. Targeting is personalised, intimate, timed, relevant, efficient and possibly most importantly, localised. We are able to build communities of interest and manage long-term engagement and relationships through remarketing.

Context and understanding are critical

A comedian telling a joke understands the audience. They understand the sensitivities of the audience and realise the perfect time to deliver and just how far they can go to get the best response. If you are a recipient of a message and cannot figure out a message because your vocabulary is limited, you miss out on the entire meaning of a message.

Personally, I think that advertising and the introduction of a brand is always intrusive. The trick is to introduce the brand as seamlessly as possible, when it is able to solve a problem and add benefit to the consumer. Native advertising drives advertisers to develop engaging content that resonates with consumers, which they want to interact with and share. It's not just about volume but about the depth of the vertical and the best results come from going deeper and building credibility with niche, special interest audiences. The thing is, you will still need numbers to succeed.

Insights and intelligence

The fact is, the more we know about individuals and the narrower we address the targeting, the less we need to rely on often generic industry-based research. This is very relevant at a time where the Establishment Survey being introduced has dropped LSM as a measurement demographic. Roots still can help at store level, but marketers need to build their own intelligence. We are moving from "have purchased shoes in the past three months" to "What did you buy? What colour was it? What style?" Or "We know you wanted to buy but just didn't follow through." Brands that know the most are able to use the knowledge to make tactical adjustments to campaigns; are the ones that will win.

Moving forward

The past was about descriptive analytics, describing what has already taken place. The future is advanced analytics, specifically using predictive and real-time analytics in pursuit of business goals, such as improving the customer experience, improving products and services, and reducing costs and churn. Individualised modelling, if you wish. Targeting individuals at scale and with context is the future of media.

Reading through the above you might be convinced that I think that "traditional media" no longer has a place. Nothing could be further from the truth. Reach of a target market in volume is always valuable. There are parameters that might limit the use of digital as a sole solution for market segments and situations.

My best advice to marketers and strategists is, don't be blinded—use the shotgun and the rifle at the same time if it's the best option. Always build intelligence. Plan holistically using each medium for its strength but also make sure that the collective delivers. At the end of the day, the only thing that matters and determines success is sales. Has this actually worked? Has it changed my business? Have I maximised value and results within my budget while enhancing the brand?

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