
Shallow Review of A/B Testing



A/B testing refers to offering multiple versions of the same thing (e.g. mailing, online ad, webpage) and comparing the user responses to each. It allows you to experiment with multiple contents in order to isolate different variables and choose the most effective ad. Because the variation in ad efficacy can be enormous, this is an easy way to increase efficacy.

Research

Animal Charity Evaluators found statistically significant differences in the effects of different ads and videos at convincing people to order a vegetarian starter kit, with the best video being almost 100% better than the worst, and the best ad 30% more effective than the worst (these differences are statistically significant, but not every inter-video and inter-ad comparison is) [1].

Mercy For Animals found a 3x difference in cost-per-pledge-signed between the best and worst ads, and a 45% difference between the best and worst pages in % signing pledge. 1/4 of the experiments have found the current approach is the best way (so no gain); and of the rest had an average variation of around 10%. They estimate it takes \$75-\$100 per ad to know if an ad is working [2].

The Obama campaign (with presumably a much larger budget) did extensive A/B testing and raised the donation conversation rate by 49% [3] (increase in donation amounts not given).

Subjective Sense

Multiple sources report that ads need to be rotated constantly anyway to maintain interest. Given that you are doing that, and the tools for advertising make testing so easy, failing to test them for efficacy is irresponsible.

Generating new landing pages takes considerably more work, but many organizations tweak theirs constantly. Should Charity Science decide to create a new page, it would be wise to test it before switching over, however given the amount of work involved I would not create new pages without a specific plan. Small tweaks probably provide a bigger bang for the buck, and those should be tested as well.

Expected Promising-ness

ADS

Increase donations by 30% - 300 % for an hours work (beyond that required to generate the ads in the first place).

LANDING PAGES

Up to 100% increase in donations, but substantially more work.

Minimum Experiments

This would be an add on to any experiments with online advertising, new landing pages, or e-mail solicitations. Instead of treating the subject as “ads as a whole”, create multiple ads and use Google Analytics to track their relative effectiveness.

Further Research

- ❖ <https://humaneleaguelabs.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/whatcamebeforevideoadcomparisonsreport.pdf>
- ❖ Nick Cooney at Mercy For Animals has experience with A/B testing and has offered to answer more questions
- ❖ Supercrunchers: <http://www.supercrunchers.co.uk/>

Resources

- ❖ Ads: Google Ads Experiments, Facebook Ads

- ❖ e-mail: MailChimp
- ❖ Landing Pages: Google Analytics, Optimizely

References

1. <http://www.animalcharityevaluators.org/research/interventions/online-ads/comparing-effectiveness-of-videos-and-ads/>
2. Nick Cooney, personal communication
3. <http://kylerush.net/blog/optimization-at-the-obama-campaign-ab-testing/>

