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advertising research



Ameritest

WHITE PAPER

Print Ad Research

Print advertising research should be based on how the *mind* moves through the ad, not the *eye*.

While Ameritest® does not believe in “formulas” for effective advertising, we do think there are general principles that need to be taken into account when trying to penetrate the mind with effective selling messages.

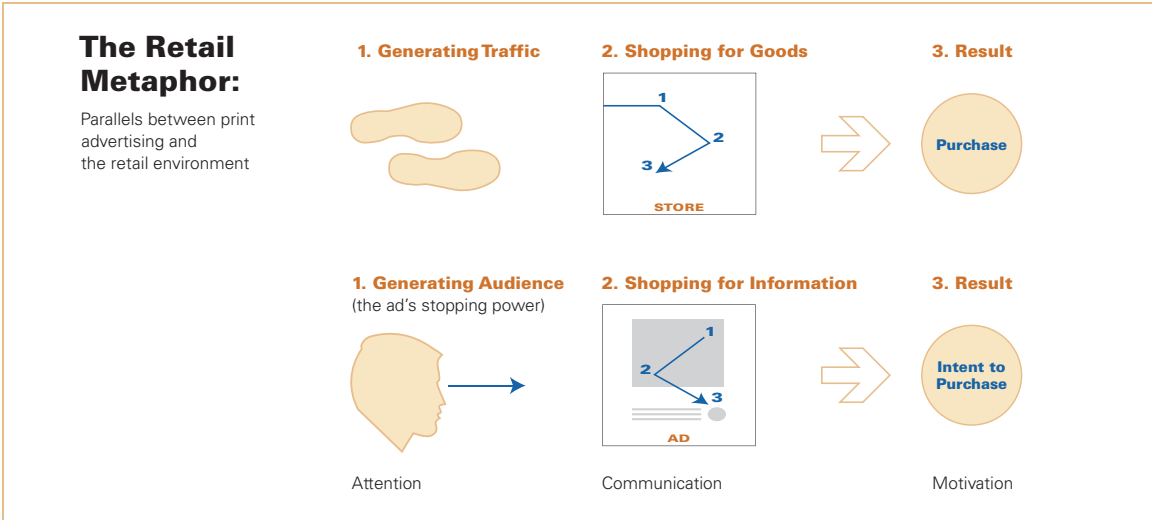
For example, it’s important not to think of print ads as “static” simply because they don’t have temporal dimensions like TV commercials. Although a print ad doesn’t move, the consumer’s mind must move through the ad to create an effective advertising experience. We help our clients to think of print in a more dynamic way.

One of the key paradigms at the heart of Ameritest research philosophy is to stop thinking of the human eye as a camera, a passive recorder of stimuli. Instead, think of the eye as an intelligent search engine, an active “gate-keeper” for the mind. Over half the human brain is devoted to creating what we call “visual per-

ception,” which is complex. That is why a measurement of what the eye *sees* is an incomplete understanding of what the mind *keeps*. And so, from a diagnostic standpoint, you need more than one way of measuring how the mind is processing your advertisement.

Metaphors help us think clearly about complex subjects. One of the metaphors we use is to think of a print ad as kind of a “virtual store.” If you were the manager of a store, there would be three things you would try to do to build your business:

1. Get customers through the door by generating traffic to the store
2. Plan the layout of your store very carefully so customers can find what they are looking for and discover something while browsing
3. Make sure they want to buy something before leaving



With this metaphor in mind, we would say there are general principles that characterize effective print ads where the consumer is “shopping information.”

1. There is a clear entry point to the ad where the majority of readers start their journey through the ad.
2. The path through the ideas and images should be clear and easy to follow in a predictable sequence so the reader has a cohesive advertising experience.
3. The reader should have a selling idea or brand image in their mental “shopping basket” before they get to your brand “checkout counter,” i.e., your logo.

Print is a more “active” medium than TV in the sense that more “work” is required from the audience in processing the information in the ad. Because of this potentially higher level of involvement from readers of print ads, it is possible to transmit more complex, multi-faceted messages in a print ad than a TV ad. However, we also know that the consumers are quite frugal with the time they will spend with advertising messages.

