



# **How to write an IPA Effectiveness Award paper**

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# The IPA Effectiveness Awards

- Primary aim: To prove that communications activity works, that you can measure its effects, and that these effects create financial value
- Secondary aim: To raise the standard of evaluation of the effectiveness of communications activities
- Entries judged on effectiveness, not strategy, creative work or use of media
- Demonstrating effectiveness means showing behavioural changes (usually increased sales), not just beliefs and attitudes
- Rigour of proof is as important as size of effect. The aim is to prove beyond reasonable doubt



# Why enter?

- Fame and glory for agency and client
- Being able to prove that what you do works makes it easier to defend or increase budgets
- The most intellectually stimulating experience in the business
- Excellent training exercise for authors

# Getting started

- Start early!
- Allocate time, people, budget
- Review all possible cases to identify likely candidates
- Write a timetable and stick to it
- Create incentives?
- Teamwork helps: appoint coordinators/editors analysts as well as authors
- Use IPA resources, especially old papers, to prompt your thinking

# Getting started (contd.)

- Don't start writing until you have a theme, an essay plan and some evidence
- Get senior client commitment a.s.a.p.
- Cancel social life during last two months!

# Identifying likely cases

- Do you think the activity worked?
- Could you prove it? Do you have a 'killer chart'?
- Do you think the judges would buy it?
- Is the case interesting? What's the theme?
- Did it have a big effect? Profitable?
- Would the client let you enter this into the awards?

# A typical plan

- Introduction
  - The marketing/business problem
  - The solution
  - Results
  - **Proof that the activity worked**
  - Payback and efficiency
  - Conclusion
  - Appendices
- ~1/3 paper
- ~2/3 paper

# The front bit

- Introduction: What's the theme of the case and why is it interesting?
  - Think of this as an ad for your paper
  - Write it **last**
- The marketing problem: Market background and brief to agency
  - Make the problem look hard
  - State (quantified) objectives
- Communications activity solution: identify different elements
  - How did you think the activity would work?
  - Include of the activity plan



# The back bit

- Results: Show how well the activity worked, ideally in hard business terms.
  - Show you achieved your objectives
  - Remember, maintaining sales or slowing decline can be deemed a success in a challenging market
- Proof: Link success to activity, beyond reasonable doubt
  - Longest section of paper
  - Lack of proof is why papers usually fail
- Payback
- Conclusion
- Appendices – Technical, boring or sensitive stuff



Start  
here



# Four ingredients of proof

- Effect correlates with cause
- Correlation is not a coincidence
- The mechanism linking the two is clear
- Other explanations can be ruled out

# Ingredients of proof 1: Show effects correlate with cause

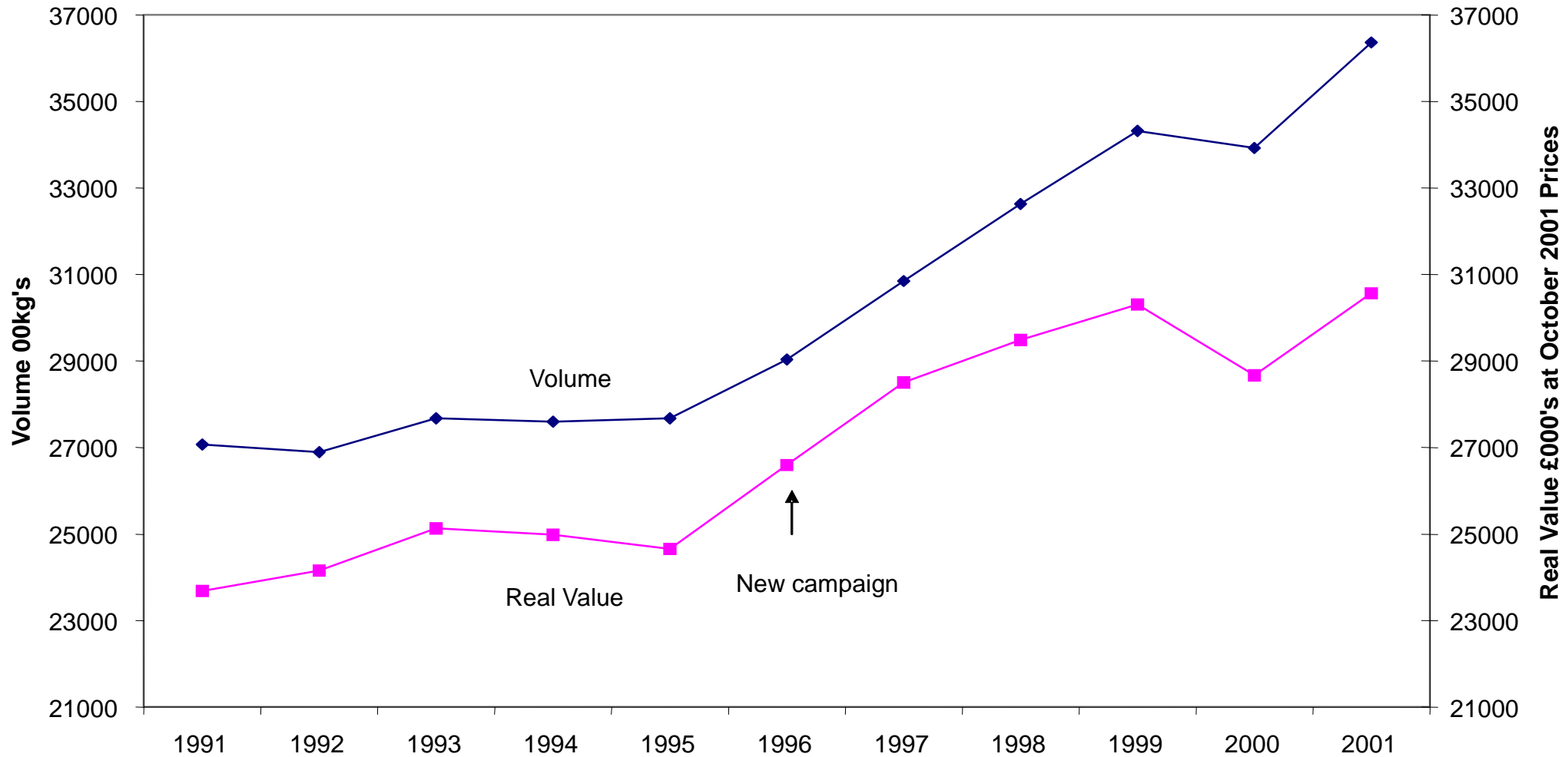
- Soft data is good, but hard data is essential
  - » Value data usually better than volume
  - » Market share usually better than sales
- Look for correlations between brand activity and performance over time
- If there are regional variations in brand's comms activity, look for correlations by region
- You can also look at correlations across social groups, but beware of spurious results

