

Thinking Beyond the Unique Selling Proposition

Gimme! The Human Nature of Successful Marketing



For too long, many marketers have ignored the basics of how human beings are wired and how they work emotionally. And as a result, the effectiveness of their marketing and advertising suffers.

Marketers who understand the emotional triggers and genetic characteristics of their consumers are better able to persuade and convince them with their marketing programs. *Gimme!* explores these evolutionary traits in ways marketers can easily understand, so they can better leverage these primary human drivers of behavior for greater marketing success.

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Gimme! is a must-read for the marketing professional... John Hallward brings together robust data, a deep understanding of consumer values, a knowledge of advertising and great insights, that make Gimme! an indispensable resource for marketing executives everywhere.

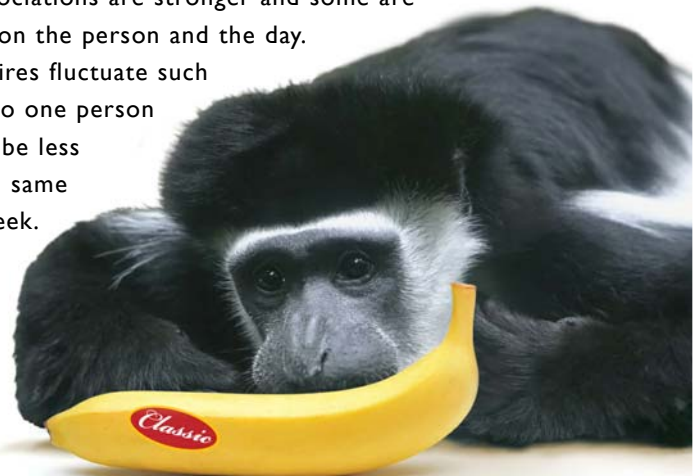
— Tracy Hampton, SVP Research Services, Visa U.S.A. Inc.

In this second issue of *Lessons Learned*, author John Hallward argues why the concept of marketing a unique selling proposition (USP) is not a consumer-centric view.

The concept of the USP, as seen by the brand manager, is to focus on one main selling benefit of the brand versus those offered by competitors. The strategic thinking which goes into selecting a brand's USP resembles warfare between competitive brands, with imagery maps reflecting the battlefield, and positioning statements as the weapons. But where is the consumer in all of this?

Consumers do not want one characteristic or one USP. Consumers want it all. Why should a consumer have to choose between the longest lasting pain reliever versus the fast acting, or the safest, most gentle, or the cheapest priced? The concept of marketing a USP is not a consumer-centric view. It is not a realistic, relevant reflection of how consumers operate. Furthermore, a USP for a brand is limiting in appeal by the very definition of trying to sell one main benefit to the sub-segment of consumers which most values that one benefit. Consumers want pain relievers to be fast-acting, and safe, and strong, and inexpensive and more.

The consumers' emphasis on one or more of these benefits changes from occasion to occasion, and from mood to mood. Consumers are not stable, nor consistently rational. Although segmentation research allows us to place consumers into distinct groups, and to put a descriptive label on each person, consumers are not fixed with just the characteristics of the one segment. The reality is all consumers have all emotional needs within them. Some elements/associations are stronger and some are weaker, depending on the person and the day. Our emotional desires fluctuate such that what appeals to one person in one week might be less appropriate for the same person the next week. These fluctuations are hard to target because a population of consumers are all in fluctua-



tion. This is why segmentation research can be so frustrating to market researchers when trying to neatly explain brand behaviors. Unique segments do not uniquely buy just one or two uniquely defined brands. And segments are not stable.

Instead, brand managers should be targeting all consumers with the intention of painting their brand with the emotional associations the brand can satiate. Market research should focus on emotional need states in all consumers rather than focus on segments as if they are stable and mutually exclusive.

What we've learned from our own work

What do we find in the Ipsos experience of measuring brand equity? From our Equity*Builder databases, we have observed that:

1. Some well established brands are associated with offering many emotional pay-offs, while other known brands lack such associations;
2. Brands which offer many emotional associations have higher brand equity and stronger purchase interest than brands which offer fewer such emotional associations;
3. Strong brands can offer many emotional associations which on the surface appear to be opposites or contradictory. Some brands are seen as both harmonistic/reserved/quiet, while also offering emotional associations of being individualistic/expressive/out-going.
4. Emotionally rich brands such as Starbucks, Apple's iPod, Hallmark, eBay, RIM's Blackberry, Nike, Viagra and Virgin have earned great equity and business success. These are brands satiating many emotional desires while avoiding one USP.

Consider iPods. This is a brand with dominant market share which built the business by appealing to emotions (their "Silhouette" campaign) while avoiding talking about their product features. And they were vague enough to appeal to a wide swath of consumers to allow each consumer to experience their own personal pay-offs. This was not a specific narrow, targeted, rational ad campaign, but instead it was an open, indirect campaign which allowed many different personalities to find and experience their own emotional pay-offs for choosing iPod. It appears that big successful emotional brands avoid narrow definitions of their brands to narrow target groups, based on narrowly defined touch-points.

In summary, the concepts of a USP, of segmenting, and traditional advertising models should expand to a broader and more holistic consumer-centric model. This is about establishing many positive emotional associations for a brand. The role of 'emotions' is the topic of our next Lessons Learned.

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About the Author



Advertising research expert John Hallward started his career with Procter & Gamble, and Johnson & Johnson. He then co-founded the Canadian firm of Tandemar Research Inc., a leader in advertising research for top advertisers. After Tandemar was acquired by Ipsos, he went on to become Director of Global Product Development for Ipsos ASI, where he is also a member of the board. *Gimme! The Human Nature of Successful Marketing* is his first book.

Ipsos ASI



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