



the drum mcr
Market & Communications
Research

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mcr

Ph: 07 3254 0700

Email: mcr@mcrpl.com.au

MCR is Queensland's top social research agency, having conducted work for both government and corporate clients for over 15 years. We regularly conduct polling and focus groups to tap into the very latest opinions on the public and community impact of a range of social issues. These include public health matters, the environment, transport, road safety, financial changes and government regulations.

Welcome to our September edition.

FOR OUR NEW READERS:

The Drum is a monthly publication which reports back on the views of a special "public interest" focus group conducted by MCR.

The group consists of 8 Brisbane residents who come from all walks of life and a range of Brisbane suburbs. They are aged from their early 20s to their 60s. Each month we get the group together and ask them to discuss a number of "hot" news issues.

For previous issues of The Drum you can visit our website at www.mcrpl.com.au.

This month we focus exclusively on advertising and how people regard ads. What works in their eyes and what doesn't work?

The ads we showed

As part of this project, we showed people 10 ads and asked for their comments on them. The ads were chosen to reflect different types of ads – different genres and different tones, but the choice of the specific ads was fairly random.

The 10 ads were as follows:

Origin Energy

This ad asks the viewer to remember the things they really love, like running under sprinklers and catching tadpoles. The theme focuses on "what we love today we want to love tomorrow" and underscores that Origin is working towards a sustainable future.

Babylove

Sung to the song "Pretty Baby", the ad shows a mother dealing with a baby in various funny situations. The final scene shows the Mum handing over baby with dirty nappy to Dad.

Brand Power – Yoplait

Part of the Brand Power stable, this shows Sally Williams talking about Yoplait Yoplus.

Carlton – Big Ad

Sung to the music of Carmina Burana, this ad for Carlton Draught shows hundreds of people dressed in red and yellow forming a picture of someone drinking beer. The lyrics talk about it being a big ad.

Prouds

General ad for a Prouds sale referred to as Jewellery Price Crash.

Brisbane Tourism – 'Sleepy little town'

This ad shows 20-somethings engaging in nocturnal pursuits in Brisbane.

Riva Coffee

This ad involves 4 people dancing in a highly choreographed way with trolleys in a supermarket, showing a Riva display in the background.

Dairy Farmers

We hear a man talking about how he grew up on a dairy farm but became a golfer. But when his father asks him later in life to take over the farm he says yes. He declares it to be the greatest day in his life.

ING

This ad uses Billy Connolly to promote ING superannuation products. It shows Billy wearing a number of different costumes and explaining that ING has super products for all walks of life.

KFC

Shows 2 men ordering 2 fillet burgers at a KFC counter. One of them asks why it tastes so good. It then shows KFC staff singing and dancing their way through an explanation of why 'Fresh tastes best'.

What ads pass muster according to our participants?

For likeability?

- Carlton Big Ad
- Origin Energy
- Babylove

For memorability?

- Carlton Big Ad
- Origin Energy
- Babylove

For feeling good about the brand?

- Carlton Big Ad
- Brisbane Tourism
- Origin Energy
- Dairy Farmers

What elements seem to work best?

Humour

According to our participants, humour plays a big part in making an ad more memorable. But it needs to be a certain type of humour.

They like the “tongue in cheek” variety (as seen in the Carlton and Babylove ads) and anything which sends itself up (as seen clearly in the Carlton ad and more subtly in the Brisbane ad).

They strongly associate this “tongue in cheek” / “sending yourself up” style as very Australian and are very much in favour of it. They much prefer it to what they describe as “American” humour, perceived as being slick and full of one-liners.

This response to humour is not an unusual finding for us. The desire for humour comes up again and again when testing advertising material...even for some social and public interest marketing.

Evoking emotions

This is another strong element which draws in viewers. They like the idea that an ad can leave them feeling good. Ads such as Origin, Brisbane Tourism and Dairy Farmers are considered to do this well.

These positive emotions are more than just feeling warm and fuzzy. They go deeper than this and relate to more fundamental issues about the quality of the brand, the dependability of the brand and the familiarity of the brand.

As one participant put it, “We relate to things we know.”

Or as another put it, “They’re telling you everything is fine. Don’t worry about it. It’s like the Qantas ads.”