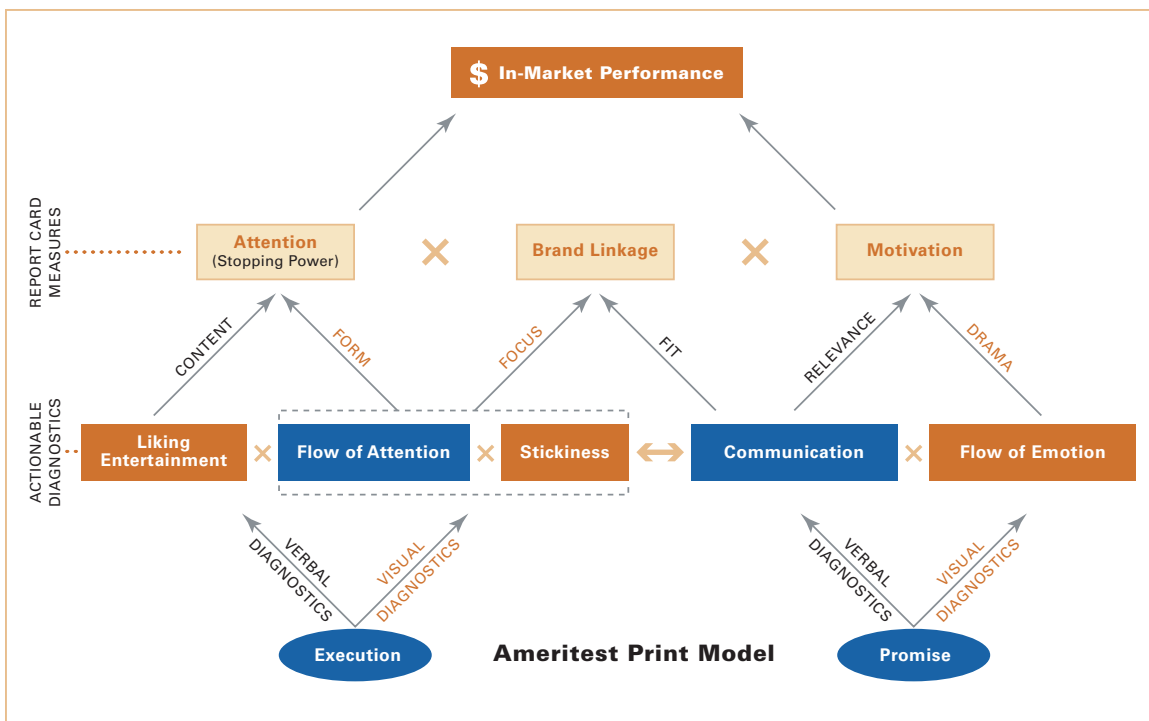
Print is different from television in two important ways. Readers of print ads control the order in which they process the images, and the amount of time they give to that process. Consequently, even though you can put more “content” into a print ad, the possibilities for confusion or irrelevance caused by reading ideas out of order or of a reader leaving the ad too soon may be higher for print advertising than for TV.

The Ameritest Print Model

Once the data has been collected it is analyzed within the framework of the Ameritest print advertising model, which is a “heuristic” or teaching model.

In this model, information is arranged in a hierarchy that bridges the divide separating report card systems and diagnostic systems.

At the top is what copy testing is supposed to predict: in-market sales results.



One level down are the evaluative measures that provide the report card portion of the analysis.

Two levels down are the diagnostic measures that are correlated with and explain the evaluative measures.

The arrows in the model highlight the primary relationships between the different variables measured. They provide a “roadmap” for interpreting the data.

Both report card and diagnostic systems use evaluative measures in an attempt to explain why an ad is working, or why it is not.

Essentially, the model says that for any ad to be “effective” it must accomplish three things:

1. It must get noticed and attract a reader (Stopping Power).
2. The reader must know who is sending the advertising message (Brand Linkage)
3. Once the ad has the reader’s attention it must “sell” her something—i.e., motivate sales in the short run or at least create a positive predisposition for sales in the long run (Motivation)

Other variables are important only insofar as they help explain the variables of Stopping Power, Brand Linkage and Motivation. For example, entertainment value is not important in and of itself, but because it is an important predictor of Stopping Power.

Verbal Versus Visual

In the diagnostic part of the Ameritest system, we provide a balance of verbal and visual diagnostics.