# Examples of convincing proof of effectiveness

The following slides include examples taken from mass media advertising.

However, the same principles can be applied to demonstrate the effectiveness of any form of communications activity such as sponsorship, content marketing, digital experiences, UX, owned media, internal comms and development of new products and services.

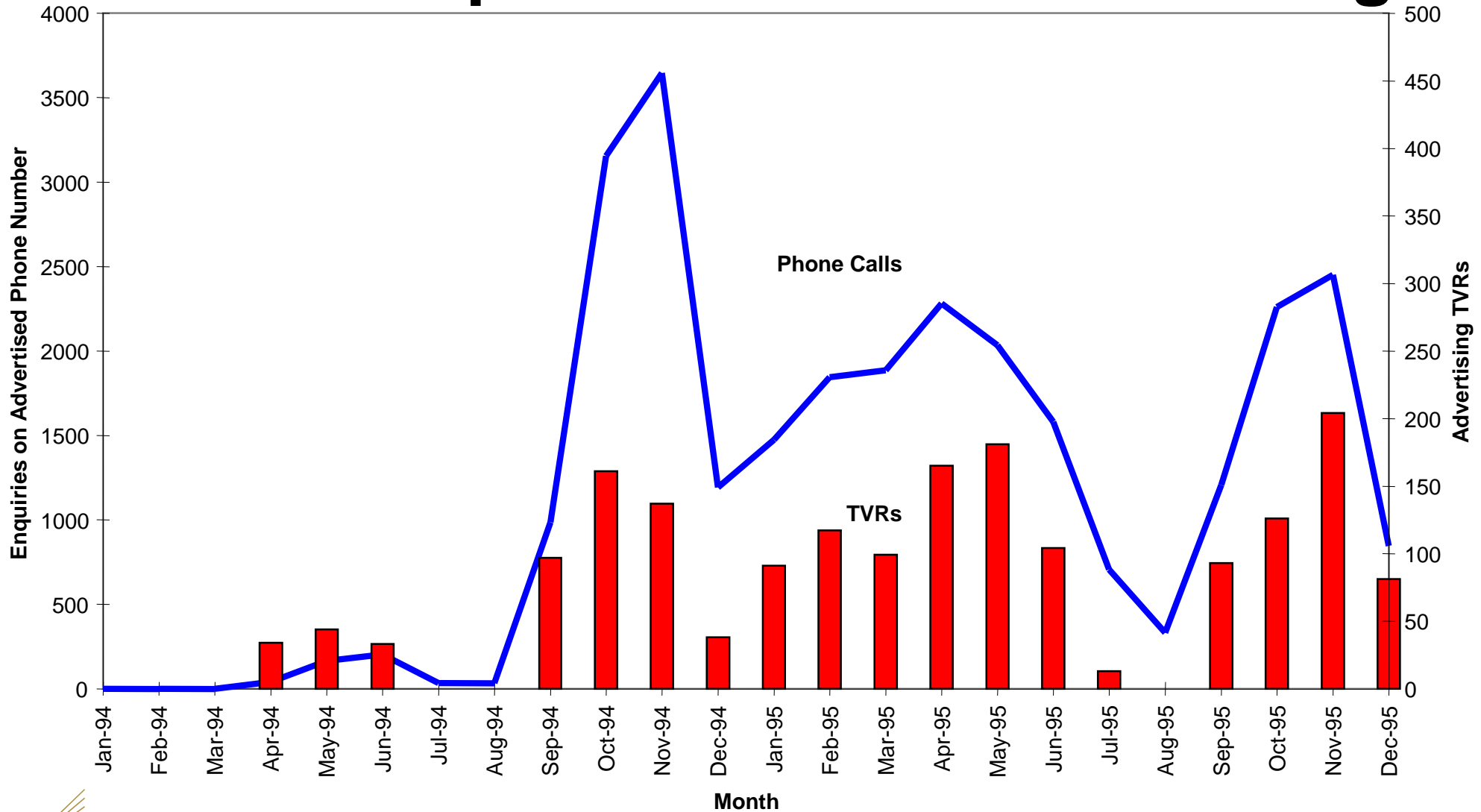
# Annual Sales



Good to show sales rose during advertising period

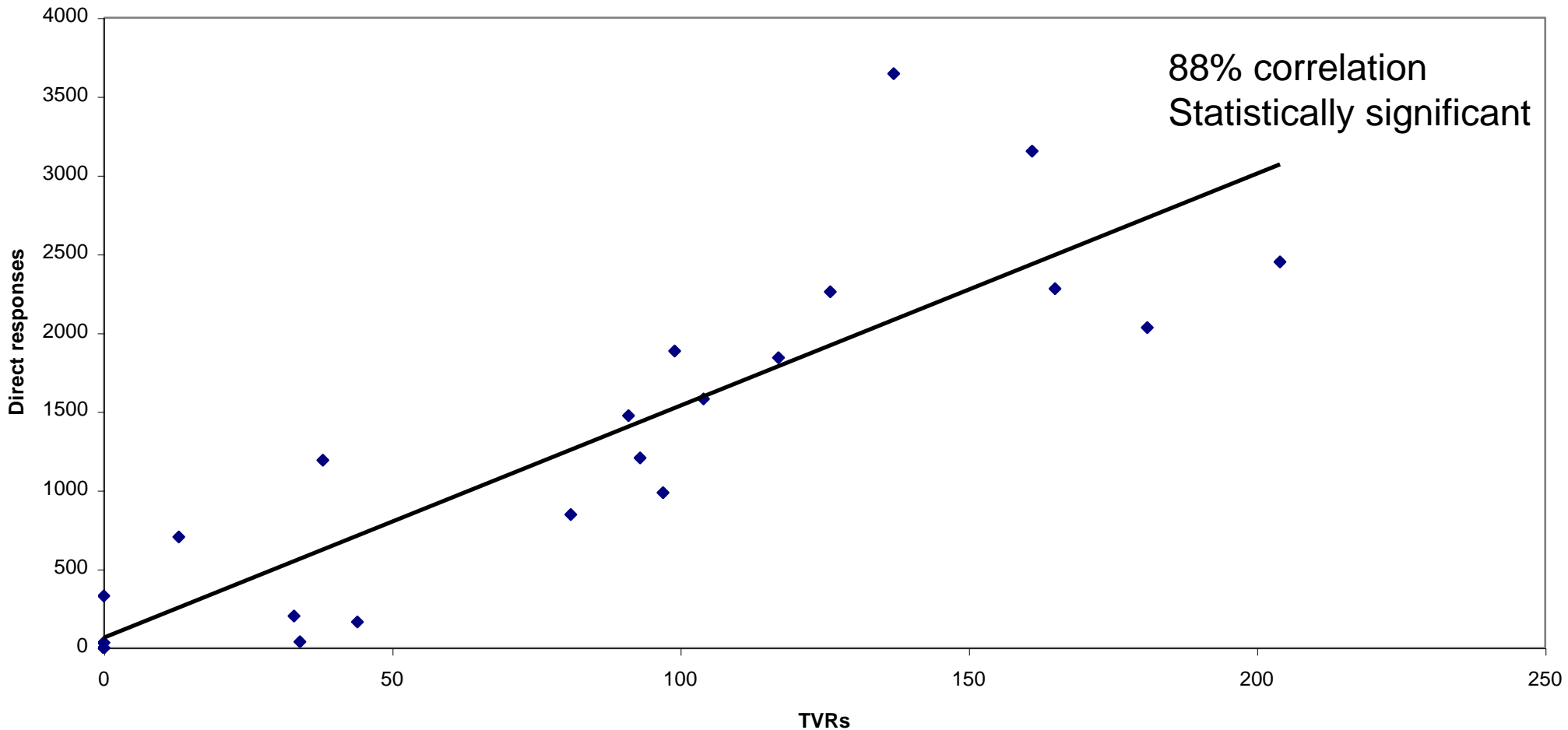


# Direct Response Effect of Advertising



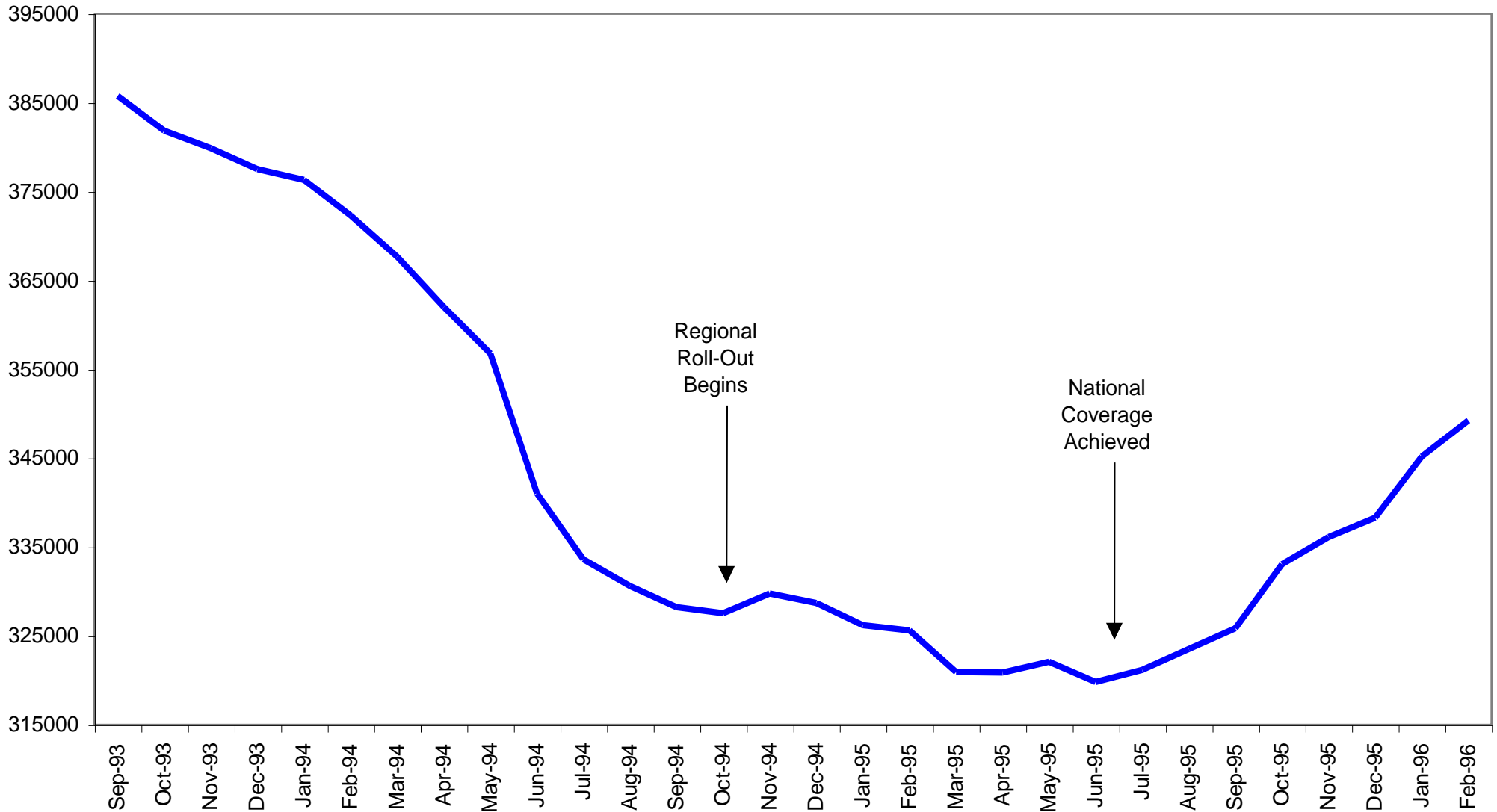
Showing that timing of effect exactly matches timing of activity is better