The positive response to emotion-provoking ads was somewhat surprising for us. There are some cynical attitudes in the group and one would have expected a bit more of the “you can’t pull the wool over my eyes” response. But, instead, it elicited some pretty powerful responses. The answer might lie in the following element.

Establishing a connection

Participants mention that the positive feelings generated by some of the ads also tend to create a sense of “relationship” with the brand.

The nature of this relationship is probably the subject of another session again. For the moment, we say that it’s probably not as strong as the brand as “friend”, but it definitely creates a foot in the door. It’s certainly more than just a simple seller / buyer relationship.

While the relationship probably doesn’t translate into a definite purchase by the viewer, it does seem to develop a more favourable reading of the brand. And one could hypothesise that this may help with recall at time of purchase.

Music

Music tracks are also considered very valuable to an ad. This particularly stood out for Babylove, Carlton Big Ad and Brisbane Tourism.

For some of these ads, the music seems to reinforce and act as an adjunct to the “evoking emotions” element. This is especially the case for Brisbane Tourism and Babylove.

Subtlety

Participants also appreciate when the ad is imbued with a degree of subtlety. They want to be allowed to work out the ad for themselves and given a sense of autonomy.

By contrast they are very averse to the selling message being “in their face” or being “rammed down their throat”. As an example, they cite the “Rugs a million” advertising. They see this approach as too blatant...and perhaps a little condescending?

There are some exceptions where our participants will allow the subtlety factor to be suspended. We talk more about this below in relation to the Prouds ad.

Do they see a place for other types of ads?

As mentioned above, our participants have some tolerance for pure selling ads provided they are not too blatant and do not hit a “raw nerve”.

For this reason, they mention that they have no real problems with the Prouds-type ad because it advertises a sale or a special promotion.

They are also not averse to the Brand Power style of ad, which is trying to give some factual account of the product. However, they point out that the Brand Power branding tends to mask the actual product being spotlighted. For some it’s as though the primary brand being marketed is Brand Power rather than the product. So in their minds, recall in this instance appears stronger for Brand Power than the Yoplait product it is promoting.

Interestingly, participants express a preference for the actual ad that relates to the product (e.g. the French policeman advertising Yoplait), rather than the Brand Power version.

What is their attitude about spokespeople?

The list of ads deliberately included ads that used spokespeople – the ING ad (using Billy Connolly) and the Dairy Farmers ad (using a farmer).

Our participants have no real problem with the use of a spokesperson. And they don't have a preference for using a *celebrity* spokesperson (such as Billy Connolly) over using an *authority* on the subject (as with the farmer).

What is perhaps more important is that the spokesperson has to be saying something credible, even if they don't have expertise in the category. So the Billy Connolly ad works, for example, because he is considered to have something important to say about superannuation.

But will they buy?

Now we know it's a big leap between attitude and behavior, but we thought we'd ask the question.

And please note that for the sake of this exercise, we asked our participants to act as if they were in the market for the products being advertised.

When asked whether they would consider buying the brand, the ad which received the highest score was Dairy Farmers. But nibbling at its heels was Carlton Big Ad, Origin and Babylove. So, as you can see there is some correlation between what they like and feel good about and what they might buy.

Notably, ING also fared well in this part of the exercise, suggesting that celebrity spokespeople have some sway.

And what does future advertising look like?

Our clients will be relieved that most of our group still see a future for TV advertising. But there is a sense that TV advertising will focus more and more on presenting the brand in an *entertaining* manner rather than concentrating on *information* about the brand.

Some in the group see the internet as the way of the future and believe that there will be some integrated approach combining the television and the internet in one process.

There was also some discussion about viral marketing with one respondent describing it as "fabulous". For most of our group this was new territory, but they were tentatively curious about it, based on the knowledge that it comes with a recommendation and strong word of mouth.

So what have we learned?

It would appear that for this group what works best is an ad which aims for some form of emotional response. And it would seem that the best type of emotional response is laughter, provided it has an Australian twist.

Of course this is a small sample and it would be wrong to generalise too far. But certainly these findings point in the direction that generating good feelings nudges the viewer a little closer to the brand.

This makes a nice fit with current research that positive mood states are related to greater advertising effectiveness. In fact, if you really want to tap into your audience's good mood, do it on a Sunday. Research hot off the press shows that people are in a better mood on Sunday and will therefore do more ad noting on that day!