

A R E V O L U T I O N

I N A D V E R T I S I N G T E S T I N G

PUBLISHED IN ADMAP
JUL/AUG 2013

When the objective of the communication is to bring about a business outcome such as gaining market share, then the creative idea, execution and subsequent marketing measurement should have as its genesis the buyers' rational (explicit) and emotive (implicit) drivers of that business outcome.

A REVOLUTION IN ADVERTISING TESTING

THE SITUATION

A generation ago, global brands needed consistent metrics for comparison of communications across categories, products and time. Baked into communications processes, these metrics were reported to executives, who became trained to understand them. At the time, these communications testing metrics were the best available tools and became generally accepted practice.

But these measures have now been superseded by advances in understanding how decisions are made. Now we know that to activate a consumer's intention to choose your brand, communications efforts must activate the implicit and explicit actors of behavioural change required to create consumption decisions.

The trouble with the existing metrics is that the drivers of behavioural change are rarely measured. Instead, advertising effectiveness is measured by an array of attention-based measures anchored to normative databases devoid of implicit emotion-based insight or performance on a category-specific hierarchy of rational drivers of consumption.



PROF. JOHN ROBERTS

PROFESSOR OF MARKETING
LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL

THE CHALLENGE

In the last ten years, arguments about the importance and relevance of attention-based metrics have persisted. Indeed, creatives have rightly flagged that only high attention, explicit content was being adequately captured by researchers' recall/disruption/persuasion-based metrics. With the rise in our understanding of the non-conscious mind and the importance of emotion in decision making, the high attention aspect of marketing research is now inadequate as a measure of advertising effectiveness and predicting business outcomes.

HIGH ATTENTION

Traditional pre-tests show respondents an advertisement, then ask a series of generic questions. Such approaches are biased towards explicit, conscious memory—high attention. Advertising designed to work implicitly by associating emotions and feelings with a brand is, in traditional pre-testing methods, less likely to succeed.¹

For the most part, the current communications tests were built on knowledge of consumer behaviour based on last century's Learn-Feel-Do and AIDA (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action) paradigm. These delivered high attention metrics such as;

ENJOYABLE	UNPLEASANT
BELIEVABLE	SOOTHING
APPEALING	ORDINARY
UNDERSTANDING	INVOLVING
RELEVANCE	DISTURBING
UNIQUENESS	GENTLE
ENGAGEMENT	WEAK
INTERESTING	FEEL GOOD
IRRITATING	GENERAL RECALL
PLEASANT	BRAND RECALL
BORING	LIKEABILITY
DISTINCTIVE	PURCHASE INTEREST

...and so on.

The beauty of these high attention metrics, according to Professor John Roberts of the London Business School, is that they are unambiguous, easily measured and comparable across categories. However, he goes on to point out their flaw— they are largely irrelevant to the effect of marketing communications on consumer beliefs, feelings and behaviour.



MARK TRUSS

DIRECTOR OF BRAND INTELLIGENCE
J. WALTER THOMPSON, NYC

These measures assess reactions to communication without considering their relevance as actual drivers of consumers' choice and resultant impact on business outcomes such as driving market share or improving margin.

As Mark Truss, Director of Brand Intelligence J. Walter Thompson, NYC explained:

“Often, copy testing measures the wrong things very well and the right things... hardly at all.”



TONY PALMER

PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL BRANDS & INNOVATION
KIMBERLY-CLARK CORPORATION

DATABASES OF NORMS

The importance of norms is waning, according to Tony Palmer, President of Global Brands & Innovation for Kimberly-Clark Corporation. This is a consequence of the discontinuity caused by online search and social media.

Mr Palmer said that researchers:

“Boasting of tens of thousands of precedents has become somewhat hollow as advertisers have diversified across a range of communications channels, and yet the applied norms have continued to be mainly related to traditional media.”

