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WHITE PAPER

Brand Linkage and Advertising That Builds Brands

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What is Brand Linkage?

We have all had the experience of hearing someone say, “I saw a great commercial on television last night—though I’m not sure whom it was for.” The reaction of a professional to that statement is to conclude that the advertiser probably just wasted some money because the essence of great advertising is that it builds brands. Advertising that does not communicate—in a memorable way—the identity of the brand that it is selling, cannot be great advertising no matter how entertaining or emotionally arousing it is. Brand Linkage is the business concept that the experience of a television commercial should be linked somehow to the experience of a brand in order to grow the business.

Why is Brand Linkage Important?

Impact on Market Share

It is quite possible that unbranded advertising could drive sales in a category. That is why it has become popular in recent years to use television advertising to sell milk or raisins or a drug-free lifestyle. It is quite likely that all of the advertising for e-commerce is a major factor driving interest in the Internet. But if a commercial sells without branding its sales message, the benefits of that advertising will be expected to accrue to all the players in the category in proportion to the market share they currently have. To gain competitive advantage, however, a commercial must be branded. An effective, branded commercial will grow an advertiser’s share of market in addition to any possible effects it has on the size of the market. Put simply, a branded commercial will increase an advertiser’s slice of the category pie, and if the pie grows too, so much the better!

The Advertising Model—Linking Execution and Strategy

According to the Ameritest® Advertising Model, a strong advertising execution will attract the Attention of a large audience for the advertiser’s message (large being relative to media spending) and a strong strategic promise will motivate the target audience to do business with the advertiser. Based on validation work we have done for a number of our clients, we know that Attention and Motivation are independent or uncorrelated variables. In other words, knowing whether or not you have a commercial that will attract the attention of the audience tells you nothing about whether or not you will sell them anything. In addition, knowing whether or not your brand’s message is motivating tells you nothing about whether or not you will get anyone to pay attention to your commercial. Attention and Motivation are the yin and yang of the advertising experience. Brand Linkage is the bridge between these two advertising variables. Brand Linkage is linked to both the advertising execution and the brand motivation and is the thing that makes the selling experience into a whole.

How does Ameritest® Measure Brand Linkage?

Top of Mind Versus Aided Measures

Brand Linkage is measured after a respondent has seen the test ad in the clutter reel of other advertising. Brand Linkage is coded from the verbatim responses given in answer to the question, “What commercials, if any, did you find interesting?” Respondents who use the brand name when referring to the test commercial as one of the ads they found interesting are counted toward the Brand Linkage Score.

As you can see, the measure of Brand Linkage that we use is a top of mind measure, in that we are looking to see whether or not the respondent is using the brand name, in an unprompted way, as the handle for retrieving recall of the advertising. This is quite different from the question of whether or not the viewer actually understood or comprehended who was the sponsor of the advertising, which is a measure of confusion that is collected later in the interview. The measure of Brand Linkage is analogous to the measure of unaided versus aided or prompted brand name recall, which is commonly found in telephone tracking studies of advertising effectiveness. Based on our validation work with other clients, the top of mind measure of Brand Linkage is more discriminating across commercials (and therefore is a more useful measure of commercial performance) and more predictive of in-market results.

Threshold Levels for Attention

Keep in mind that the respondent base that is used to measure Brand Linkage is the sample of respondents who found the test commercial to be interesting, not the entire sample used in the study. For example, if the Attention Score (or interested recall) is 50% among the sample of 150 respondents, then the base size for the Brand Linkage Score is only 75 respondents.

Two things happen to the Brand Linkage measure as the Attention Score decreases. First, the measure itself becomes more unreliable as the base size gets smaller. Second, below some minimum threshold level of Attention, around 25%, the Brand Linkage Score tends to get quite a bit better. For example, it is not unusual to see a Brand Linkage Score of 100% for a commercial if the Attention Score is only 15%. We have noticed this phenomenon quite frequently in the scores for competitive commercials that are very low in attention-getting power. Our interpretation of this threshold effect is that, as the executional appeal of a commercial falls off, it increasingly calls out to only a very loyal

core user base of that brand, the audience for whom the brand is most meaningful and most top-of-mind already. Above this threshold, Brand Linkage and Attention tend to become less correlated measures so that a highly attention-getting execution may or may not have good Brand Linkage.