## Direct responses vs TVRs



Showing that the level of sales corresponds to the level of ads is better still

# Frizzell Enquiries (MAT)

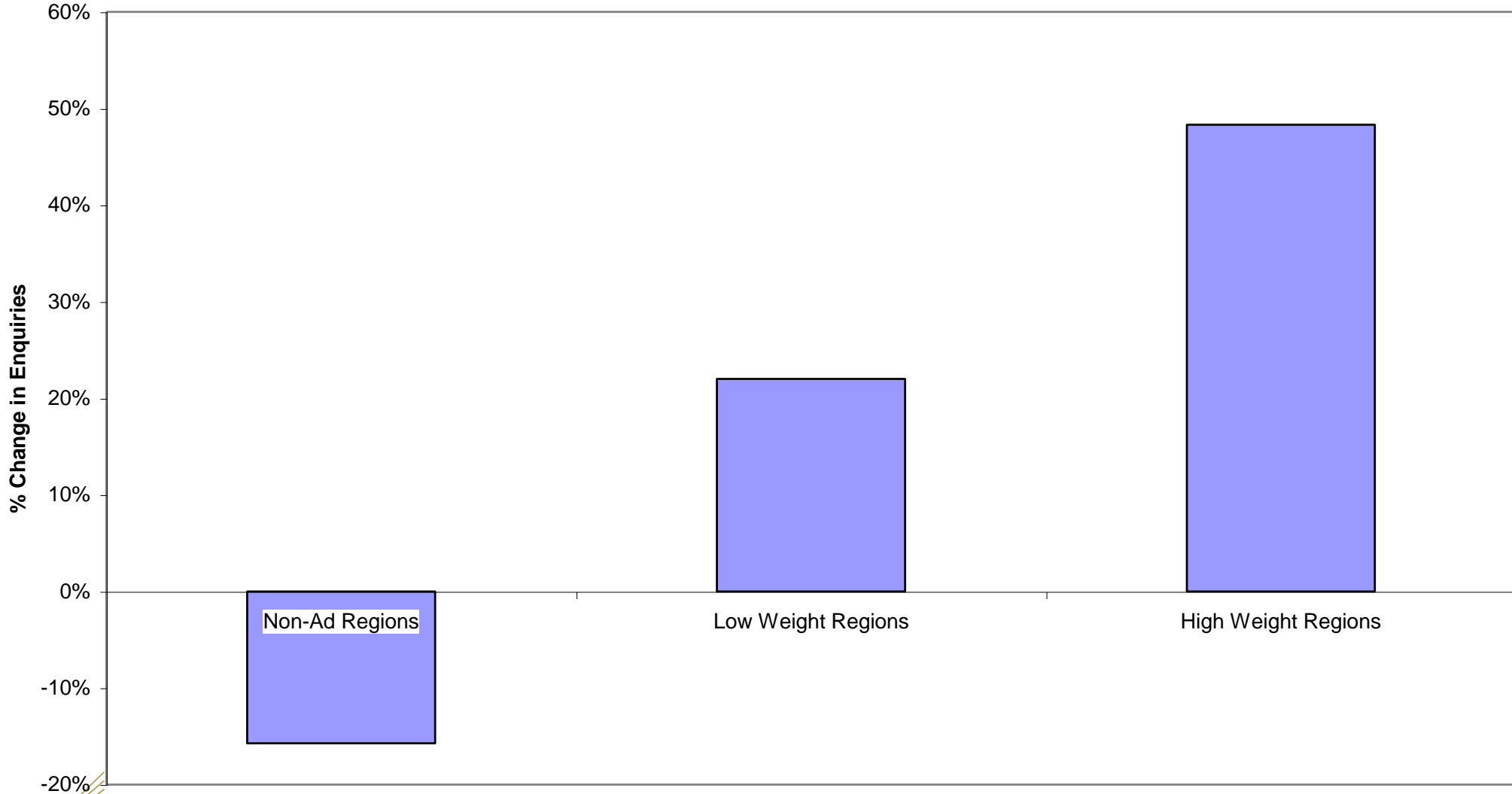


Source: Frizzell

