



## Why National Brands Should Focus on Local Media

Posted by [Rob Reif](#) on November 15th, 2011 at 1:55 pm

Lately I've been wondering about national retail brand campaigns and whether they're worth the media dollars.

Numerous brands advertise nationally in all media formats, but every single one of them is intensely focused on attracting the highest amount of foot traffic to stores in local markets. While they all spend in local media, they may or may not need to flood those sectors with more dollars. But they should get smarter about making sure that spend is deployed for maximum effectiveness.

National campaigns are good for raising awareness and brand building but the real activation happens on the local level, and national ads should contain those ancillary media plans and buys. This concept is not news—marketers and media buyers have always explored ways to make the media spend work as hard as possible.

If a retailer has 15 locations in Missouri, it makes sense to have a larger marketing budget there than in Nevada where they may be only have three.

Yet it's surprising just how much inefficiency still exists in local media buys even in this day and age.

As any media planner knows, the whole local marketing process can be tedious, and the ROI imprecise enough so that marketers sometimes take the most perfunctory approach to local-market spending or turn it over to a third party. A lot of manual labor is associated with localized media plans because they require meticulous oversight and hands-on management.

In the recent past, planners would have had to conduct a lot of research to buy locally at scale. An advertiser in suburban Chicago who is putting together a media buy for a specific group of ZIP codes in New York is usually hard pressed about how to start.

Technology is making local media buys more acceptable to more advertisers because finding out the local media options in any market is becoming less cumbersome. New tools now enable a plan for 15 local markets comprised of 75 different local news outlets with the media company getting just one bill and point-of-contact for that service instead of having to deal with 75 different people at multiple vendor companies that handle different parts of the process.

With hyperlocal targeting tools, one person can handle 15 or 50 markets.

National advertisers need to understand physically where their target audience is located. Geography is the foundation on which to build out your media plan across platforms, then proceed to add layers of information about gender, age, likes, dislikes, household income, and purchasing behavior. There are still some media planners who think, “If I run on Yahoo! I’ve got it covered.”

The fact is, after this basic information is established, advertisers must tweak the creative to speak to the local market. If the creative piece falls short, it’s a waste of ad dollars. You must speak to each market in its local language.

For example, a national car company could take advantage of local advertising by featuring a photo of a specific dealership showroom or their salesperson of the year in a local market. They could combine this custom, local message with an offer for low financing or another special incentive. Keeping a standard creative message in other markets could help the national dealer measure ROI and show lift.

These geographically-targeted ads then become content for local news outlets. An ad touting a back-to-school sale at the local branch of a national chain store is going to be much more pertinent to the readers in that area than a less customized branding message that doesn’t speak to a specific location or address a community issue.

Newspapers and magazines have been doing this forever. The Macy’s ad in the local newspaper has always listed the store hours, coupons, and address of that Macy’s store alongside ads for the local lighting store, carpet store and pizza place.

For more than 40 years, MNI has taken national brand ads and customized and placed them at scale in local markets, first in print and increasingly in web display ads and through SEO/SEM.

Technology enables advertisers to target differently. All national advertisers should have a local branding initiative. It’s silly not to when it’s all at your fingertips.