The Advertising: Film

The key to visual communication is understanding that all communication is interactive. Half of the experience of watching a television commercial is what ideas and images the advertiser puts into the ad, but the other half is what the viewer brings to the party—based on his or her own life experience, beliefs and attitudes. (That's why the up-front strategic research is so important to the communications process.) Visual perception, according to Professor Rudolf Arnheim, author of *Visual Thinking*, is not a passive recording of stimulus material—the eye is not a camera—but rather it is an active process of visual perception. And, according to an old saw in science, there is no such thing as immaculate perception. Visually-effective, brand-building advertising begins, therefore, with a proper respect for the intelligent eye of the viewer.

The process of perception is the process of selection. Out of the vast stream of sensory data continuously flowing toward us at every moment, what are the images and sounds and other information that the mind, or rather its gatekeeper the eye, chooses to select out as important enough to let into our consciousness? The Ameritest Flow of Attention® graph is literally a map of the process of selective perception, with the images of your commercial filtered through the intelligent eyes of your target audience. It is a diagnostic research tool designed to help you understand how well the viewer has processed the visuals in your commercial. (Psychologically, this is the process of cognition.) It can help you understand how quickly a viewer is hooked into the commercial and which images are in the foreground of

viewer thought and therefore very memorable—focal points of attention—and which visuals are in the background of conscious attention and therefore less well remembered. Finally, it can tell you whether or not there are any discontinuities in the flow, where the viewer's attention unexpectedly wanders from the intended flow of visual communication.

The following guidelines are based on research findings from the study of the flow of viewer attention to the visuals in literally hundreds of television commercials. These are not intended to be hard and fast rules for commercial film making, but merely summarize our experience with what works in television advertising. Keep in mind that if you choose to ignore any particular guideline in a commercial you are creating you should do so deliberately, thus breaking rules in order to achieve the intended creative effect that you have in mind.

Visualization: Visualize the brand identity, don't just say it in the copy.

While it's obvious, it's so important it bears repeating anyway. Since television is primarily a visual medium, the key to effective Brand Linkage is visualization. If you have a problem with Brand Linkage in a commercial, trying to fix it by only making changes to the copy usually does not work.

Framing: Establish the category frame of reference as soon as possible.

Just as framing a picture is important for achieving a particular esthetic effect, framing the communication of ideas in a commercial is important for achieving a branding effect. At the beginning of a commercial you can be sure the viewer's mind is anywhere but where you want it to be. The average respondent is not waiting to receive a message from you—or from any other brand. In order to prepare each member of the audience to receive a message from the brand it is important to provide category cues so that the viewer will be in the correct frame of mind

for processing the communication correctly

Exception: The reveal. The major exception to this rule is the reveal, which is the technique of deliberately keeping the viewer in the dark or off balance about the real subject of the commercial until very late in the commercial in order to achieve a dramatic, surprise ending. While this technique can be quite effective, and is a hallmark of good storytelling, it also carries a high degree of risk in the cluttered world of television because if you are not successful in holding viewer attention until the very end you can end up with completely unbranded advertising. Another reason this technique appears to be very heavily used in contemporary advertising is the implicit creative assumption that the category being advertised is not really that involving so that the audience needs to be hooked into paying attention to the brand message in some other way.

Continuity: Create a unified selling proposition.

Continuity consists of weaving the threads of the different ideas in the commercial together in order to create a unified whole. The most obvious continuity structure from the world of film making is the convention of beginning a sequence with a wide shot, cutting to a medium shot and finally to a close-up: wide, medium, close-up. To translate this idea into the world of advertising, you need to remember that continuity consists of weaving together different selling ideas into a unified selling proposition. To continue the example above, continuity in constructing a selling proposition would consist of beginning a sequence with a categorical situation, cutting to the brand, and finally delivering the sales message: category, brand, message. Another example of a continuity device would be problem-solution commercials. Montage, another continuity device, involves the use of multiple brief images that express and often emphasize a single meaning or brand emotion. MTV-type montage advertising can be quite effective but only if continuity is maintained by focusing sin-

gle mindedly on one branding idea. Violations of continuity, or the logic of the sale, frequently underlie problems with Brand Linkage.

