

WhitePaper



Using Visual Semiotics to Think Beyond Segmentation: Mapping the Needs and Expectations of Segments of Value to your Brand Portfolio

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Abstract

People use visual semiotics from an early age. We learn to associate colors such as red with hot surfaces such as a stove. This association of colors and images develops throughout our lives and can represent a nonverbal roadmap to help marketers understand human motivation. In this paper, we explore how category segmentation, paired with Visual Semiotics research (BrandLife), has helped marketers prioritize marketing tactics and investment in their portfolio of products.

The Challenge

Segmentation studies are often the first significant primary research investment toward understanding markets and audiences. However, while segmentations help marketers identify, understand and prioritize segments of value, they often fall short of informing a multi-brand portfolio strategy in which a company has several brands fulfilling similar needs. The result of an uninformed portfolio plan may lead each brand team to pursue the same segments without giving consideration to a holistic marketing approach where each brand is positioned to meet the needs of a specific segment of value.

Solution: Visual Semiotics

Our solution, called BrandLife, is derived from the science of visual semiotics. It uses a validated library of images that are culturally, life stage and historically neutral to reveal the subconscious decision influencers of consumers. When applied in portfolio planning, it provides an understanding of the 'why' behind unconscious reasoning and influences, as well as 'how' the findings can be applied to the brand portfolio. Through survey research, each respondent is instructed to select image(s) that represent three things: the typical brand in the category; the brand they used most often; and the ideal brand. The images selected for each question are coded based on the universal meaning of each individual image or image components. Subsequent open-ended questions serve to further reveal the motivations toward each image selected.

Using BrandLife as a follow up to segmentation research will allow marketers to map each segment of value to the brands in the portfolio. Specifically, the approach:

- Establishes the minimum emotional entry criteria necessary for a brand to effectively compete in the marketplace.
- Identifies the unclaimed emotional territory available and the building blocks that lead up to the ideal brand.
- Establishes the aspirational emotional drivers necessary for developing optimal communications to ideally compete in the marketplace.

“BrandLife delves deeper into the drivers and motivations of the segments of value and illustrates an innovative approach to positioning a portfolio of products to maximize ROI and deploy an effective category marketing plan.”

A Case Study

A leader in the eye care industry sought to understand how they should prioritize the three major brands against the segments of value identified in their segmentation research. The marketing teams had a hypothesis: that the over-the-counter eye drop category could handle three major brands. However, they did not yet have an understanding of how the needs and desires of each segment stacked up against their brands. The action plan called for the development of a category strategy that would encompass between one to three brands. Specifically, they sought to:

- Take a deep dive into the motivations and drivers of each segment to fully understand their needs in the eye drop category.
- Reveal insights into consumers' emotional and rational purchase drivers within the category.
- Map the needs of each segment to the three company products.
- Explore product, campaign and creative elements that will resonate most with each segment to help inform the creation of distinctive brand platforms.

Following a round of qualitative, which was designed to understand the segments and explore the drivers and unmet needs for each group, the quantitative phase incorporated Ipsos' BrandLife methodology to assess the underlying factors that resonate with each segment to determine which of the three eye drop brands best meets their needs. The research further assessed what platform each brand should 'own' to best communicate their value to each segment.

To tie the findings from the visual semiotics analysis back to the market research objectives, the results were run by each segment of value. The output was a segment-specific territory analysis that revealed the criteria that represented the ideal eye drop.

Summary

Using visual semiotics (BrandLife) has proven to increase the value of segmentation research and allow organizations to reach the full potential with the research investment. In this case, the findings enabled the eye care company to explore ways to re-launch two of their three brands to better meet the expectations of category users.

About Ipsos Healthcare

Ipsos Healthcare is a global business focusing on research in the pharmaceutical, bio-tech, and medical device markets.

With offices in over 40 countries, the team of 600 healthcare market research experts, marketers and ex-client-side brand-builders focus on delivering outcome-oriented research for its clients. It is also the leading provider of global syndicated patient chart studies in over 14 countries.

Drawing from a broad range of qualitative, quantitative and data analytic/integration techniques, Ipsos Healthcare offers a range of stand-alone and integrated research programs to evaluate the motivations, experiences, interactions and influence of stakeholders forming the multi-customer markets which increasingly drive business success in the healthcare industry.

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