

## Can advertising adversely affect what customers think about your company?

Will a customer or prospect who hates your ad still love your brand? Probably not. Marketing researchers have shown that the emotions elicited from viewing advertisements correlate to ad liking, brand liking and purchase intention.<sup>1</sup> It's no surprise that an attention-getting ad your target audience finds irritating could do more harm than good.

Research presented by the Marketing Science Institute shows that marketers can predict consumer attitudes toward their brand (and thus ad effectiveness) by documenting and qualifying the target audience's reactions to ads.<sup>2</sup>

**M**arketing  
**I**nights  
from 5MetaCom

### Marketers can predict brand attitudes by rating customer reactions to ads



#### About the studies

In two studies, university researchers showed subjects a series of television commercials for unfamiliar goods and services. Afterward, subjects described their feelings in writing while viewing the ad. Researchers tabulated the number of positive, neutral and negative emotions reported by study participants. Using this methodology, researchers' ability to predict attitudes toward the advertised brands improved as much as 183% compared to studies that didn't measure consumer attitudes.<sup>2</sup>

*By categorizing an ad viewer's comments as positive, negative or neutral, researchers accurately predicted viewer attitudes toward advertised brands.<sup>2</sup> Why is attitude so important? Many studies have shown that people's attitudes toward ads match their attitudes toward products.<sup>1,3</sup>*

### What about your brand?

As you might expect, research shows advertising affects brand attitudes. Including a provocative image or bold headline that receives many negative comments in ad testing may not be the best choice for generating positive emotions that lead to brand preference. (See the back for more on creating positive brand attitudes.) To find out more about creating effective advertising, see our related *Marketing Insights*, "Creating ads with stopping power" (5MC14196), and "Build awareness through message frequency" (5MC14539).

## Executive Summary

- The emotions consumers experience from viewing advertisements correlate to ad liking, brand liking and purchase intention.<sup>1</sup>
- By rating viewer comments about advertisements as positive, negative or neutral, researchers can successfully predict attitudes toward the advertised brands.<sup>2</sup>
- Because emotional responses to advertisements influence brand preference, an ad that creates negative emotional responses could harm your brand.
- Several tools are available to help predict viewer attitudes and improve ad effectiveness (see back).

## Creating ads that generate positive brand attitudes

Research shows that aligning advertising messages with target mindsets improves ad effectiveness. Researchers revealed three techniques that could help you develop advertising that resonates with your audience and creates positive impressions of your brand:

### ■ Align advertising appeals with product attributes.

Much research supports the theory that ads focused on features and benefits are most persuasive for products perceived as utilitarian, such as air conditioners or coffee for consumers, or photocopiers, file servers or back-office software for businesses. Likewise, ads depicting what a product symbolizes or communicates to others are most effective for products expected to express status or image, such as perfume or high-end jewelry for consumers, or a corporate website for business audiences. Researchers found ads that align with product attributes create more favorable brand attitudes, preference for purchase and favorable attitudes toward the ads themselves than ads that don't align with product attributes.<sup>4</sup>



*Advertising appeals that don't match the functionality of the product (and the target's mindset) fail to create favorable brand attitudes.<sup>4</sup>*



### ■ Base corporate advertising tone on desired behavior.

Researchers found they could predict the effectiveness of corporate advertising campaigns based on reactions of internal stakeholders.<sup>5</sup> Subjects assessed campaigns on three criteria: creativity, professionalism and consistency. Findings show:

- To educate, ads must be highly professional
- To change attitudes, creativity is important
- To change behavior, professionalism and campaign consistency are important

### ■ Match ad style to audience mindset.

When viewing an ad, targets use either “imagery processing” to imagine they’re using the product, or “analytical processing” to weigh the product’s positive and negative characteristics.<sup>6</sup> You can influence the type of processing your targets use by formatting your ad with cues, such as a comparative table to stimulate analytical processing. Mixing styles creates confusion and reduces ad effectiveness. Research shows that aligning ad style with targets’ processing mode helps targets process ad information. Easier processing makes ads more persuasive—and the resulting brand attitudes and purchase intentions more favorable—than when ad style and processing mode are incompatible.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stout, P., Rust, R. Emotional feelings and evaluative dimensions of advertising: Are they related? *Journal of Advertising*. 1993;22:61-71.

<sup>2</sup> Stephens, D., Russo, J. Predicting post-advertisement attitudes. Marketing Science Institute Report 92-109, May 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Haley, R., Baldinger, A. The ARF copy research validity project. *Journal of Advertising Research*. November-December 2000;114-135.

<sup>4</sup> Shavitt, S. Evidence for predicting the effectiveness of value-expressive versus utilitarian appeals: a reply to Johar and Sirgy. *Journal of Advertising*. 1992;21.

<sup>5</sup> van Riel, C., van Bruggen, G. IMPACT: A management judgment tool to predict the effectiveness of corporate advertising campaigns. *Journal of Brand Management*. 2003;11:22-33.

<sup>6</sup> Thompson, D., Hamilton, R. The effects of information processing mode on consumers’ responses to comparative advertising. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 2006;32.