Focusing: Make sure the brand is in a focal point of viewer attention at least once in the ad.

In composing a photograph, some elements in the picture will be in the foreground, creating the focal points of a viewer's attention, and other elements will be in the background, creating context. The same is true of a television commercial—the only difference is that the focal points of attention exist in time, rather than in space. The primary use of the Ameritest Flow of Attention® picture graph is to identify what images in the commercial are in the foreground of audience thought and attention—those that plot relatively high on the attention curve—and what images remain in the background—those images that plot relatively low on the attention curve. The key to effective Brand Linkage is that for at least one clear moment in the thirty-second flow of images, the brand is in the center of the field of viewer consciousness. This is the branding image to which all the other thoughts and feelings created in the film will be linked.

Transitions: Lead the viewer's attention to the brand.

Shots exist in relation to other shots. When considering the placement of the brand in the flow of images in the commercial, it is necessary to consider the rhythm of ideas that come before and after. The concept of rhythm is connected with that of expectation—rhythm implies that after one film event occurs in the Flow of Attention®, the viewer expects the next film event. It is essential to note that the looking forward is not with certainty but with expectation. Discontinuities in the Flow of Attention® generally occur when the sequence of ideas and images changes direction unexpectedly, without a proper transition. For example, simply cutting to a shot of the brand at an unexpected moment in the flow can result in poor recall for that brand image and weaken Brand Linkage.

Camera Distance: Use close-ups to move the viewer emotionally closer to the brand.

Camera distance is one of the key factors determining emotional response to the shot. Close-ups create an emotional intimacy or emphasis. More distant shots are cooler emotionally. Since one of the more important goals of advertising is to create an emotional bond between the customer and the brand, camera distance should be used to modulate the emotional distance between your customer and the brand. For example, as a visual rehearsal of the brand-adoption process, you might use the camera to move viewer perceptions from the cooler, more rational and distant perceptions of the non-user of the brand to the close, emotional attachment of the brand's core user.

Zooming: Zoom in to make the viewer read the brand name, zoom out to shift attention to the visual.

Similar to the process of cutting from wide to medium to close-up, zooming in with a camera is a process of focusing the viewer's attention. Zooming in on a brand name (or a set of words in general) has the psychological effect of causing the viewer to read what is on the screen. Conversely, zooming out shifts attention to the visual gestalt of what is on the screen—for example, a package shot. Think of this camera technique in terms of the process of drawing into a book versus stepping back to look at the whole picture. Because Brand Linkage is a verbal recall measure, zooming in on the name to encourage reading will tend to improve the Brand Linkage Score.

Camera Movement: Avoid panning across the letters of the brand name.

Panning across a long brand name is sometimes done to take advantage of the power of film to make the name feel more dynamic. However, this is a technique that may not create strong Brand Linkage. When people read they perceive whole words, as a gestalt, and do not visually take in words one letter at a time.

Camera Angle: Avoid low-angle shots of the brand.

Unusual camera angles can evoke strong viewer emotions but they can also be confusing and imply unintended symbolic messages. Low-angle shots of the brand convey power and authority, but also imply the attitude that the brand is talking down to the customer.

Within the Frame: Avoid divided attention within the frame.

Because the amount of time that a given frame is on screen is under the control of the advertiser and not the viewer, you should not assume that the viewer will focus on more than one thought within the frame. Copy and a congruent image express a single thought and so agree with this principle.

Exception: Side by side comparison. With comparison advertising, placement of a brand side-by-side with its competitor implies consumer choice. The implication of being on the left side is that the advertised brand should be their first choice. Putting the advertised brand on the right side, therefore, is more likely to cause misattribution and lead to incorrect Brand Linkage.

Duration: Pause on the brand to peak attention.

The actual threshold of perception for registering stimuli, such as the brand, varies as a function of a number of factors, such as the amount of contrast in the image, the response time of the particular viewer, etc. Moreover, the longer the brand is on screen the more likely it is to become a focal point in the Flow of Attention®—as the image burns in to viewer attention. In other words, pausing on the brand is a good way to peak attention. As a general rule, a brand that is on screen for much less than a second is unlikely to register with the majority of your audience.

