

The modern way to undermine modern terrorism

Tags: [Daesh](#), [Cve](#), [IQ](#), [Counter Terrorism](#), [Social Media](#)



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🕒 07/11/2016

There has been a lot of talk about DAESH, as one of the fastest-growing global brands. The fact that they continue to build their identity unabated, online, through social media channels.

So let's look at DAESH through the global brand lens. Any FMCG marketer will tell you that in building a global brand you need to drive two things concurrently: your equity and your sales. Equity being brand health and momentum – and sales, in this case, being recruitment and conversion.

For perhaps the first time in history, we face the industrialised recruitment of terrorists. This has been driven in part by DAESH's fervour and tenacity, but more significantly by the low cost and far reach of social media.

DAESH is making use of, and benefiting from, new technology's low cost per impression. They are focussing a significant amount of effort on generic volume messages in the hope of securing a tiny percentile return on their investment. A high volume / low probability of conversion strategy.

This is not to say that DAESH don't conduct highly targeted campaigns. They do. But they still undertake volume campaigning as a matter of course, as much for overall brand building as for opportunist recruitment.

This volume messaging is identical to the way in which many large-scale commercial brands operate: the cause of all that junk mail that hits your inbox every morning. Very few people are actually 'in market' for the particular products and services, but the significant wastage is priced into the overall campaign. If even a handful of recipients respond with intent, then the strategy can be considered to have been a success. A more sophisticated and targeted recruitment process can then begin on this much smaller audience segment.

So, can the marketing industry provide any learnings to help overcome this rather crude DAESH volume strategy, and would they want to? Well yes. Because what the marketing industry doesn't know about junk mail, isn't worth knowing. The ability to successfully convert mass prospects into hot leads has built many a multi-billion-dollar marketing business. For once this rather dubious underbelly of our business sector could do society some actual good.

But this isn't just a matter of copying what the marketers do for a living. Rather, understanding how to undermine it. With the advent of new and more successful campaigning techniques, many of these aforementioned big beast mass marketing companies are now at risk of losing their shirts. It's the new emergent industry start-ups that may hold the key to beating DAESH's online volume efforts.

"Smart volume" is the new volume. Programmatic media buying and marketing that enables the buying and selling of advertising space in real time. In simple terms, this is the ability to bid for advertising space online in response to assessed audience demand. An algorithmic solution to ensure that your message reaches the right person, at the right time, in the hope of confirming or disrupting their beliefs and behaviour.

This is the one tool that DAESH doesn't have at its disposal - and it is of course the reason that the likes of Facebook are being courted so vigorously by governments and security services alike. This ability to disrupt DAESH mass messaging with real time counter narratives, targeted specifically at users who have 'hand raised', heralds a new dawn in our collective war of words against the terrorists.

So far so good. There is a new technology that can help 'serve' counter messages to audiences who are responding to DAESH recruitment efforts.

However, there is a catch... and perhaps an opportunity for our sector. This entire process relies on having the right counter narratives to 'ad-serve' at the appropriate time. Mass personalisation relies on a suite of relevant images, films, animations, blogs and content themes to pattern-match and undermine the specific 'pull' of the DAESH content and nudge the audience onto an alternate, positive, path.

Creating this appropriate content is more than simple marketing. It is the preserve of a more robust psychologically-underpinned intervention approach. And this is the opportunity for our national strategic communications capabilities.

Despite the many negative news reports and predictions post-Brexit, this is perhaps one area in which the UK can excel and set the international standards.

Britain has always been amongst the leading pack in terms of its marketing output. Building equity and understanding conversion. This need for a new, upgraded, marketing content solution to counter DAESH throws down an exciting, albeit challenging, gauntlet.

We, the influence industries, need to create a modern fit-for-purpose content stream that is based on assessment, rather than pure creative instinct. Real time, not always ahead of time. This requires new techniques and talents that do away with old mass marketing volume thinking and introduce a more responsive, and responsible, way to affect and measure behaviour change.

It's time for London's best and brightest technology and creative professionals to unite to defeat DAESH - whilst also taking the next step to advance their own respective industries.