**JOHN ZEIGLER**

CHAIRMAN & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DDB ASIA PACIFIC, INDIA & JAPAN

Adding a creative agency's view, John Zeigler, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer at DDB Asia Pacific, India and Japan says;

“Marketing remains relatively embryonic, and only recently is it starting to show some points of maturity... Until now, norms have been used because advertisers were spending tens of millions of dollars and needed to hold onto something that might approximate what that money was going to deliver. Norms provided that semblance of confidence, but they are being superseded by predictive modelling.”

He didn't stop there;

“Thank you for your service norms, but, predictive modelling will take it from here.”

WHERE TO START?

Understanding the hierarchy of consumption drivers must now inform the creative idea. While in many agencies this happens through the insight and instinct of those working on the account, the chances of success can be greatly improved if such intuition is systematically informed, as John Zeigler suggests, by quantitative predictive modelling of the rational driver (the reason to believe) and emotions catalyst (the implicit detonator) of consumption choice.

This situation is analogous to the post-World War II total quality movement inspired by W. Edwards Deming (1900–1993), whereby the Japanese shifted from inspecting the quality of finished goods to building quality into the manufacturing process. The creative brief and the advertising effectiveness measures jointly need to contain the most commercially effective reason to believe and the primary driving emotion to activate the requisite behavioural change.

But given the incumbent testing environment, how will the creative idea that is based on the quantitatively verified rational and implicit emotive drivers—aka the Behavioural Change Agents—ever successfully make it past the researchers' high attention measurement screening?

As a step to producing creative that results in changes in market share and raising profitability, we should lay a foundation as a principle for assessing the commercial potential of creative:

When the objective of the communication is to bring about a business outcome such as gaining market share, then the creative idea, execution and subsequent marketing measurement should have as its genesis the buyers' rational (explicit) and emotive (implicit) drivers of that business outcome.

For our purposes here, I will refer to this as the 'Consumption Drivers Principle'. This is a rudimentary idea, yet in practice it seems curiously novel to many brand owners, creative agencies and marketing researchers.

THE CONSUMPTION
DRIVERS PRINCIPLE



**MIKE EWING**

 PROFESSOR OF MARKETING
 MONASH UNIVERSITY

BUILT ON BEDROCK

As previously stated, inherent in the Consumption Drivers Principle is the idea that maximising the economic benefit arising from the communication of the creative idea is best achieved when the core of that idea connects powerfully to consumers' rational and emotive drivers, identified through quantitative modelling.

Indeed, there is ample evidence of organisations that have been able to substantially raise market share via optimising their communications: specifically, by linking the brand more firmly with the derived drivers of market share.²

According to Professor Michael Ewing of Monash University, this principle follows a similar underlying logic to Andrew Ehrenberg's (1926–2010) differentiation-saliency paradox, wherein Ehrenberg implored creative agencies to worry less about striving obsessively for (often irrelevant) differentiation in advertising, and focus on demonstrating how the brand outperforms competitors on the category salient dimensions that matter most.

What is relatively new to the world is the insight fraternity's ability to measure the relative performance of the rational and emotive choice

drivers and, from this, to accurately predict changes in market share. Marketers have been slow to employ this new found capability, overlooking a powerful new source of advantage.

As Rory Sutherland has noted elsewhere:

“The record of the marketing services community to what seems to be a Copernican revolution in the behavioural sciences has so far been mostly notable by its absence. The past reaction to earlier work... which challenges assumptions with real empirical evidence, suggests that marketers may do what they usually do: show great interest and appreciation of this new information before carrying on doing what they have always done.³”

RORY SUTHERLAND

 EXECUTIVE CREATIVE DIRECTOR
 & VICE-CHAIRMAN
 OGILVYONE, UK

THE ACCOUNT PLANNING PERFORMANCE

Account planners may be best placed to reform the current communications testing regime. A generation ago, in their evolutionary quest to provide a sure-fire consumer-generated seed for the creative idea, communications agencies developed an internal resource named 'account planning'. The essential function of the account planner today is to guide the creative process towards the client's commercial objective.