Tempo: Register the brand on the beat of the editing tempo.

Getting the editing tempo right is one of the

most artful and intuitive parts of film making. In a sense, the film editor is engaged in a kind of virtual dance with the viewer—you can lead, but the viewer must follow. The importance of rhythmic structure in all forms of communication is being studied by a number of researchers.

Rhythm and beat in language, for example, help us to organize the information in a face-to-face conversation to avoid cognitive overload by focusing on predictable, strategic moments to pay attention. In spoken language, the words you stress are the important ones, and you automatically speed up or slow down on the words in between so that the major points of stress form a regular chain of beats.

Researchers have found that the beat is when speakers often convey key information and bring up new topics.

An early film theorist, Raymond Spotiswoode, suggested that in film a cut should be made at the peak of the “content curve,” which is the point in the shot at which the audience has been able to absorb most of its information. If you wait too long for the cut, the shot begins to drag and get boring. If you cut too soon many in the audience may miss the meaning and get confused. In the end, all the intended meanings of the commercial are intended to be attached to the brand, therefore somewhere in the flow of the commercial there should be one clear moment when an impression of the brand falls on the beat of the editing tempo. Another way of thinking about the Flow of Attention® graph is that it shows you, from your audience’s perspective, the visual beats in the commercial and whether or not the brand is on one.

Repetition: Use repetition to strengthen branding.

While it is most important that a brand impression occurs at least once in a clear focal point of viewer attention, it is also true that simple repetition of the brand can improve memorability and the branding process. If you accept the notion that repetition is useful in a particular commercial,

then the question becomes, how many times should the brand identity be repeated? As an opinion, let us suggest the rule of three. The logic for this is the same as the logic for using three vignettes per commercial in that particular genre of advertising. To prove a point, once is a curiosity, twice is a coincidence, and three times begins to form a pattern.

This also fits with the ideas of the respected advertising researcher Krugman who held that, from a media buying standpoint, three exposures are needed to optimize the impact of a television commercial. His argument is that the three exposures correspond to three questions that are subconsciously asked by the television viewer:
1st exposure: What *is* it? 2nd exposure: What *about* it? 3rd exposure: What *of* it?

Brand Identifiers: Identify the brand in a variety of ways. To get good Brand Linkage in your advertising it is necessary to focus the viewer's attention on a strong brand impression—but this does not necessarily mean the brand has to be identified only by the brand name. One of the advantages well-established brands have is that other ways of identifying the brand being advertised have been built up by advertising over time. One of the current hypotheses about IBM advertising is that the blue letterbox is becoming a telegraphic cue to the IBM target audience that they are watching an IBM commercial—which may be one factor causing the improvement in IBM Brand Linkage Scores over time.

The following is a list of some of the different ways the identity of a brand might be cued in a television commercial:

Name: This is the most straightforward way of identifying the brand. But for new products, or in some categories such as pharmaceuticals, names that are difficult to read or ambiguous in their pronunciation can be difficult to work with creatively.

Symbols: Which brand is identified by the symbol of the golden arches? Which telephone company is identified by the symbol of a pin dropping? A symbol or visual icon can become a very telegraphic cue to the identity of the brand being advertised. Moreover, some symbols can also become mnemonics, or memory aids, for encoding in a highly compressed way, a fundamental promise of the brand. For example, Sprint's pin drop symbol also reminds the viewer of the brand's promise of unsurpassed sound clarity or transmission quality on the Sprint phone system.

Slogan: Which brand tells you to "Just Do It"? Which brand asks you, "Where do you want to go today?" A well-known slogan is one way of contributing to the identification of the brand being advertised, as well as summarizing a positioning idea.

Trade characters: When viewers in the eastern United States see the actor/spokesperson talking about telecommunications they are quick to realize that the brand he is talking about is Bell Atlantic. When viewers anywhere see Bill Gates they know the brand is Microsoft. Charlie Chaplin was a strong identifier for IBM during the early years of personal computers. Identifiable characters, as Disney has learned better than any other company, can be powerful assets in building strong brands.

