

ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS



## Dated Notions About Advertising Recall and Persuasion: Not Really That Important

[By Mark Sneider, Senior Vice President of AcuPOLL]

Finding the Emotional Impact Significantly Impacts Brand

Why do consumers remember and act on the advertising they witness? In the beginning, advertising recall mattered, right? It is likely that the undying support for recall was actually a conspiracy orchestrated by manufacturers who believed more in functional messaging and less in the power of the emotional bond advertising can create.

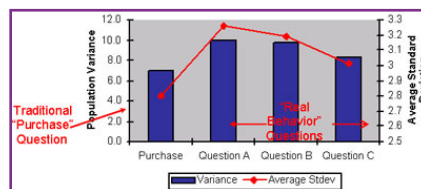
During the 2002 Advertising Research Federation conference, UniLever presented findings that indicated that recall most strongly correlated with functional messaging, an element that historically has not been a big driver in establishing ownable, differentiating equities for brands—which all successful brand executives know is the key to long-standing, successful positions in the marketplace.

Another dated theory suggests that persuasion also matters—but was the persuasion measure really all that helpful? Historically, marketers haven't seen much discrimination among advertisements using traditional persuasion measures, nor have traditional methodologies accurately distinguished among ads' performance levels when they claim that an ad performs "at," "below," or "above" the norm. Data suggests that it is the very rare case that ads perform statistically differently from each other in standardized testing.

Our experience testing ads for clients is that traditional "purchase questions" like "How likely would you be to buy this product after seeing this ad?" do a poor job of accurately reflecting how a consumer really reacts after seeing an ad. Purchase questions don't do a good job of distinguishing between ads in helping determine an ad's ultimate success. As the chart below indicates, questions that more appropriately measure the "real" behavior after seeing ads are more discriminating and appropriate measures of how a consumer reacts after seeing an ad—and should be used as a more actionable discriminator when testing advertising.

### Traditional Purchase Questions versus Other Behavioral Questions

In the end, what matters most is how an ad shapes a consumer's perception of the brand. This is not to suggest that purchase doesn't matter; however, it simply matters less, and successful brand executives need to recognize this reality. The brands that succeed on a long-term basis are those able to form strong, differentiating emotional



bonds with consumers. Without this bond, a brand's relevance and connectivity with a consumer is not sustainable—too much of a functional connection can result in lost meaning, lost loyalty, and lost sales.

Take, as an example, the following brands: Gee Your Hair Smells Terrific, Oldsmobile, and Wilson—all brands that rested their fortunes on the value of their functional benefits and not the emotional connection made with their target consumers. Where are they today? They certainly are not the leaders in their respective categories. Without a more emotional messaging strategy, consumers had a hard time understanding what made these brands different, why they should stay loyal to them when comparable brands entered the marketplace, and how they possess a meaningful place in their lives.

On the flip side, consider brands like Pantene, Volvo, and Nike—all brands that have not only pushed functional messaging, but have done an excellent job building a relationship with their consumers, making them feel like they are partners with the brand.

The challenge for most marketers and agencies today is a) understanding what emotional messaging is being transferred to the consumer and how this messaging impacts the perception of the brand, and b) identifying what, if any, changes are necessary to push the brand's defining equity in the right direction. It's one thing to have a well-defined creative brief, but completely another to unearth how an ad connects on a deeper emotional level and what this means for your brand.



What makes this so challenging is that consumers have a hard time expressing an emotional reaction to an ad. When you ask a consumer what they like or don't like about an ad, they usually dial down into the executional components of the ad: "I didn't like the way she looked"; "He seemed too fake to me"; "That food looked really delicious."

And most research methodologies today don't have a sound formula for unearthing the deeper emotional connection made with an ad. In quantitative testing of this question, we have found that consumers' responses were quite functional and executional descriptions, absent of any emotion.

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Absent of the ability to unearth these emotions, marketers and agencies are left with a huge void. Without an understanding of how advertising impacts deeper consumer emotions, it will be impossible for marketers to truly understand the long-term, equity-building impact of their advertising campaigns.

