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## Why creatives need not fear the data

“Data – for too long a four-letter word driving fear into the heart of creatives”

Gloomy economic forecasts have thrown a renewed focus on the power of data across the entire direct marketing industry. As agencies invest more time, effort and money into insight, the ‘boys from the backroom’ are having a greater say in campaigns.

But while planning departments are embracing customer data to bring online and offline marketing drives closer together, there is yet to be a real shift in the attitude of creative bosses. In reality, testing the impact of campaigns through consumer research panels before finalising work could bring us closer to finding the creative holy grail.

We all know the tradition of holding focus groups during campaign planning. This institution still has its place from a consumer input point of view, such as provoking in-depth discussions of emotional attachment to a brand. But it can be a long process and difficult to arrange, let alone quantify.

There are simpler ways of testing creative. For instance, we have access to an online panel of 30,000 UK consumers who can respond to questions on a range of topics, in realtime. So if they were asked “would this creative execution make you open the envelope?”, the brand would be provided with a snapshot of attitudes in days rather than weeks. This knowledge can be used to tweak executions to ensure they are closer to what will persuade people to buy into a product.

The resulting geodemographic, social and economic breakdown shows what appeals to various groups. The beauty of using this insight to support creative work is that agencies do not need to take a punt on what they think might work based on a gut feeling or the mercurial whim of a marketing director. Subjectivity is removed and advertising is based on what messages consumers actually want to receive.

This immediacy and objectivity is of vital importance at a time when businesses are keen to provoke maximum response from their marketing. Data – for too long a four-letter word driving fear into the hearts of creatives up and down the country – could be about to have its day in the sunshine.