The Advertising: Copy

Ameritest® tends to emphasize the visual component of television advertising, based on the belief that television is primarily about the pictures, not the words. In part, our approach is intended to counteract what we believe is a historically-based bias of researchers who favor copytesting television commercials. However, don't let that fool you into thinking that we believe the copy is unimportant. Indeed, we believe that television is a multimedia or multi-sensory experience and all of the elements of the commercial need to work together to create a unified whole.

In particular, we believe that one of the best ways to create brand-building advertising is to use the medium effectively for storytelling. One of the most powerful aids to memory has always been the art of storytelling. Primitive people cemented their tribal relationships by passing on their core values and beliefs through the oral tradition of storytelling around the campfire. Today, brands tell their stories with the bright, flickering images of television to create the lore and loyalty of a valuable brand franchise. To accomplish this, words are needed to focus the meaning of the images the viewer is watching.

Narrative/Brand Integration: The role of the brand should be clear and essential.

The role of the brand should be clear and essential to the action of the story. That does not mean that the brand must be the center of attention all of the time—but it should never be an afterthought in the viewers mind. One way to tell if you have satisfied this requirement is to see if viewers can play back the commercial in their own words without referring to the brand! If they can, the brand is not very tightly woven into the narrative structure of the commercial and Brand Linkage is not likely to be strong.

Creating Brand Drama: Place the brand at the turning point in the drama.

One of the great ad men of the twentieth century, Leo Burnett, frequently admonished his younger creatives to find the “inherent drama” of the product. He believed that every brand had some connection to people’s lives that could be made into a good story. Now one of the key elements of a good story is that it should create dramatic tension—for example, the struggle between good and evil. Sometimes in advertising, negative emotions are deliberately evoked at the beginning of a commercial in order to make the ultimate promise of the brand seem more dramatic and larger than life. (Sometimes in a commercial it’s okay to have things the viewer doesn’t like—you can’t have heroes with-

out villains.) The important thing for this genre of advertising is that there be some resolution to the negative emotions and that the brand receives the credit for the resolution of the emotional conflict or change in emotional state. In a commercial of this type there is usually a key moment in the commercial—an emotional pivot point—when emotions turn from negative to positive or down to up, a kind of phase transition between the viewer’s resonant emotional states. This moment is a key branding moment. It is the point in the drama when the brand gets to play the hero. From a Brand Linkage standpoint, this climactic moment is the time during the flow of the action when the identity of the brand should be clearly in the center of the viewer’s attention.

Audio/Visual Sync: Make the pictures and words work together.

To reinforce a communication point it is important that the information the viewer is receiving through the visual channel be coordinated with the information being received through the audio channel. For example, showing the brand while a voice over says the brand name out loud keeps the viewer’s mind focused. To do otherwise, that is, to show one visual idea while conveying a different auditory idea divides attention and creates dissonance.

Exception: Sometimes an interesting effect can be achieved by creating contrast between what you are seeing in the pictures and what you are hearing on the audio channel. As a classic example of this, Woody Allen created a very funny comedy, “What’s Up Tiger Lilly,” by taking a serious, grade B Japanese action movie and dubbing comic dialogue over the original soundtrack. The unexpected juxtaposition of sound and image was quite effective. This technique has also been frequently used in television commercials where unexpected sound effects are played against predictable imagery to transform our experience of the ordinary.

The Advertising: Music

Focusing Attention: Use music to focus attention on a branding moment.

Anyone who has ever watched a silent movie understands the importance of music in generating interest and emotion and carrying the viewer's attention forward in a piece of film. There is, in fact, evidence that a music track can actually increase the rate at which a viewer processes the visual information in a commercial. From a branding standpoint, one of the important uses of music is to create an accent, that is to emphasize a key point in time, such as a branding moment, when the audience is cued by the music to pay particular attention to what is happening on screen.

Signature: Create a musical signature.

One technique that can be used to strengthen the identification of the brand being advertised in the commercial is to create a recognizable phrase in the music track. Intel has succeeded in creating a highly recognizable musical signature to brand their advertising. United Airlines is another brand with a strong music signature for their brand.

The Brand: Fitting the Brand

Relevance to the Customer's Brand Belief System

One of the rules of persuasion is that people do not believe what they see, they see what they believe. You cannot argue successfully with someone unless you can see their point of view. A belief system that is constructed in the mind, based on the axiomatic structure of one's value system, is a powerful filter for communication.