**Rising sales could mean stopping/slowing decline**  
**There may be a time lag in the effect**

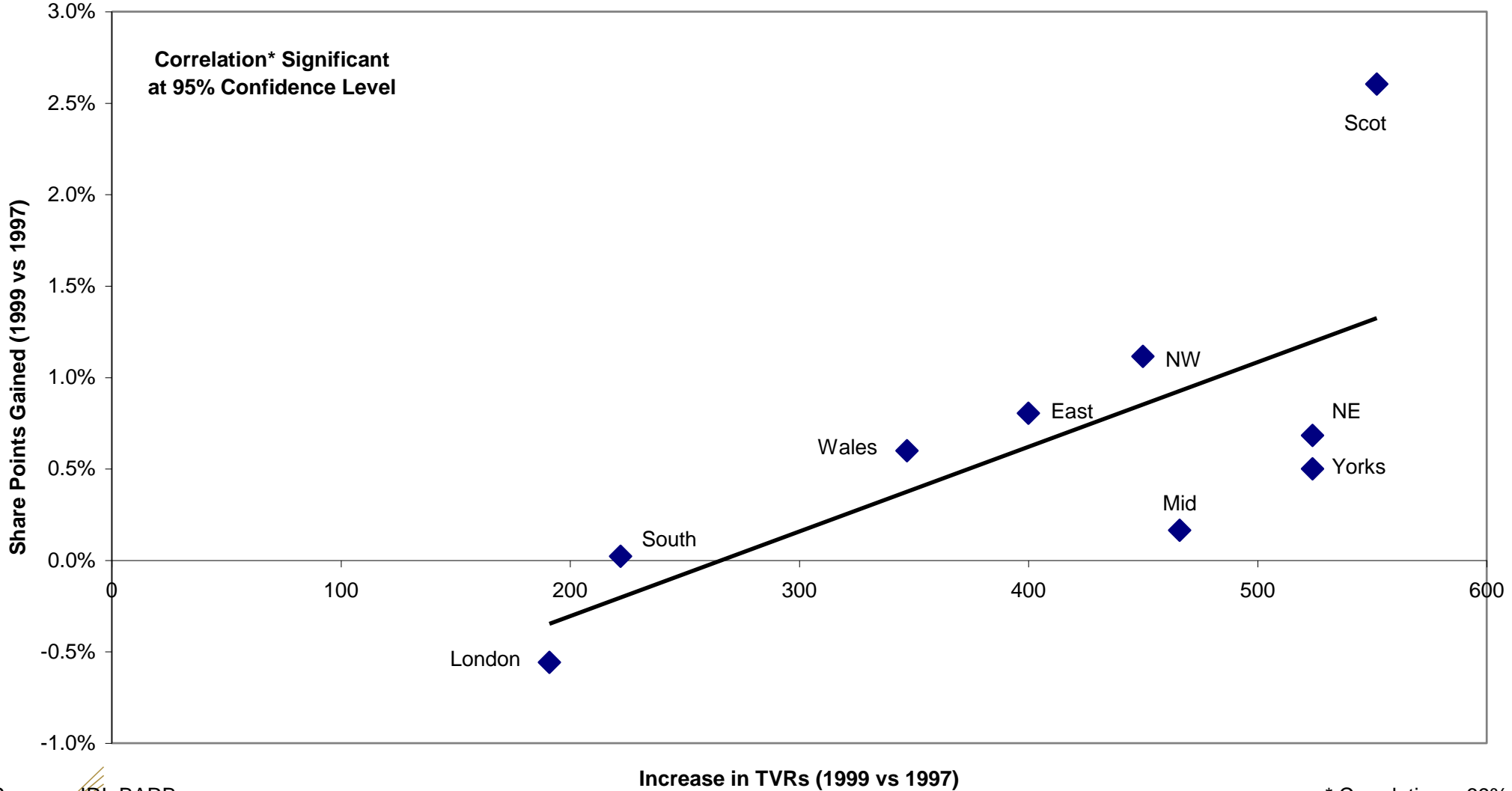


# Frizzell Growth During Regional Roll-Out



Use regional data to show that communications activity  