One means for this reformation is to cement two pieces of quantitative insight into the creative brief. These ideas will increase the probability of the campaign achieving the client's expected business outcomes. It is no surprise that these are category, or segment, specific:

1 EXPLICIT DRIVERS:
Derived rational purchase drivers that display reasonable competitive performance ('reason to believe' or cognitive learning task candidates); and

2 IMPLICIT DRIVERS:
Discrete emotions underpinning consumption behaviour.

This reformation is not about removing artistic license from creatives. It is about prescribing the explicit and implicit precincts within which the creatives should be encouraged to explore ideas, knowing that these precincts are quantitatively verified drivers of behaviour, therefore underpinning business outcomes. (Creativity has been found to be enhanced when it is systematically informed, causing efforts to be focussed).

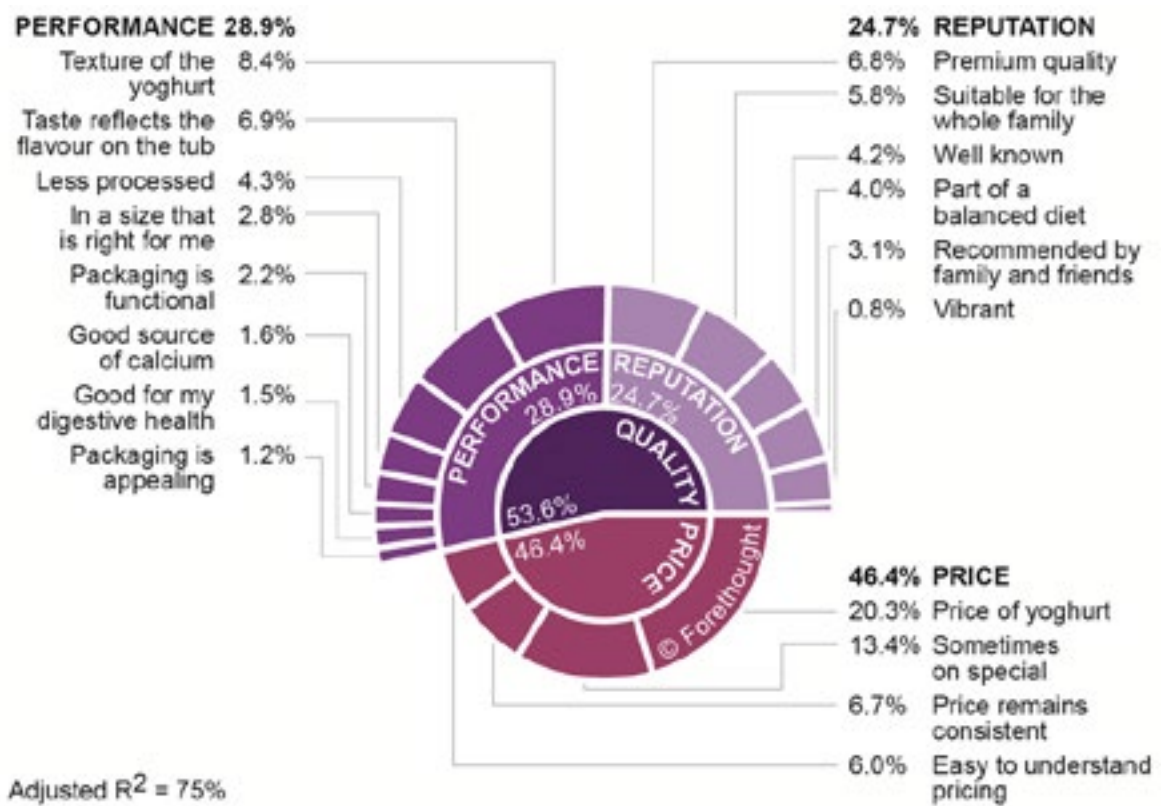
For the Consumption Drivers Principle to be successful, the client should join the journey and include research that informs, predicts and then measures behavioural activation, removing the risk of reliance on only attention-based metrics.