Clearly a brand is built on a much smaller set of values than a political doctrine or a religion. The Coca-Cola company, for example, manages the communication for its stable of highly successful brands with a very small set of brand val-

ues—usually no more than two or three per brand. But the values that a marketer succeeds in associating with the brand over time become very important filters for the messages that are sent from the brand to the customer. Non-users of a brand will frequently see something different in a commercial and take away different messages than users of the brand will.

Fitting the Set of Expected Messages

Most advertising creatives have a strong desire that the advertising they create be fresh and original—but an important distinction needs to be made between the originality of the advertising execution and the originality of the message being communicated. An original execution can be a good thing—because executions that are unique or different from other advertising in the category can break through clutter to generate a high Attention Score.

But sending an original or completely unexpected message from a brand is a different matter. The type of message that the audience would expect to receive from IBM is not the same type of message they would expect to receive from Disney. While this example is an extreme case, it makes an important point that goes to the heart of the theory of communication. A message from a sender to a receiver is never completely unpredictable—if it were, it would be nonsense. Indeed, a completely original message would be noise—a message we are not prepared to hear. The different messages that the audience expects to receive from IBM represents a finite set of possibilities—the set of possible promises that IBM would be likely to make its customers. To quote Claud Shannon, the creator of modern information theory, "this word information in communication theory relates not so much to what you *do* say, as to what you *could* say. That is, information is a measure of one's freedom of choice when one selects a message."

That is not to say that all the messages that IBM could be sending in its advertising have equal probabilities. A surprising message from IBM, for example, that the company is now giving away software free, would be a low-probability message, one that the audience would be more likely to expect from an Internet startup. As a consequence, the more surprising a message from a brand is, the more difficult it may be to create strong Brand Linkage in the mind of the receiver.

Fitting the Brand Persona

The Brand Persona is the human face that your brand wears in the mind of your customer. Its friendly and familiar face is one of the reasons your customer has a loyal relationship with the brand. Making brand advertising is a process of creating the theater of the mind where the brand has the opportunity to act out its essential characteristics.

In well-branded advertising, the brand should always be the star of the commercial. The essential characteristic of a classic movie star, as opposed to a great actor, is that he or she tailors each role to fit his or her personality, which remains relatively constant from role to role. The same is true of your brand, which is more like the star than merely an actor in your film. The role of the brand is likely to be the same from one ad to another. Betty Crocker is always the archetypal homemaker. Mickey Mouse is always the archetypal child. Bill Gates is the archetypal nerd.

Casting your brand against type in an inappropriate role is likely to result in weak Brand Linkage for the simple reason that this unfamiliar use of the Brand Persona creates a disconnect in the mind of the brand's customer.

Fitting the Brand Place

To continue the metaphor that brand advertising takes place in the theater of the mind, consider the concept of Brand Place. This is the situation-

al setting or stage on which the Brand Persona can act out its appropriate roles.

Intuitively, advertisers have always made use of branded places. Marlboro Country is one example. The "friendly skies" of United Airlines are another. Coors Beer comes from the "Rockies" and Taco Bell customers head for "the border." AT&T has staked out the future as a brand place with its award-winning "You Will" campaign.

Place is important not only because of the role it plays in how human memory operates (associating things with places is an old trick for training memory) as well as the loyalty that can be created between people and places (how do you feel about your home town?). Knowing your brand's place is one key to effective branding.

The Brand: Growing the Brand

Differences by Target Audience

Because different customer segments—loyal customers, occasional customers, non-customers or prospects—have different conceptions of your brand, and different degrees of familiarity and attachment, the strength of Brand Linkage Scores might be expected to vary across segments.

Differences by Brand Lifestage

New products are, by definition, not yet brands. Creating strong Brand Linkage in new product advertising is, in general, more difficult than in established brand advertising.

Anchoring News

When conveying brand news, such as an improvement in an established brand, it is useful to begin the sale with a head nod by reminding the viewer first of something which they already believe to be true about the brand. This provides a platform for establishing the credibility of the new promise you are making about the brand.

