How Australian marketers are using data to develop high-impact ad creative

More advertisers than ever are making data a key part of their creative executions. Our research shows that well over half of Ad Age's Global 100 advertisers now use data-driven creative. Here, Google's Rhys Williams explains why and how leading brands use data to drive their marketing campaigns.

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We live in a world where people are exposed to literally thousands of marketing messages every day. Breaking through the noise requires engaging consumers with relevant, personalised creative at the right moment and in the right place.

Advertisers and media buyers have long used data to set budgets and optimise campaigns, but data hasn't always been regarded as an essential part of the creative process. That's changing in a big way. Instead of simply looking at campaigns as a function of strong creative + media, more advertisers than ever are using data to drive creative development. The new brand marketing formula = **data + creative + media**. In the past year, we've seen a 74% increase in the number of the top 100 Australian advertisers that use data signals to deliver relevant display ads to consumers, a technique also known as "data-driven creative."

Using data to inform creative can help Australian and New Zealand brands meet consumers' expectations by delivering more relevant and useful messages at every stage of the purchase funnel. Local brands, such as Qantas, Fly Buys, and Toyota, are already seeing that data-driven creative delivered through programmatic marketing isn't just more efficient—it's far more effective.

Data-driven creative uses data signals to drive real impact

Data-driven creative involves processing real-time data signals using a platform such as DoubleClick to develop and deliver display ads that are relevant to a user's environment. Data signals can come from all sorts of places:

- **Business data:** flight times, stock levels, hotel rooms, trending products
- **First-party data:** CRM, website visits
- **Audience data:** demographics, interests, purchase intent
- **Contextual data:** site, device, keywords
- **Environmental data:** weather, traffic

Brands can use any of these signals to inform the development and delivery of highly relevant display ads.

Best practices for getting the most out of data-driven creative

Some of Australia and New Zealand's biggest brands are seeing the impact of making data a key part of their marketing campaigns. Based on their examples, here are some best practices for putting data to work in the creative process:

1) Understand available data, then select the right signals

A wide range of data beyond CRM and market research can be used to tailor ad creative. Collect all the available data about your target audience before deciding which insights are the most important to use during creative development.

When developing a programmatic campaign for Toyota, the brand's media and creative agencies got together with the marketing team to plan which data signals to use for targeting. Along with using Toyota's own data for remarketing to past website visitors, the teams decided to use Google's in-market auto intenders data for prospecting. The campaign featured several different car models from Toyota, and by targeting audiences based on their purchase intent for certain vehicles, Toyota ensured that the most relevant car model was served to everyone.
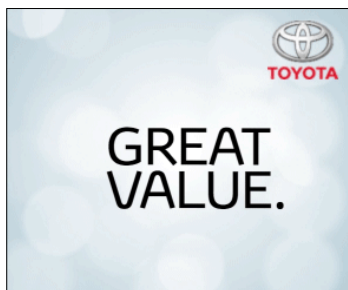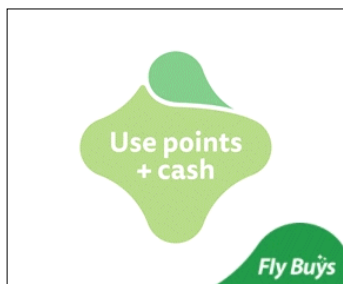

This ad is illustrative of the creative used. The offer shown is no longer available.

The campaign led to a huge boost in engagement, and Toyota now uses dynamic creative across a wide range of their display activity.

2) Work with creative teams to develop data-informed strategies

Data needs to be a part of creative strategy meetings from the get-go. One effective approach is to get the whole team together early in the process to map out goals and a data-based strategy that draws on everyone's expertise.

When MBM New Zealand was developing a campaign for the loyalty programme Fly Buys, the creative team was involved from the start. Using customer data allowed the team to develop tailored campaign creative for each consumer based on their product browsing histories and available loyalty points.

This ad is illustrative of the creative used. The offer shown is no longer available.

The data-driven approach led to significant cost savings and record-breaking reward point redemptions. Fly Buys' head of marketing described the brand's tailored approach as "the most cost-effective measurable digital reward redemption campaign that we've ever run."

3) Collaborate from start to finish

Running a campaign with siloed media and creative teams prevents communication and transparency. It's important to keep all agencies involved throughout the campaign process and ensure that feedback can be efficiently given, received, and implemented. By keeping everyone involved, you can tap the analytical capabilities of multiple stakeholders.

The media specialists at Red Planet collaborated closely with Qantas' marketing team and creative agency partner Slik from start to finish. This ensured that data-driven media strategies were complemented with data-driven creative.

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Serving the right message to the right audience at the right moment resulted in a 50% increase in click-through rates for Qantas' ads, and dynamic creative is now used for 90% of Red Planet's programmatic campaigns for Qantas.

Data can help marketers tell better stories

While data has revolutionised the creative process, it's important to remember that many established marketing principles still apply. To make data as effective as possible, brands still need a genuine insight and story to share with consumers.

By understanding their audiences and what they care about, marketers can start sorting through their data and realise its value as a driver of rather than a crutch to the creative process.

Rhys Williams
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