

**XMOS Case Study: VeriSign: Repositioning the B2B Brand**

**The Cross Media Optimization Study (XMOS)**

The objective of the Marketing Evolution’s XMOS study is to help marketers and their agencies answer the question “What is the optimal mix of advertising vehicles across different media, in terms of frequency, reach and budget allocation, for given campaign to achieve its marketing goals?” Using methodology designed by the research firm Marketing Evolution and supported by the Advertising Research Foundation and recognized for international research excellence by the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR), the XMOS study simultaneously measures online and offline advertising in the same campaign to determine the optimal mix and weight of each medium.

**The Challenge**

VeriSign sought to reposition its image in the minds of a core segment of business customers from that of a provider of domain names and e-commerce solutions to that of a trusted, enterprise-level provider of key infrastructure services for web and telecom solutions. At the same time, the campaign had a direct-response objective designed to drive qualified leads for VeriSign’s salesforce. Several VeriSign white papers on the subject of its new services were used as the primary offer. The target audience was managers making decisions about security, telecommunications, and identity management.

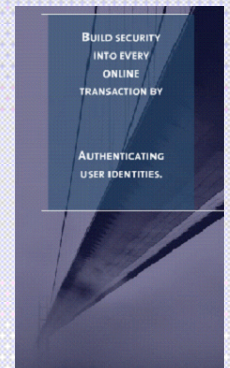
**The Campaign**

The campaign ran in several business and technology magazines, including Forbes, CIO, Computer World and Network Computing, as well as targeting a B2B technology audience via online sites. The magazine ran one-page and two-page ads of striking black-and-white photos of large building projects, emphasizing by analogy the reliability of VeriSign’s infrastructure. Online, the ads were graphically similar but simpler, presented in leaderboard, large rectangle and skyscraper formats, with the copy emphasizing security services.

The objectives of the campaign were many. First, the ads were intended to generate awareness, association, familiarity and purchase intent for VeriSign as a supplier of security, telecom and directory services. Second, the ads were meant to convey specific brand messages, namely that VeriSign is “customer-focused,” “reliable,” “innovative,” “trustworthy” and a “technology leader.” Finally, the campaign was split between these brand objectives and a direct-response mandate: to drive online downloads of a white paper. In the case of the online ads, the white paper download was deemed half of the ads’ job, while that direct-response mandate was only 30% of the magazine ads’ job.

**Methodology**

Marketing Evolution surveyed readers of both the print and online readers to measure attitudes about VeriSign’s brand. Subscribers to magazines in which the campaign ran were surveyed both before and after the campaign (a so-called



“pre/post” study) using a list of email addresses provided by the magazines. The Online component of the study surveyed those on the websites which contained VeriSign advertising starting before the campaign broke and continuing through the end of the study (a so-called “continuous-tracking pre/post” study)<sup>1</sup> to measure the increase that the campaign had on the perceptions of the audience over time. Online advertising was measured based on an exposed / not exposed method rather than Marketing Evolution’s preferred classic experimental design (due to limitations of the data collection partner used for this study). Marketing Evolution has developed a proprietary technique for decontaminating “exposed / not exposed” sampling to achieve similar cell blocking as in a classic research construct known as “experimental design,”<sup>2</sup>. Online respondents were also surveyed in terms of their magazine reading habits to measure the synergy between magazine and interactive ads. In total, 5,111 respondents were surveyed.

**Results**

The campaign was only modestly successful in achieving its specific brand objectives. By themselves, the magazines were most successful in conveying the brand’s attributes as “reliable” (a gain of 8 points) and “innovative” (a gain of 6 points). The online ads, at a frequency level of 4+, produced moderate lift in all the brand attributes (from 4 points for “reliable” to 7 points for both “technology leader” and “customer-focused”). When readers saw both the magazine and online ads, their awareness, association and purchase intent for the security and directory services raised slightly (3-4 points), as did their impression of the brand as innovative (4 points).

As for the white paper downloads, which was half of the measure of the online ads’ success, the interactive ads were highly effective in doing so, generating more than 2,000 downloads, which exceeded the campaign’s goal, compared to only 16 downloads attributable to the magazine ads (despite the fact that Magazine ads were paired with a 1/3 page call to action to download the white paper).

Online Lift to Brand Attributes	
BRAND ATTRIBUTES	POINT LIFT OVER CONTROL, AT 4X+ FREQ.
Customer Focused . . . . .	+7
Reliability . . . . .	+4
Innovative . . . . .	+4
Technology Leader . . . . .	+7

The table shows the lift that the interactive ads, at a frequency of four or more exposures per person, caused to respondents’ perceptions about key VeriSign brand attributes, compared to those who saw a control ad for American Red Cross.

**Implications**

The results demonstrated that while print media offered a more cost-efficient reach (with a lower CPM) to top-level job titles, interactive proved more effective at increasing brand awareness and association, and, with higher frequency, at improving brand image.

It was determined, however, that the differences between the online and offline creative communication strategies made direct comparisons of media cost-effectiveness difficult. Given the multiple objectives of repositioning the brand, awareness and direct response, both Print and Online made meaningful contributions. Marketing Evolution recommended 11% of the mix be devoted to Online (which was the same approximate level used in the study) and suggested additional research to determine if Online could be more successful at moving brand imagery with lower frequency (which would result in extending the repertoire of influence from interactive advertising beyond direct response).

<sup>1</sup> During a brief period of time in the middle of the study, no surveys were gathered due to inventory constraints. This means that the continuous tracking component should more precisely be considered “wave tracking” as opposed to purely continuous tracking.

<sup>2</sup> The Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) has reviewed Marketing Evolution’s approach to de-contamination and signed off on the validity of the approach.