

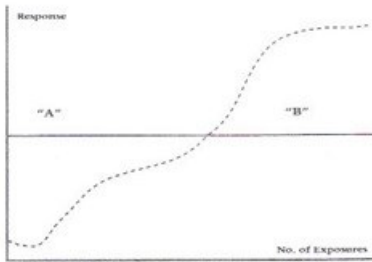
# Reach and frequency

By  Chris Brewer

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Last week I wrote mainly about [marketing wastage](#), which ended in a brief discussion about "response".

This is where sales (or whatever it is that we're measuring) can be plotted on a "response curve" which will hopefully indicate, amongst other things, when no further investment in advertising exposure can be justified due to diminishing returns.



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Here is a simple graph. "Response" is on the vertical axis and "number of exposures (advertisement messages)" on the horizontal.

Clearly, underperformance will occur when exposures are restricted to a point at the left of 'A' in the diagram or are saturated at the right of 'B'. Any amount short, or in excess, of the optimum threshold can be considered as 'wastage' or, at least, cost-inefficient.

Generally speaking, the wastage created by over-spending is less serious than that created by under-spending. It may take a few moments for that to sink in because it sounds contradictory at first.

Under-spending probably means you've missed a chunk of your Target Market Group (TMG) whilst over-spending is, at worst, inefficient - assuming, of course that you're not spending more than you can afford.



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So how is wastage overcome? What opportunities exist for reaching optimum levels?

There are no really clear cut answers to these questions and they will continue to be an enigma in the media-planning process.

There are many analytical tools that claim to resolve the main concerns. Some are good and some are questionable.

In terms of media planning, in its pure sense, there is sufficient data, at least, to control some of the wastage. By this I mean circulation certification and readership surveys, for example.

In terms of response and impact (reach and frequency), it is less easy - although there is an amazing tool called "Telmar", which performs absolutely amazing calculations. No media planner should be without access to this remarkable program.

There are schools of thought, and it is the practice of some advertising agencies, which seek to discover the response curve of a specific campaign and, with this knowledge, attempt to predict what will happen at variable expenditure levels. A real-life visionary, if you will.

Superficially, this procedure appears sensible, but advertising is an inconclusive and inexact science. Axiomatically, any conclusion drawn will be questionable.

Just when you think you have it all worked out, hey presto, somebody moves the goalposts and you have to start all over again. So beware of those who tell you that you're going to meet a tall dark stranger.

Generally speaking, however, the modern day planner has access to a wealth of information and data - from AMPS and TAMS and the like, in addition to the Telmar analyses.

Being able to arrive at total numbers is therefore not as difficult as it may first appear, providing care is taken.

But before media planners become obsessed with bottom-line numbers, they would do well to remember the wise words of a deliciously flamboyant PR lady called Pam Trevelyan who said "count the total disposable income first, darling - then count the numbers."

When you think about it, she was absolutely right.

Read my blog ([brewersdroop.co.za](http://brewersdroop.co.za)) or see what other amazing things we do at [brewers.co.za](http://brewers.co.za)

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## ABOUT CHRIS BREWER

Having joined the ad industry in London, Chris Brewer spent most of his career in media analysis and planning - but has performed just about every advertising task from Creative to Research. He's an honorary lifetime member of the Advertising Media Association and regularly advises agencies and clients regarding their media plan costs and strategies. He is also often asked to talk at industry functions. Email: [chris@brewers.co.za](mailto:chris@brewers.co.za). Twitter: [@brewersapps](https://twitter.com/brewersapps). Read his blog: [www.brewersdroop.co.za](http://www.brewersdroop.co.za)

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