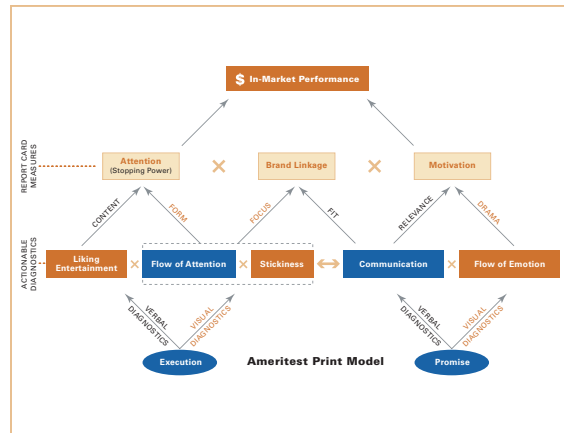
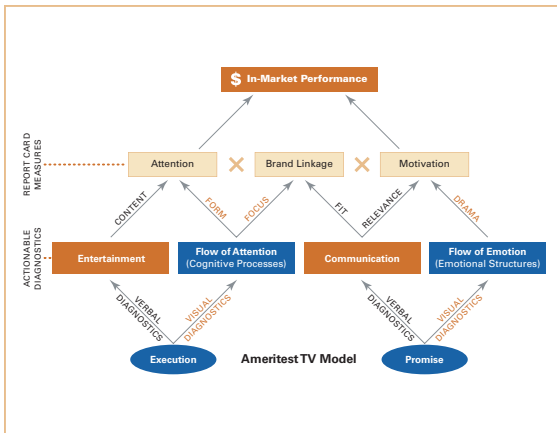
To fully describe the total advertising experience—the aesthetic content of the execution (important for building brand image) plus the semantic content of the message (important for reinforcing product positioning)—it is necessary to complement traditional verbal measures of advertising research with non-verbal measures.

Analysis of the pattern of attention shaped by the layout of a print ad and measured by the Ameritest Flow of Attention™ is an important predictor of Stopping Power and Brand Linkage.

The Flow of Attention helps clients make the paradigm shift from thinking of the human eye as a recording device, like a camera, to thinking of it more as a computerized search engine that actively sorts through information. Selective perception is the filter that alters an advertising message from what the agency intends to what the viewer actually understands.

Just as the Flow of Attention helps us to better understand Stopping Power and Brand Linkage Scores, a Flow of Emotion graph is a visual diagnostic that helps us explain Motivation Scores.

The Ameritest print ad model is the same as our TV ad model (next page), except for two important differences—(1) the amount of time readers spend with the ad and (2) the order in which they process the ideas and images. For example, one reader may start with the headline, while another reader starts with the main visual. To reflect these differences between the two mediums, the print model uses a somewhat different measurement of Flow of Attention and includes open-ended communication and a “stickiness” factor.



Importantly, most of what we need to measure about print advertising is identical to what needs to be measured for a TV commercial. This use of similar models for TV and print leads to considerable efficiencies from an integrated marketing standpoint. By using a common measurement framework, you can compare TV test results with print test results. Clients learn a simple and coherent way to think about and manage these seemingly different modes of communication.

For both TV and print, the Flow of Attention measures what parts of the ads respondents pay attention to, how the search engine of the eye is processing on a cognitive level the ideas and images in the ad. While the presentation of the data is different, the basic premise is the same between mediums.

Once again, our purpose with these two techniques is to deploy a common measurement philosophy within

the context of an intuitive and consistent model of how advertising works so that TV and print advertising development can be integrated into an effective communications program overall.

Offline / Online

We have conducted many Ameritest print tests, both in the US and international markets. Interviews are conducted in geographically dispersed markets—reaching most target consumers through mall intercept. If a specialized target group is requested, respondents are recruited by phone to a central research location for face-to-face interviews. Internationally, interviews are conducted according to the best practices in each based upon country and culture. For a typical research study, 100 interviews are conducted.

Flow of Attention

TV Analysis: Keys to Recall

1. A rising opening
2. A build in attention
3. Relevant focal points

Print Analysis: "Shopping information"

Entry point

Trajectory of the eye

Ameritest's online print testing has been used successfully by numerous clients for several years. The interview process is the same as in-person except the clutter book and test ad are seen on-screen. The online methodology is particularly cost effective for interviewing hard-to-reach audiences such as highly specialized medical professionals, farmers or senior executives at large companies.



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