Targeting the Edges of the Brand

As a business person you will be rewarded for growing the size of a brand's franchise, not for maintaining its current size. The key to growth is to move beyond the comfort zone of familiar messages to focus your advertising efforts on the edge of your customer's brand perceptions. Unfortunately, finding this edge is always going to require some trial and error. If you try too hard and overshoot the brand's edge, you will create a disconnect in the mind of the viewer and Brand Linkage will suffer. If you play it too safe, Brand Linkage will be great but you will be preaching to the converted. In either case, the business will not grow. The art of creating effective brand advertising consists not in creating edgy advertising, but in finding the edge of the brand and focusing your advertising there.

Developing Ownable Brand Equities

Over time some elements of your brand's advertising can acquire properties that make them valuable equities for your brand. The following are some of the questions you might ask to help you decide whether or not you have begun to develop an ownable brand equity:

Telegraphic: Does the creative element quickly identify your brand identity to the audience? One of the advantages of this type of advertising equity is that it allows you to save time in linking your brand identity to the commercial message.

Iconographic: Does the creative element have emotional significance for your customer? Like a capacitor in an electric circuit, an advertising icon stores customer emotions that are released into the advertising message. The McDonald's golden arches, the Coca-Cola logo, or the face of Mickey Mouse immediately warm up an audience's feelings toward any commercial in which they appear.

Distinctive: Is the viewer at all likely to confuse it with something used by another advertiser? If so, then you don't own it in the mind of the customer and it's not a property after all.

Work in Progress: Extending the Model

Semantic vs. Esthetic Information

Not surprisingly, creating strong Brand Linkage is more difficult for new products than it is for established brands. Teaching your audience the name and reason for being for a new product with introductory advertising is a different problem than reminding them of their feelings toward a brand they are already familiar with. On a theoretical level, however, understanding the differences takes us to a deeper level of understanding the communication process.

The French musicologist Abraham Moles, suggests the existence of two types of information generally in messages. The first type of information is semantic information, which is, logical, structured and translatable into a foreign language or another channel of communication and serves to prepare actions. From an advertising standpoint this may be thought of as the strategic message in the commercial.

The second type of information is esthetic information. This is the information in a picture that cannot be translated into words—the information in the music *that cannot be translated into words*. It is the poetry of the language. Esthetic information, which might be thought of philosophically as personal information, shapes states of mind. From an advertising standpoint, it is the part of the commercial that makes the communication a creative act.

Both types of information are present in every communication and both are relevant to the advertising brand building process, though their relative importance might change as a function of the life stage of the brand. In recent years

researchers have found that viewers of television advertising respond differently to new product advertising than to established brand advertising. The differences that have been found confirm not only that the information content of these two kinds of advertising is different but also that how consumers process the information content of new product ads is different from how they process the information in established brand commercials. Creating a new product commercial is fundamentally a learning process, while for most established brand advertising we are, on balance, more concerned about the process of creating feelings in the viewer. Understanding the differences in how these two types of information are processed by viewers is an ongoing challenge to advertising researchers.

Recognition vs. Recall Measurements

The existence of two types of information in every commercial creates a measurement problem for researchers. Of the two types, semantic information is the easier to measure, because, by definition, it is the part of the advertising experience that can be translated into words. This explains the dominant role that *copytesting* has played in the television commercial research business for so many years. To quote Moles, *“Messages with exclusively semantic or purely esthetic content are theoretical limits, dialectical extremes. Every real message has some of each. Semantic information, related to the universal aspects of an individual’s mental structure, is rather easy to measure and to determine objectively; hence it is better known.”* (Information Theory and Esthetic Perceptions, p. 132.)

The Ameritest Picture Sorts® was designed to complement copytesting by providing a visual recognition-based means of measuring how viewers process the esthetic content of the commercial, at least for the visual component of the ad.

A similar problem exists with measuring adver-

tising awareness in the marketplace, once the commercial has been aired. The traditional approach, telephone tracking studies, was designed to measure the part of the advertising experience that the target audience could put into words and convey over the telephone. While the analysis above suggests that this approach would be just fine for tracking advertising awareness for new product introductions—which has been the experience of many advertisers—for established brands, a recall-based approach, which measures the semantic content of the advertising message, would be more problematic. This, too, has been the experience of many advertisers.



Ameritest® is a seven-time winner of the ARF David Ogilvy Research Award including the Grand Ogilvy.