Reversed brand's decline

# Felix Share Growth vs Advertising by Region

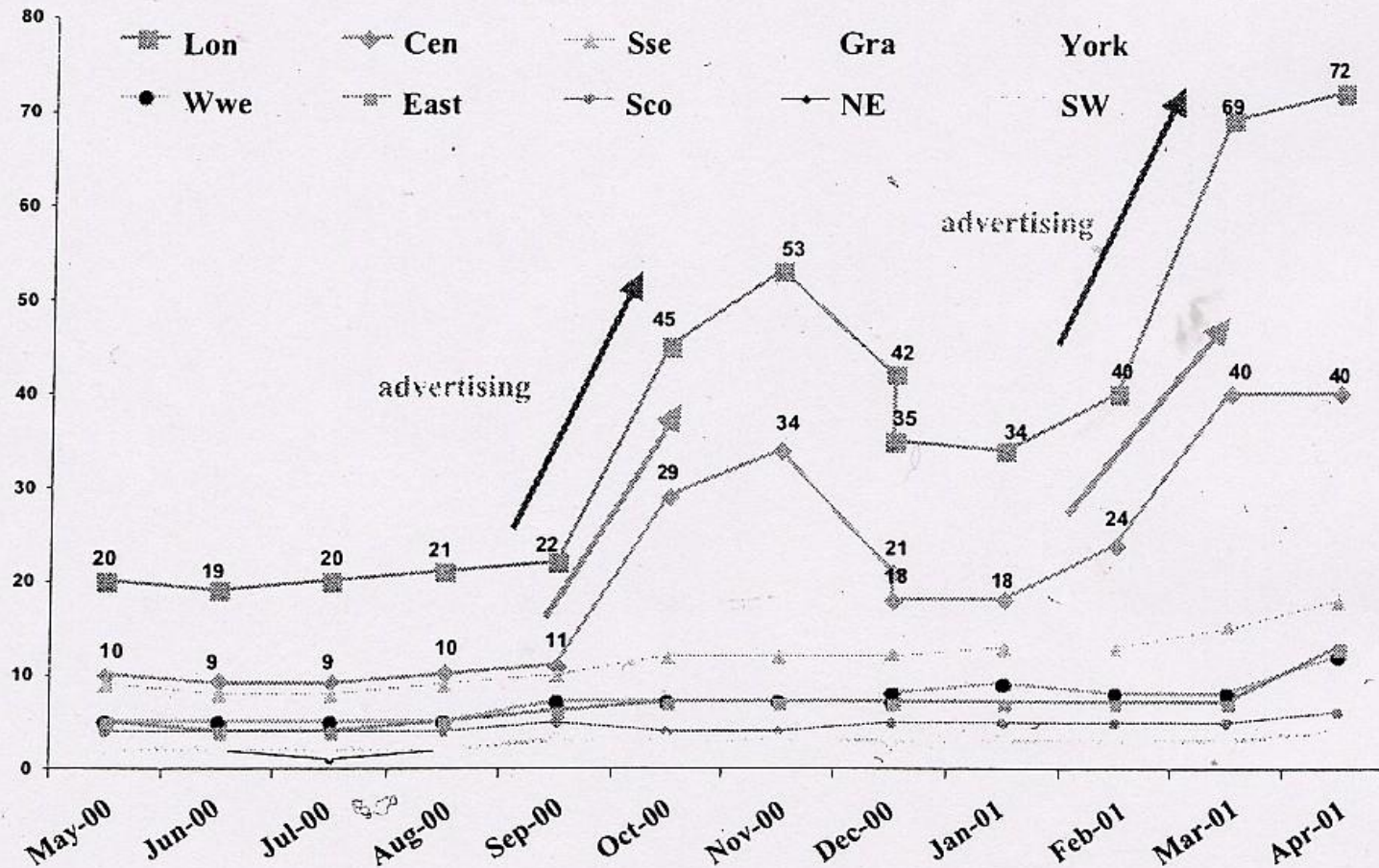


Sources: IRI, BARB



Use fine variations in levels of activity if possible,  
not just formal tests.

