

A New Roadmap for Ad Optimization

Integrating Neuroscience with Leading Advertising Research:
A Post Shredded Wheat Case Study

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INTRODUCTION

In their efforts to understand the full spectrum of consumer response to brand communications, marketers are looking to augment the learning they gain from traditional research with new and innovative techniques. Among the most promising new approaches are those based on advances in applied neuroscience, which promise to shed light both on cognitive response and more visceral emotional reactions.

Marketers are seeking practical examples of neuroscience methods combined with traditional quantitative research that deliver robust and actionable insights. This case study demonstrates how marketers are leveraging the best of both worlds for the next generation of advertising development research. The integrated research described here points to new roads for optimization of brand communications and provides insights into how advertising can increase in-market potential.

BACKGROUND: POST SHREDDED WHEAT (PSW)

In an attempt to respond to softening sales, a 360-degree campaign called "Progress" was developed for Post Shredded Wheat. Intended to be provocative, to differentiate PSW from the competition, and to drive traffic to the store shelf, "Progress" launched with a 60-second spot during CBS's "Sunday Morning." The campaign also included a social media component.

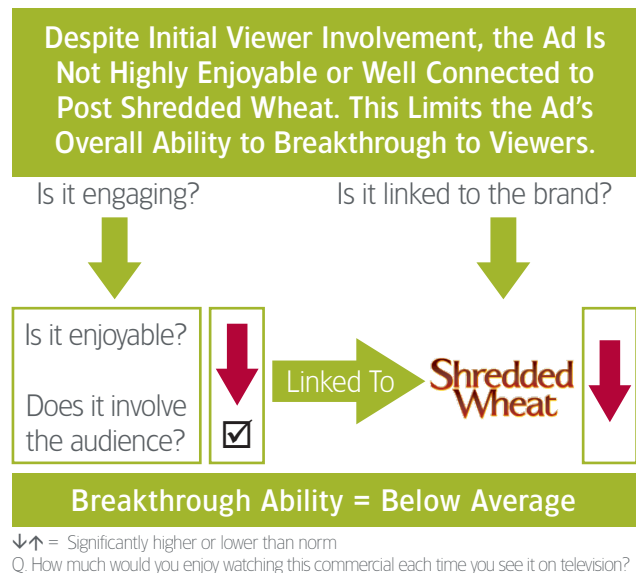
Despite the fact that it generated substantial buzz in the industry and the press, the sales results of the campaign failed to meet expectations. In an effort to understand why the TV ad had fallen short, Post took advantage of the new ad evaluation option offered collaboratively by Millward Brown and EmSense. This technique combines the validated metrics of the well-established and rigorous Millward Brown Link™ pretesting system with the advanced emotional and cognitive engagement insights produced by the quantitative EEG brainwave measurements of EmSense.

Parallel quantitative tests were carried out with matched samples (N=150 each). The Link test was conducted online, while the EmSense test was conducted at central locations using the company's proprietary technology that employs dry and wireless EEG headsets.

When the results from the two studies were integrated, the story that emerged was one of an ad that was engaging but polarizing, and which ultimately upstaged the brand. Importantly, the combined methodology highlighted opportunities for optimizing PSW communications and moving the brand forward.

FINDINGS FROM LINK AND EMSENSE

The Link results indicated that the ad involved viewers, but left them struggling to connect the ad with the brand. Confusion created at certain points in the ad interfered with enjoyment for some viewers. As a result, breakthrough for the ad was weak.



While a high proportion of consumers described the ad as being very different from other ads, relatively few (significantly fewer than the Millward Brown norm) linked the ad to Post Shredded Wheat.

Breakthrough was also impeded by some consumers not fully understanding the ad, resulting in an understanding score that was significantly lower than the Millward Brown norm. While some respondents understood and appreciated the intended humor, others did not.

Those consumers that did understand the ad found it "interesting" (higher than the MB norm). They also liked the clever and unique style, the humor, and the lead character, Frank Druffel. However, too many respondents found the ad "dull," "boring," and "confusing." This confusion prevented the ad from being more enjoyable.

By integrating the EmSense measurements of cognitive processing and emotive response with the Link metrics, we were able to better understand the response to the ad and to identify the specific elements that were working as intended as well as those that were troublesome.

For example, the EmSense cognitive response trace identified the points in the ad where cognition was high — that is, where consumers were actively processing information. The trace indicated that consumers were engaged relatively early in the ad, after just 3.5 seconds (significantly earlier than the EmSense norm), but this level of engagement was not sustained throughout the ad. A very positive finding was that the peak in cognitive attention occurred late in the ad when the product benefits of vitamins, minerals, and fiber were mentioned. This demonstrated that viewers were interested in these key brand benefits when they were stated clearly, outside of the envelope of humor.