THE TWO ELEMENTS OF THE PRINCIPLE

1 EXPLICIT DRIVERS:
TEACH THEM THAT...

The first task is the ‘reason to believe,’ which is a cognitive learning task that you expect the prospective customer to undergo. This should be explicitly communicated and requires high attention if it is to be recalled. It should be drawn from the hierarchy of statistically verifiable rational drivers of market share (See **Figure 1**). In the exhibit (shown to the right), the percentages indicate the relative importance of each rational driver of consumption behaviour.

The classic marketing value chain calls for an organisation to choose value, create value and then communicate value. The hierarchy of rational drivers allows the brand owner to select the strongest candidates for the reason to believe. Of course, reasonable relative competitive performance should be achieved first before that reason to believe is communicated.



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FIGURE 1.
Explicit/Rational Choice Drivers for Yoghurt—
Australia

2 IMPLICIT COMMUNICATIONS TASK: MAKE THEM FEEL...

The second element of the marketing communication is to activate an emotion—the implicit communication task.

As the Advertising Research Foundation concluded after its review of neuromarketing methods in 2011, marketers need to recognise the importance of emotions in advertising.⁴ Emotions are not just the next marketing punchline—they are non-conscious behavioural detonators.

Put quite simply, in the absence of an emotional catalyst, consumers cannot decide.

Research shows that the relative importance of rational versus emotional drivers varies by category, as does the relative importance of discrete emotions within category, and indeed within segment.

The discrete emotions underpinning consumption behaviour must be identified and quantified. From a marketing communications perspective, there are three questions to be addressed:

- 1 For my product category, what are the discrete emotions that drive purchase behaviour and their relative importance?
- 2 Is my brand's current and past communication effective at eliciting these discrete emotions?
- 3 How much of these discrete emotions does each of the competitive set of brands elicit?

Unlike the rational reason to believe that can be changed with each campaign, an emotion should be chosen for the long term—perhaps in perpetuity—and communicated implicitly. Creative that explicitly attempts to elicit an emotion fails in that objective.

Here the objective is to create and strengthen neural pathways as marketers emotionally tag associations, goals and decisions aligned with choosing a specific brand.

An example of the implicit drivers of market share can be found at **Figure 2**. The percentages relate to the relative importance of each discrete emotion in driving category consumption behaviour.