## Dr Beckmann Rescue Sales April 99–April 01 4-Weekly Value Sales by Region (£000s)



If possible, use timing and regionality

# Ingredients of proof 2:

## Show correlation is not coincidence

- Use fine variations in activity, not just ad/non-ad comparisons
- The more data points the better
- Show correlations are statistically significant
- The more correlations the better. Look at several of variables in a number of ways

# Ingredients of proof 3: Show the mechanism

- It is easier to believe that activity worked if you can convincingly show how it worked
- Build up 'causal chain' of correlations
- Measures used should reflect the way the activity worked. (Standard measures like awareness are not always the right ones)
- Ideally, show that the activity worked more or less as planned

# Ingredients of proof 4: Rule out other explanations

- If A correlates with B, there are four possible explanations:
  - A causes B
  - It's a coincidence
  - **B causes A**
  - **A and B are caused by a third factor C**
- To prove A causes B, need to rule out the other three possibilities

# The Rosser Reeves Fallacy

- This is the commonest example of confusion between cause and effect. Nearly every author makes it at some point
- Example: “Sales gains correlated with activity (e.g., ads), therefore activity increased sales.”
- Problem: Sales increases can cause increases in ad awareness
- Solution: Show that sales increases correlate with exposure to the activity, not just awareness of it



# Other examples of confusion between cause and effect

- Example: “Sales were higher in the regions where the activity ran”
- Problem: The activity targeted higher-selling regions
- Solution: Show sales increased more in regions supporting the activity v non-supporting regions
- Example: “Sales were higher during the activity’s peak months”
- Problem: The activity was timed to hit the brand’s seasonal peaks
- Solution: Look at market share, year-on-year changes, or MATs (Moving Annual Totals)



# Eliminating other factors

- Sales might correlate with activity because of some third factor that happens to correlate with both
- Example: Sales went up when the activity was current, because distribution happened to increase at that time
- Solution: need to rule out other factors that might be responsible for growth

# Some factors to rule out

- Seasonality - Look at market share, year-on-year changes or MATs
- Market size effects – look at market share
- Improvements to products, packaging, etc. – ideally show sales unimproved products rose too
- Increases in distribution – look at rate of sale
- Other channels – take integrated approach?
- Price – ideally show your price went up
- Reduced competitive activity – ideally show things got tougher

# The perfect proof

- Show a logical causal chain from communications activity to attitude to sales, in line with the brand's strategy
- All along the chain, show that changes in brand performance correlate with exposure to the communications activity
- For each correlation:
  - Show significance and direction of causality
  - Eliminate other factors
- Don't worry, no proof is actually this perfect!

# Example: Felix Cat Food

- Ad awareness improved
- People liked the ads & understood the messages in them
- Brand awareness improved
- Brand image improved, including quality perceptions
- Penetration and loyalty increased
- Rate of sale increased
- Price premium increased
- Distribution increased
- Market share increased
- Unit costs came down
- Profits improved
- All this significantly correlated with TVRs over time/regions
- No other factors could explain these effects



# Econometrics:

## Ultimate proof or black box?

- Detects and measures communications effects, even when other factors are confusing the picture
- ‘Pooled’ models can look at variations by region, as well as over time
- Get an expert econometrician, involve them early
- Look at all variables that affect sales and test models thoroughly
- Difficult to understand. Use it for quantification rather than as core of argument
- Integrate findings into main case, but put workings in appendix. Ensure econometrician also reads the econometric appendix guidelines

# Writing the paper

- Don't start writing prose too early. Start with the theme, the essay plan, and the evidence
- Two thirds back bit, one third front bit
- Show that the activity worked, how it worked, and how well it worked
- Think of it as a legal case. Prove beyond doubt
- Judges know the tricks – logic must be faultless
- Anticipate and deal with likely objections, (but don't raise unnecessary objections!)
- Expose your argument to robust criticism
- Allow time for many rounds of editing

# Writing the paper

- Judges read huge numbers of manuscripts. Make it clear, interesting, easy and fun to read
- Break argument into clear sections
- Say what you're going to say, say it, then say what you've said
- A picture is worth a thousand words
- Use “declarative” headings for sections, tables, charts, etc.?
- Word count tricks: figures, footnotes, appendices. (Use sparingly)
- Highlight new learnings where possible

# What makes a good paper?

- Positive sales effect and/or objectives achieved (big, obvious effects help)
- Convincing proof (great ads make it plausible)
- Well-written
- (Difficult communications objectives/evaluation task helps)