Consider another: fortunately for the Lycra brand, they were able to unearth the deeper emotional connections made by the ad campaigns they tested in a 2003 “shootout”. By using specific “unarticulated emotional elicitation” techniques, they were able to unearth the central emotional drivers that have since helped shape a more compelling and differentiating equity for the brand.

As background, over the last five to ten years Lycra has increasingly faced challenges from generic offerings, making it harder, without stronger emotional messaging, to distinguish itself from the competition. The charge for the three agencies involved in this “shootout” was to better create a unique and ownable positioning for the Lycra brand. Successful agency executives and brand managers alike understand the importance of consumer testing and developing this connection.

At the end of the day, the “Has It” campaign proved to be the most powerful of the three campaigns tested, primarily for reasons of its ability to connect with consumers on a deeper emotional level. Consumers played back feelings that suggested wearing Lycra would make them feel sexier, more confident, more beautiful—all benefits which consumers associated very positively with the brand. The stronger emotional messaging helped consumers feel a greater sense of ownership with the brand and feel more positive about what the brand had to offer.

“Has It” was launched in late 2003 and has thus far proved to be an effective campaign for the Lycra brand. It served as the cornerstone for a major restage of the brand not only here in the United States but also in major markets worldwide.

Key Measures  
Among Total Panel\*

	Mean Ratings
<u>Motivational Impact</u>	
“Has It”	<b><u>7.6/T</u></b>
Campaign B	6.8/T
Campaign C	5.6/M
<u>Effectiveness at Communicating Benefits</u>	
“Has It”	<b><u>8.5/T</u></b>
Campaign B	5.5/B
Campaign C	4.8/B
<u>For Someone Else/For Someone Like You</u>	
“Has It”	<b><u>7.3</u></b>
Campaign B	6.7
Campaign C	5.2
<u>More Neg/Pos Feelings About Brand</u>	
“Has It”	<b><u>8.5</u></b>
Campaign B	7.4
Campaign C	6.1

\* Top/Mid/Bot Tier Comparison to U.S. Master Database

Bolded, underlined ratings indicate significant differences between “Has It” and other campaigns.

Overall, brand executives and researchers need to recognize that while testing is important, the quality of the data gathered and how it is interpreted is critical to the success and longevity of the brand. Methods can vary widely, but understanding how good ideas can be made better, particularly from an emotional connection standpoint, will allow researchers to provide better and more actionable information to the brand team. The team, in turn, will significantly increase its chances of success.

With a staggering number of new products on the market and an even more staggering

number of failures, the use of an advertising methodology that goes beyond traditional measures to help assess things like the “deeper” emotional impact of advertising, marketers will be more successful.

About Mark Sneider

Mark Sneider holds a masters degree in marketing and economics from the Kellogg Graduate School of Business at Northwestern University. Sneider also holds a B.S. in marketing from Miami of Ohio. Sneider started his career serving clients at DDB Needham in Chicago prior to attending Kellogg. Prior to joining AcuPOLL in 1999, Sneider worked in Marketing for S.C. Johnson, Andrew Jergens, and O-Cedar Brands. Sneider’s AcuPOLL experience includes work in the food, financial and insurance services, pharmaceutical, durable goods, and personal care categories.

About AcuPOLL

With world headquarters in Cincinnati, Ohio, AcuPOLL Research, Inc., is a global brand-building research agency that uses a patented system to provide companies with clear business recommendations based on a thorough analysis of customized data. AcuPOLL provides the fastest, most predictive, and most accurate research methodology. Over the past ten years, AcuPOLL has quantitatively tested over 30,000 new product ideas and ads, giving it the largest, most current database in the marketing industry. AcuPOLL has predicted the success of new products, services, mail-order-catalog items, retail concepts, advertising, promotions, and business services. AcuPOLL is an internationally recognized company with offices in the United States, Asia, Europe, Mexico, and South America. More information can be accessed at [www.acupoll.com](http://www.acupoll.com) or by calling 513.943.0020.