

Editor's Desk

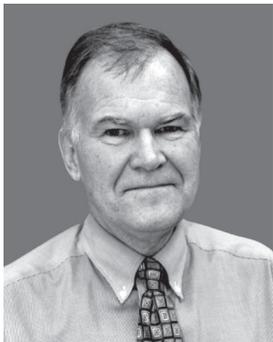
What Do We Know

About Segmentation and Targeting?

JOHN B. FORD

Editor-in-Chief,
Journal of Advertising

Research
Eminent Scholar and
Professor of Marketing
and International
Business,
Strome College of
Business, Old Dominion
University
jbford@odu.edu



In the digital age, precision in segmentation and targeting has immense potential. But more information doesn't necessarily translate into better information, and there are many questions about the quality of big data. In the first of a series of papers in a special "What We Know about Segmentation and Targeting" section, "**Precise Targeting Foiled by Imprecise Data: Why Weak Data Accuracy and Coverage Threaten Advertising Effectiveness**" (please see page 133), insists "there has been very little research about missing and misidentifying consumers when using commercially available target segments for digital campaigns." Sequent Partners authors Alice K. Sylvester and Jim Spaeth find that inaccurate targeting creates significant problems in consumer negative sentiment as well as hurting return on advertising investment.

Exploring the issue of effective coverage, they further argue that "brands struggle to reach enough of their target population given crippling media fragmentation." The data dilemma is complicated, moreover, by difficulties created by using surnames and geographic locations to target particular ethnic groups—a problem that can compromise research within culturally mixed families and groups with ethnic geographic dispersion

The authors suggest that brands protect themselves by

- demanding that vendors show evidence of correct segment identification,
- defend their definitions of accuracy, and
- validate key groups and increase coverage.

In "**Straight to the Heart of Your Target Audience: Personalized Advertising Systems Based on Wearable Technology and Heart-Rate Variability**" (please see page 137), authors Davide C. Orazi (Monash University) and Greg Nyilasy (University of Melbourne) focus on the importance of the

match between the advertisement message content and the personal condition and/or emotional state of the audience.

The authors write that "sensor technology integrated into wearables can capture the audience's emotions through biometric features extraction—most importantly, heart-rate variability—paving the way for interactive, personalized advertising systems that allow for temporal segmentation and targeting."

They further discuss the nature of commercially available smartwatches and other wearable devices with sensors that can capture heart-rate variability. Such wearable devices, they propose, offer two benefits: For one, they provide continual recording of biometric information and, second, they offer the potential to create digital interfaces that match content to biometrics.

The third paper in the special section examines different models for segmentation. "**How Do Human Attitudes and Values Predict Online Marketing Responsiveness? Comparing Consumer Segmentation Bases toward Brand Purchase and Marketing Response**," (please see page 142)—by Stefan Scheuffelen, Jan Kemper, and Malte Brettel (all from RWTH Aachen University)—uses survey data from 3,219 German consumers from a Europe-based online retailer along with 163,000 clicks from their consumer database. The research explores the results of three different segmentation models:

- human-value based;
- fashion-attitude based;
- online shopping-attitude based.

The authors believe "this study applies and validates the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy to segmentation research." To that end, they find that "attitudes appear to produce better results than human values" and that "fashion

attitudes produced much better results than online-shopping attitudes.”

One caveat: “Segmentation bases often are chosen *ad hoc* and based on mere data availability.” To guard against such concerns, the paper advises that “practitioners should identify the expected findings and then choose the most appropriate base.”

“Adolescent Perceptions of Black-Oriented Media: ‘The Day Beyoncé Turned Black’—Can Black-Oriented Films and TV Programs Be Marketed More Broadly?” (please see page 158) utilized data from 1,000 non-Hispanic African-American respondents and 990 non-Hispanic Caucasian respondents to assess their perceptions of the targeting audiences for black-oriented media. Authors Morgan E. Ellithorpe (Michigan State University), and Michael Hennessy and Amy Bleakley (both from the University of Pennsylvania) identified adolescents ages 14–17 years, and, as expected, black adolescents were found to “distinguish between black-oriented and mainstream media in terms of to whom they expect such content is targeted.”

The paper further found that black adolescents reflected strong ethnic identities. By contrast, the research found that white adolescents reported that they did not have much exposure to black-oriented media. Moreover, the authors found that there was “a disconnect between perception and behavior, such that white adolescents often perceive black-oriented media as being for them, yet they still do not watch it”—potentially the result of the fact that “white

adolescents do not receive as many marketing messages about the black-oriented content as black adolescents do.”

For marketing practitioners, the study shows there may be an opportunity here to target content more broadly. The authors conclude that “encouraging authentic diversity of race, perspective, and culture in mainstream media is a worthy goal, and it may be that black-oriented and other target-specific content really can be for everyone.”

One important target audience seems to have been left out of segmentation/targeting research—a failing addressed in **“How Advertisers Can Target Arab E-Consumers More Effectively: A Framework for Localizing Digital Advertising and Marketing Content to Arab E-Consumers”** (please see page 171). Authors Mamoun Benmamoun and Nitish Singh (both from Saint Louis University), and Rana Sobh (Qatar University) conducted two studies: one exploring localization themes through focus groups with Arabs from Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Palestine, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt, (and a few participants of Indian and Pakistani descent)—and the other surveying just Qatar and UAE residents about website preferences. From these interviews, they learned that “website localization and cultural customization of Arabic digital content can influence Arab e-consumers’ purchase intention.”

Case in point: The research found that Arabic millennials are an important target audience for e-commerce, and that global

digital advertisers and marketers effectively can connect with them by “imbuing digital content with local cultural values and markers.”

The final paper in the “Segmentation and Targeting” package explores different mechanisms for promoting anti-drunk-driving messages. **“Positive versus Negative Messaging in Discouraging Drunken Driving: Matching Behavior Consequences with Target Groups”** (please see page 185) questions whether the negative tone of fear—so dominant in such communications—is the most effective way to engage consumers.

Authors Lefa Teng (Jiangnan University), Guangzhi Zhao (Loyola University Maryland) and Yuanyuan Wu, Hongyu Fu, and Jiajing Wang (all from Jiangnan University) conducted two studies involving adult Chinese respondents and found that “a negative message of DUI (driving under the influence) is the most effective when it is coupled with social consequences of DUI ... (and) actually is more powerful than the common approach, whereby negative physical consequences are highlighted.” The study further found “a positive message frame can be quite potent at dissuading people from drinking and driving when coupled with the financial or physical consequences of DUI.”

As the *Journal of Advertising Research* continues to grow and evolve, as always, I welcome your feedback.