The emotional data from the EmSense test showed that "Progress" generated both positive and negative reactions. Consumers had the most positive emotional reactions when they made the connection with the obvious jokes ("We're up to our necks in landfill and down to the wire in resources" and "Climate change is out to get us") and, importantly, the sequence at the end of the ad featuring the PSW product benefits. However, the most negative emotional reactions

Enjoyment Is Limited Because Consumers Had to Work Too Hard to Get the Message

Enjoyment

'Progress' :30 Finished (Random)

% Enjoyed Very Much



Elements Liked:
Creative/Clever/Unique - Simple/Direct
People (Frank Druffel) - Cute/funny

"Liked the man behind the desk."

"Liked the sign behind the man."

"It was clever and funny at times."

"It was different (unique)."

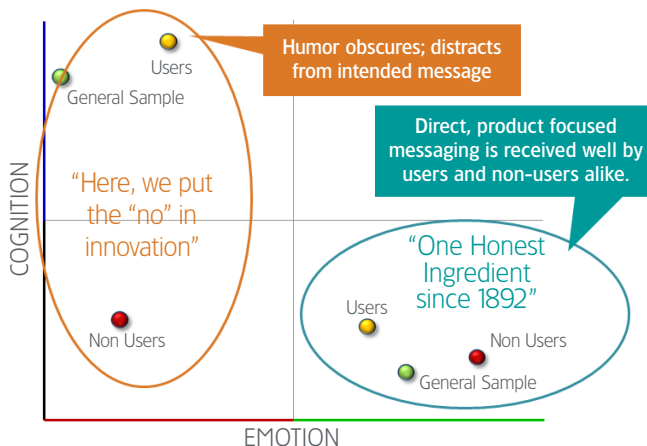
Elements Disliked:
Boring
Confusing – Not Sure What Being
Advertised Until End

"I thought the whole commercial was boring and dull, It seemed like it was a commercial for a Funeral Home or Lawyaer or something... Surely not for a cereal"

The research did identify positive aspects that could be leveraged for future brand building. The chart below illustrates that a strong cognitive response coincided with a positive emotional reaction when the brand benefits were mentioned. This suggests that consumers liked what they were hearing about the product.

Key Creative Copy Is Received Negatively. And Yet, “One Honest Ingredient Since 1892” Resonates Positively, Even with Prospects.

CopyScape – Subgroup Analysis



of ad performance. The EmSense EEG brainwave measurements provide an understanding of emotional and cognitive response patterns that includes highly specific information on the reaction to individual commercial elements in real time.

Moreover, the joint Millward Brown/EmSense methodology demonstrates how the integration of quantitative survey research with quantitative neuroscience metrics can provide a new roadmap for advertising development. The insightful and actionable findings yielded by the combined approach allow for new approaches to evaluation and optimization that can lead to favorable in-market results.

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CONCLUSION

As a result of the research, learning was integrated into a new Post “Natural Advantage” campaign that is based on PR, print, online and in-store activity. The buzz surrounding this new campaign is notable in that it is about health and wellness benefits, such as natural fiber and antioxidants, and not about provocative advertising. Moreover, the new product-centric communications, combined with in-store tactics, generated positive business results.

This case illustrates how the combination of Link copy testing and EmSense EEG brainwave measurements can provide a highly insightful evaluation of advertising. Link provides the overall evaluation and diagnostics

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Mitzi Lorentzen, Vice-President, Optimizing Communications, Millward Brown

Mitzi has 2 decades of marketing research experience spanning international research, copy testing, brand health tracking, and custom research. Her work is truly reflective of the research industry's transformation towards more "human-based" approaches that draw insights from various data sources and disciplines. A pioneer in the use integration of both quantitative survey research and neuroscience provides, Mitzi has worked with a range of clients to help them get deeper insights on their consumers and optimize their communication efforts. She holds a Master of Business Administration from DePaul University and a Bachelor of Science from Indiana University with a major in advertising and a minor in psychology.

Elissa Moses, Chief Analytics Officer, EmSense

Elissa is an industry leader in Strategic Planning and Market Research, with broad experience that includes Philips as SVP of Global Consumer Strategy and Intelligence, DMB&B as SVP, Head of Strategic Planning, Grey, as EVP, Managing Partner and The BrainWaves Group, as founder and Managing Partner. Throughout her career, Elissa has developed strategies for such elite companies as Coca-Cola, P&G, AT&T, Gillette, Unilever, Kraft and Mars. She is the author of the primer on marketing to teenagers, *The \$100 Billion Allowance: Accessing the Global Teen Market*, a frequent speaker at conferences and universities, past President of the Copy Research Council, and a reviewer for the *Journal of Advertising Research*.

Kelley Peters, Senior Director, Integrated Insights & Strategy, Post Foods LLC

With nearly 20 years in the Insight industry with leading CPG, B2B, and market research vendors, Kelley Peters continually pushes the boundaries of Insight methodologies. She was an early adopter recognizing and seizing the power of neuroscience. She holds her MBA with Marketing Management concentration from Pace University where she was inducted into Beta Gamma Sigma National Honor Society.