

## Like-minded: Does likeability determine effectiveness?

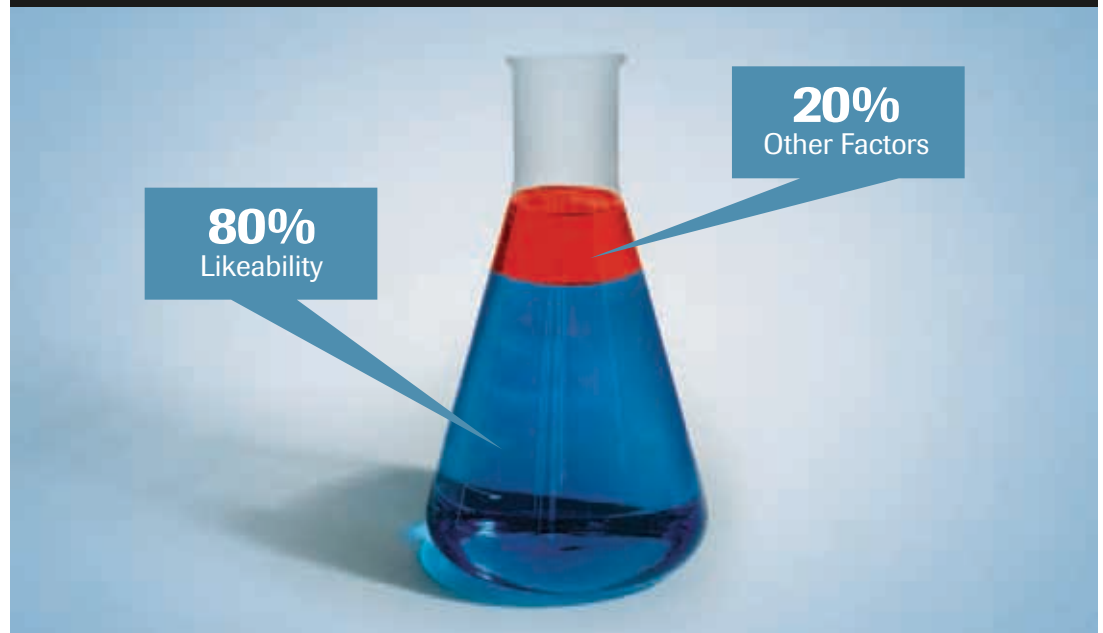
In the world of technical and scientific marketing, how important is likeability? Does your marketing need to be liked in order to be effective? And if your marketing is liked, does that influence whether or not it is remembered?

There's significant data on likeability in the consumer product world that may provide insight on the impact of ad liking in the business-to-business sector.

Max Sutherland, in his book *Advertising and the mind of the consumer*, explains that likeability plays a key role in persuasion. "We feel more inclined to argue with someone we dislike than with someone we are fond of ... our minds tend to react similarly with advertising. We are less inclined to counter-argue when we find ourselves enjoying an ad."<sup>1</sup>

**M**arketing  
**I**nsights  
from 5MetaCom

### What makes an ad memorable?



According to a 2005 study of 2,879 advertisements, an ad's likeability accounted for 80% of the differences in recognition (whether it was remembered).<sup>2</sup>

Giep Franzen describes the impact of ad likeability in his book *Advertising Effectiveness*: "Likeability is important in the very first stages of advertising processing. If consumers do not like an advertisement or commercial, they will immediately switch their attention to something else, at least with print advertising."<sup>3</sup> Franzen goes on to divide likeability into two subcategories:

- **Message:** The information/content (and the *newness* of this information), its relevance to the audience and its credibility.<sup>3</sup>
- **Execution:** The ad's liveliness or originality and the feelings it arouses, which may include creative elements such as the layout, design or packaging, among others.<sup>3</sup>

## Executive Summary

- Likeability plays a key role in persuasion, which can lead to more effective advertising.<sup>1</sup>
- A 2005 study connected 80% of ad recognition (whether it was remembered) to likeability.<sup>2</sup>
- Likeability can be divided into two subcategories: *message* and *execution*.<sup>3</sup>
- Six factors can determine an ad's likeability<sup>4</sup> (see back).

