

Metrics Brand Advertisers Care About— Introducing Brand Exposure Duration (BXD)

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What is Brand Exposure Duration (BXD)?

There are a number of marketing levers that impact brand awareness, message association, purchase intent, and, ultimately, sales. The classic levers of any advertising campaign have traditionally been reach—how many people are exposed to ads—and frequency—how many times those people are exposed. However, neither reach nor frequency speaks to the quality of the ad exposures. The element of time is missing from the basic reach and frequency equation.

To illustrate this, imagine two campaigns, both of which have a reach of 1,000,000 and an average frequency of 3.1. They look exactly the same until we add the third element of time, measured as Brand Exposure Duration (BXD)—the length of time an individual is exposed to a given advertisement. One campaign may have an average BXD of 18 seconds, while the other may have an average BXD of only two seconds, thus revealing a dramatic difference in media performance.

Why is BXD Important?

Not all impressions are created equal. It doesn't take a big leap of faith to believe that the longer a person is exposed to a brand, the greater the branding impact is on that individual. The economics of television pricing demonstrate this point. Longer spots cost more. 30-second spots cost about 20%-40% more than 15-second TV ads.

Brand icon BMW has long used the BXD principle to measure the value of their advertising campaigns. Their advertising strategy, termed "BMW Minutes", focuses on maximizing the exposure of the BMW brand to their target audience. This was the inspiration for the creation of BMW Films. BMW commissioned award-winning directors like Ang Lee (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) and Guy Ritchie (*Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels*) to create short films that feature action-packed gunfights and dramatic chase scenes—all the while, featuring the latest BMW models strutting their stuff. Within four months of launching BMW Films in April 2001, the site reported 6 million downloads¹. Given the average film lasts about seven minutes, the math reveals that in a relatively short period of time, BMW garnered a total brand exposure of 42 million minutes.

Brand exposure duration is a relevant metric for any medium. When a person is exposed to ads in TV, print, online, radio, or even outdoor, they are exposed to the ad for some duration of time. A magazine ad placed next to the feature article is going to contribute more brand exposure than the same ad buried in the classified section. Someone stuck in rush-hour traffic will have a much greater opportunity to pay attention to a billboard than someone driving 80 miles an hour along the same stretch of road. The fact is, BXD is an important element to advertising effectiveness. The challenge lies in the ability to measure and monetize it from one medium to another. In TV and radio, BXD is how the media is bought and sold. For online, print, and outdoor, BXD has hardly existed.

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¹ www.adage.com/news.cms?newsId=32430

Measuring BXD Online

To date, it has been difficult to measure the BXD of online campaigns. Web surfers control the time of their ad exposure durations by changing the page or simply closing the browser. The closest estimates of online BXD have been those reported by syndicated panel companies like comScore Media Metrix and Nielsen//NetRatings. Both companies report site-level “average time per page view.” These metrics provide directional evidence for planning, but fall short of providing post-campaign optimization metrics for placements and creative.

New innovations at Atlas are making BXD available to marketers in a standardized and scalable way. This new capability gives marketers unprecedented data by which to judge ad placements and creative effectiveness across campaigns. With no additional engineering of creative, and only minimal additional effort in the trafficking process, you can see exactly how long your audience has spent in front of your ads.

Implications for Media

The ability to measure BXD will have profound implications for advertisers looking to build their brands online. Planners and buyers will look for sites and placements that can most cost effectively deliver reach, frequency, and maximum BXD for the budget. Marketers will be able to “dial-up” and “dial-down” the amount of BXD delivered to their target audiences based on where the ads are placed and the number of contracted impressions.

BXD is relevant to brand advertisers because it assigns a value to each ad impression, not just the ones that are clicked on, or that result in an immediate sale. The actual delivery of BXD will determine whether or not specific publishers are included in future campaigns. Just like Cost per Action is a critical metric for direct response advertisers, *Cost per Minute of BXD* will become an intrinsic way for brand advertisers to evaluate the return-on-investment of their campaigns.

Implications for Creative

BXD informs creative authors about how much time they have to get their message across. If the audience is only going to be exposed to the ad for a couple of seconds, the creative will need to get the message across instantly. There is no point in posing a question if the audience won't be around to see the answer.

Strong creative can actively boost the amount of BXD. Many pop-up ads and other rich media formats, such as homepage take-overs, are closed as soon as they are delivered. Getting the audience to take the time to interact, or simply pay attention to the ad, is largely dependant on the quality of your creative.

For opt-in media, like BMW Films and ESPN.com's Motion, knowing, for example, that 50% of users viewed the entire stream, while only 20% of users ended their sessions after 10 seconds becomes important intelligence. As consumer bandwidth improves and TV-like ads become more prevalent online, measuring the BXD of streamed video will become the key way to differentiate between the performance of one creative execution over another.

What's Next for BXD

The appeal of online advertising centers on its ability to reach the right people in a meaningful way. BXD is just one of a growing list of metrics that can help marketers quantify an online campaign's effectiveness by revealing where marketing dollars are working, and, just as importantly, where they are not.

Given the impact and popularity of rich media online, BXD will change the way media is bought and sold. For example, publishers could use BXD to differentiate themselves from competitors and justify higher CPMs for premium inventory. Marketers can tailor their placements based on the level of BXD they need to achieve and balance those needs against reach, frequency, and cost. Similar to Gross Rating Points (GRPs), BXD provides another relevant way for marketers to compare cost effectiveness across different media vehicles.

About the Atlas Institute

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