

Target their baser instincts

Marketers around the globe spend hundreds of billions of dollars a year on advertising. Yet fewer than half of their campaigns succeed. That's a lot of money wasted. One of the reasons many advertisers fail is they forget that their target markets are humans! It's pretty simple: successful marketing appeals to the way our genes and brains work. Our human traits - our needs, values and emotions - factor into whether advertising has an impact on us.

These criteria are what I call the "gimmies" - the self-centered demands we all have for emotional fulfillment of our different moods. As much as selfishness is viewed as a negative personality trait, it is innate and genetic. This isn't what our parents would have had us believe when they said, "Gimme, gimme never gets!", but it's the truth. Wanting things is genetically natural; humans are wired to be self-centered to ensure survival. So above all, marketing efforts should offer emotional payoffs that satiate consumers' moods, desires and insecurities, while enhancing their own view of their status in the world. To be more effective, marketers should focus on consumers' "gimmies" and less on brand features.

For example, a company wants to advertise a power hand-drill. One strategy would be to discuss its features - its suitability for many jobs, a long battery life or a low price point. The problem is that consumers aren't looking for a drill, per se. They are looking to put holes and screws into things. But the choice of brands will be influenced by more than that.

Consumers who buy drills want emotional payoffs. They want to avoid the disappointment of ruining a surface by inexperienced drilling. They want to experience pride and feel competent. They want their spouse to exclaim with delight (proving their worth). They want to show off their accomplishment to the neighbors. Most consumers want to experience many of these payoffs. And since many drills put holes in things

equally well, a successful brand will go beyond advertising its features to assuring emotional payoffs. We see in our Ipsos databases that brands that do this tend to achieve greater brand commitment and brand equity, as well as commanding higher prices and profitability.

Ads should focus less on features and more on consumers' core needs and emotions



By John Hallward

Editor's note: John Hallward is global director of new product development for Ipsos ASI. Based in Montreal, he can be reached at 514-904-4356 or at john.hallward@ipsos-asi.com.

Struggle to maintain

We often see mature, established brands struggle to maintain their success. When I realized how our brain works to tune out familiar stimuli - in order to be ready for any new danger or new input - the challenges faced by established brands became clearer, as did possible solutions. This also helped to explain why frequent advertising exposures encounter diminishing returns in their impact on consumers. Marketers need to keep evolving and changing the consumer experience to avoid desensitization.

Advertisers really have two main jobs, and they need to know which is most required for their brand: 1) get the right brand associations into consumers' minds and then 2) trigger, or activate, these at the right time.

An example of excellent triggering is the old "It's Miller Time" campaign, which leveraged the concept that after a hard day's work, it was time to relax and enjoy a Miller beer. "It's Miller Time" is a beautiful, simple slogan that activates positive feelings of quitting time, triggers the beer consumption period and ties in the brand name - all in one easy-to-remember unit. This is not about product features, how the beer is made or purity or taste. These elements are already known to consumers. "Miller Time" triggers the brand and payoffs at the relevant time association.

Smart marketers appreciate the key role that emotions play in brand choice. Consumers consciously and subconsciously evaluate choices based on the expected emotional payoffs from their choices. Emotionally-rich brands such as Starbucks, iPod, Hallmark, eBay, Blackberry, Nike, Viagra and Virgin have earned great equity and business success. These brands satisfy many emotional desires while avoiding the use of a strongly-stated unique selling proposition (USP). They also seem to avoid reference to product features and prefer to support the attitudes and emotions associated with the brand experience.

Further, these successful brands don't use narrow definitions of their target groups. The power of their vagueness invites all types of consumers to ap-

proach the brand and to create their own (varied) emotional payoffs. This is a BSP - a broad selling proposition!

A wonderful example is Apple's "silhouette" campaign for the iPod. The use of the silhouettes avoids defining who or what an iPod owner looks like. This brand has done a wonderful job of not targeting one age, gender, or cultural group, or any one type of music lover. In turn, this avoids alienating any potential customer and allows all consumers to see themselves as being a brand user. We can all approach the iPod brand to form our own personal emotional benefits. Apple is not telling us which one narrow USP should be considered and by which ideal target group.

Distinct groups

Although segmentation research allows us to place consumers into distinct groups and to put a descriptive label on each person, this is not a stable reality. All consumers have all emotional needs within them. To simply pick one strongest psychographic or attitudinal profile to label each person grossly misrepresents the multitude of values/beliefs we each hold and how our moods constantly alter them.

Our emotional desires fluctuate such that what appeals to one person in one need state might be less appropriate for the same person for a different need state. Instead of segmenting people into distinct groups (is he Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde?), brand managers should identify the different need states in all consumers. The goal is to promote which emotional needs the brand can satiate -- hopefully it is more than just one!

Already know

So many established mature brands continue to spend money telling consumers about product features that they already know. Such brands need to change their goals towards activating or triggering these brand beliefs at the right time, with the right emotional promise. If a consumer knows some fact about a brand but fails to think of the brand's emotional promise then the brand will not be considered. The brand must be triggered and

come to mind in order for it to be evaluated. This is well beyond a focus on brand features and a USP. It is about highlighting when you want the consumer to think of your brand with the emotional payoffs they seek.

A consumer-centric approach to marketing requires a better appreciation of how emotional associations drive consumer behavior, with less emphasis on USPs, less focus on segmentation, and a better appreciation of triggering. How do you do all that? Below are some suggestions for brand managers drawn from my research at Ipsos and found in my book, *Gimme! The Human Nature of Successful Marketing*.

- Be fresh and original. For something to stand out and register in our long-term memories, it needs to be somewhat irregular. The Aflac duck is one example of a brand that has done a great job of leveraging uniqueness and irregularity to engage the brain.
- Simple is good. Our brains are bombarded with stimuli. Our firm's experience has shown that advertising messages served up in units, slogans and stories win out over fragmented-if-attractive alternatives. Simple, emotional enriched memory units get into long-term memory better.
- Enhance the brand with marketing properties. Brands that use devices like icons, mnemonics, spokespeople, cartoon characters and other extra properties often get great results. Consider Tiger Woods for Nike, the Aflac duck, the Michelin Man and the little Tetley Tea Folk. Each has added a personality and something more to evaluate than the basic functionality of the product.
- Enhance the brand with the human senses. For example: Johnson & Johnson's Baby Powder offers a unique smell; Perrier water comes in a distinctive green pear-shaped bottle; Pepto-Bismol is a shocking pink. In these examples, the brand is creating and leveraging elements beyond what is necessary for product performance. These extra senses offer more for consumers to latch onto and allow the brand to be stored in more parts of the brain, in the different centers for touch, taste, vision, sound and so on. | Q