* Non-significant driver

FIGURE 2.
Implicit Brand Drivers for Gasoline—
USA, 2011

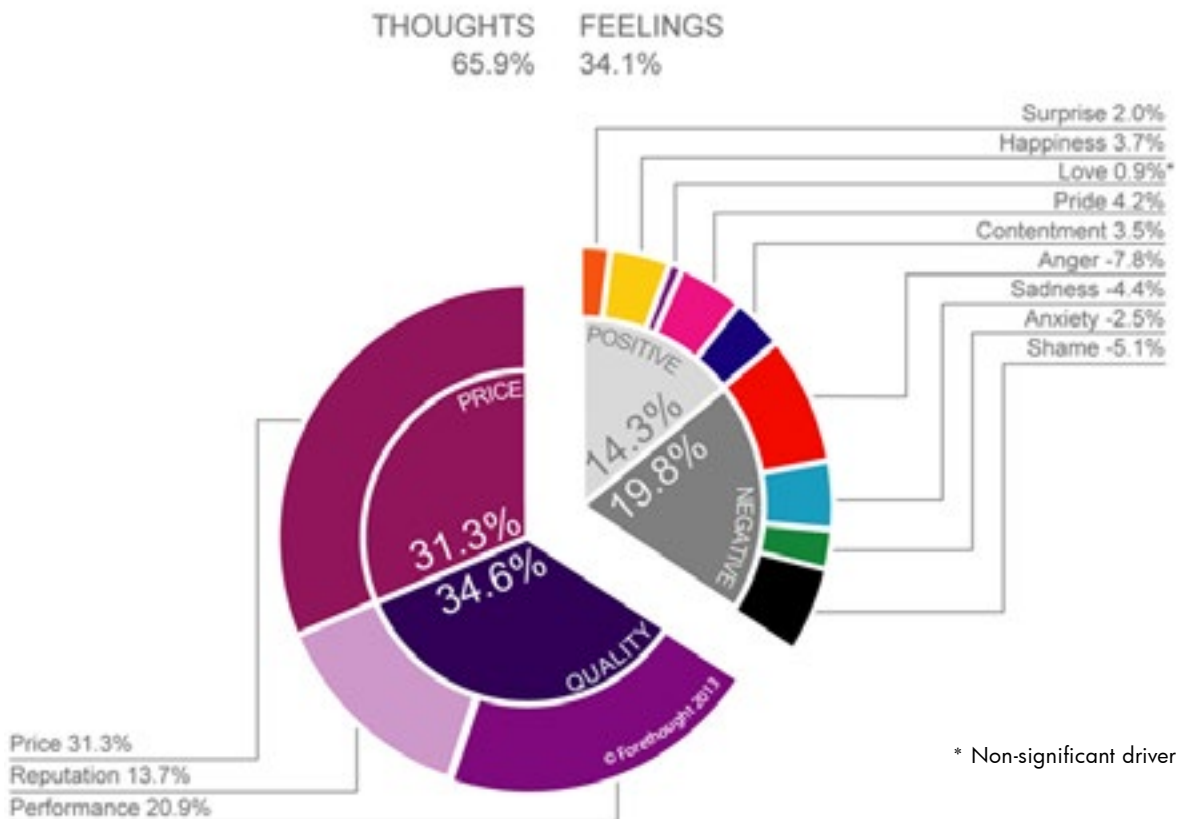
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Modelling the rational versus the emotive drivers, in this case using Prophecy Thoughts & Feelings®, reveals the relative importance of the drivers of choice (Figure 3). Thoughts (rational) and Feelings (emotive) differ by category, as well as by brand and segment.

In this premium gasoline example, the high-level rational drivers—price and quality—are close to equally important (price is more important than quality for regular gasoline). Negative emotions dominated by anger (associated with the Deepwater Horizon disaster) are more important than positive emotions.

Both the reason to believe and the discrete emotion should be outputs from the foundation research commissioned by the account planners and/or the clients and used in developing the creative idea. Pre-testing should then examine these two elements and be able to report if the communication is effectively enhancing the explicit and implicit performance of the brand.

In summary, the insight that aids the construction of the creative work should form the benchmarks to be used to test the effectiveness of the proposed communication in the pre and post-test research, since these are what are related to subsequent consumer behaviour.



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FIGURE 3. Importance of Rational and Emotive Drivers for Gasoline—USA, 2011

CONCLUSION

When the objective of the communication is to change a business outcome—for example, to increase market share or raise margin—then the Consumption Drivers Principle should form the foundation for developing communications and for measuring its effectiveness, from copy testing through to brand tracking. The Consumption Drivers Principle is based on predictive modelling that reveals the buyers' rational and emotional drivers.

Presently, much research primarily focuses on aging, high attention metrics rather than identifying the rational and emotive drivers of market share and then measuring the change in the drivers of market share as a consequence of the creative.

Reasons to believe need to be based on the rational market share drivers. Similarly, emotion should be based on a hierarchy of discrete emotions also found to be linked to consumption behaviour.

The creative fraternity is well placed to lead the reformation by changing the insight that its own account and strategic planning function feeds into the creative idea. If that can be achieved, then there is some prospect that the client's next communication will have as its foundation verified rational and emotive drivers of consumption behaviour.



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