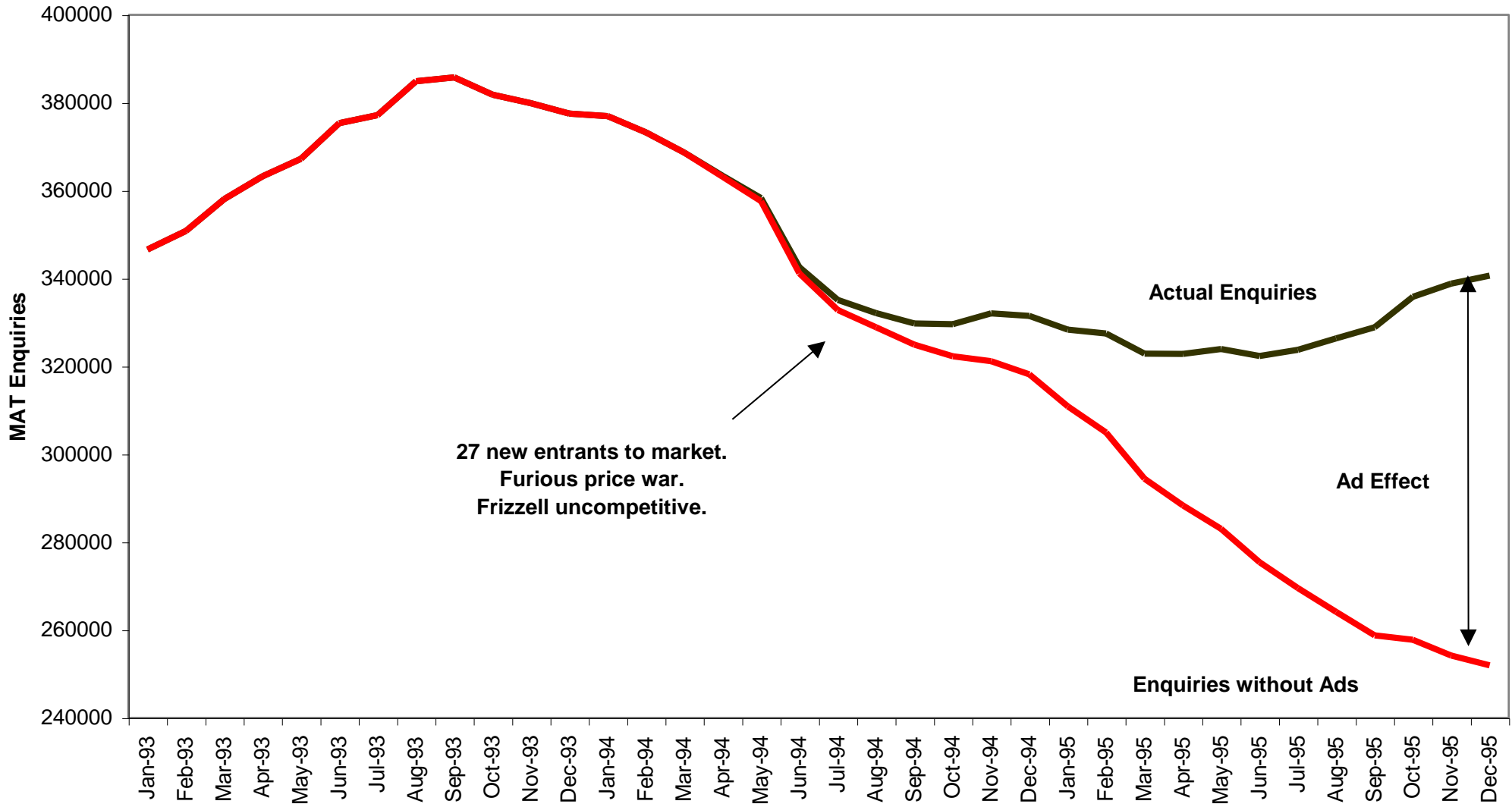
# What makes a great paper?

- Payback quantified
- “Manifold effects”
- New learnings / evaluation methods
- Compelling validation of established thinking

# Payback

- Sales growth is not the same as sales generated by your activity
- Q: What would've happened to sales without the activity?
- Methods: Trend extrapolation, regional analysis, econometrics
- Work out extra revenue and profit generated
- Remember: sales figures may be under-estimates, spend figures over-estimates
- Sensitive data can usually be indexed and/or put into confidential appendix
- Ideally, use discounted cash-flow analysis to calculate return on investment
- The activity may take more than one year to pay for themselves. Project forward if necessary

# Telephone Enquiries to Frizzell Insurance



Source: Frizzell, Econometric Model



# Some examples of “Manifold Effects”

- Increase future sales
- Gain distribution and facings
- Kill/keep out competitors
- Support higher prices
- Enhance other marketing
- Have ‘halo’ or ‘umbrella’ effects on other products
- Increase market size
- Reduce unit costs
- Increase productivity
- Increase profit and margins
- Make a brand more extendable
- Improve market expectations of all these things
- Increase the financial value of the brand
- Reduce capital costs
- Increase the value of a company and its shares



# Last minute hitches

- Client approval:
  - Get copy to client for approval a week before the deadline
  - Ensure client is around and knows that she/he has to give speedy approval
- Order images, video footage, etc. well in advance
- Make sure you have IT & admin support during last couple of weekends!

# Gaining client approval

- Awards are Good PR – showcases marketing team's achievements
- Your competitors are probably entering
- In 22 years, no case of competitors ever gaining an advantage
- Secretive clients like P&G submit papers
- Judges sign confidentiality agreements
- Papers only published if they win, with consent, & one year after submission
- Has a client entered before?
- Paper covers past, not future plans
- All data used is available to competitors
- Sensitive data can be disguised, indexed, or put in an appendix if necessary



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