## Counterpoint

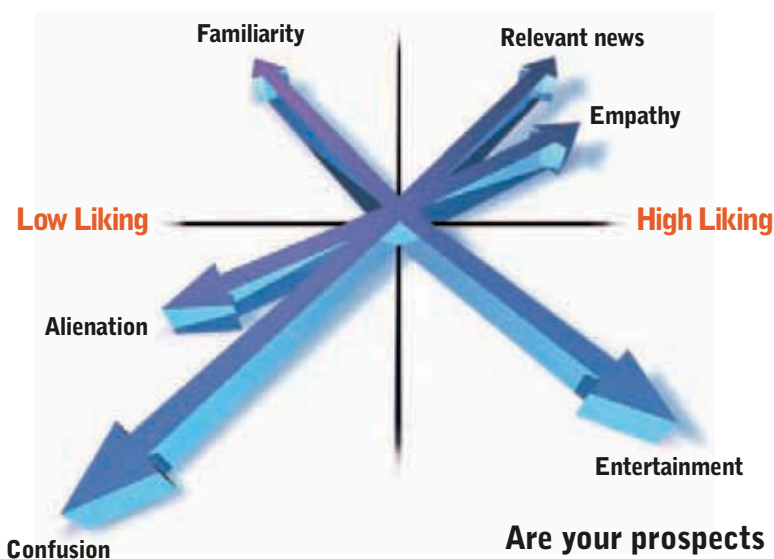
Likeability may help people remember an ad, but does it also make them buy the product? The jury is still out—but a study conducted by the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) points to “yes.”<sup>5</sup>

The study, based on 15,000 interviews, found that under tightly controlled experimental conditions, advertising campaigns (differing only in content and execution) produced sales differences that ranged from 8-41%. The study also showed that the highest indicator of whether or not an ad would lead to sales was *likeability*.<sup>5</sup>

## Six elements of likeability

The idea of “liking” an ad can be difficult to measure in tangible, quantifiable terms. Liking, after all, is subjective by its very nature. Erik du Plessis, in his book *The Advertised Mind*, supports Franzen’s assertion that message relevance plays a role in likeability. In addition, du Plessis’ COMMAP model quantifies several other factors that can affect how well an ad is liked. The model, which stands for **COM**munication-style **MAP**, breaks the likeability of an ad down to six elements:<sup>4</sup>

- **Entertainment:** If the ad entertains, it will be liked—although du Plessis points out that entertainment is not restricted to just the use of humor.
- **Empathy:** du Plessis notes that people like ads they can relate to—ads that show the kind of goods they may possess, experiences they might have or lifestyles they may aspire to.
- **Relevant news:** More than just new information, relevant news is new information that is meaningful (or presented as such) to the audience. Problem-solution type advertising falls into this category.
- **Familiarity:** If an ad has been over-saturated in the market, or is run-of-the-mill, it can have the opposite effect of entertainment—and damage likeability.
- **Confusion:** du Plessis calls this “the most common mistake creatives make in designing advertising.” A confusing ad can’t deliver relevant news, entertain or create empathy.
- **Alienation:** Irritating the audience, according to du Plessis, is a sure way to alienate consumers. While advertising that is confusing can be ignored, advertising that is annoying can actually damage a brand.



## Understanding likeability:

The COMMAP model summarizes three factors that can **help likeability** (entertainment, empathy and/or relevant news) and three that can **hinder likeability** (familiarity, confusion and/or alienation).<sup>4</sup>

## Are your prospects like-minded?

A big step in discovering how to create likeable ads may involve first finding out what your audience likes. Conducting individual qualitative interviews or other types of market research can help you determine this.

As we’ve seen, likeability can make ads more memorable and even influence product purchase. And as we discussed in our Marketing Elements *The Feather Effect*, when there is little that differentiates two brands, a subtle factor such as ad-liking can make a big difference. Max Sutherland seems to agree: “On the balance-beam of choice, if everything else is equal, liking for the brand’s advertising can tip the balance.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sutherland, M. and Sylvester, A. *Advertising and the mind of the consumer*. Australia: Allen & Unwin; 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Hermie, P., Lanckriet, T., Lansloot, K. and Peeters, S. *Stop/watch: Everything on the impact of advertisements in magazines*. Medialogue; 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Franzen, G. *Advertising Effectiveness*. Oxfordshire, UK: NTC Publications Limited; 1994.

<sup>4</sup> du Plessis, E. *The Advertised Mind*. London, UK and Philadelphia, PA: Millward Brown; 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Purvis, S. Using research to develop a better message: What matters most. A presentation to the ANA Business-to-Business Marketing Communications Conference; 1993.