



Ipsos Connect

Thought Piece
2017



THE MAP TO BRAND GROWTH



It contains evocative childhood memories like: going to the (then exotic) McDonald's in New York, the easy dating venue of my teenage years, the iconic products, some advertising and promotions. Of course, it also includes the key distinctive assets of the Golden Arches and McDonald's sting that cause me to salivate like a Pavlovian dog whenever I encounter them.

As you can see from my example, our individual brand mental networks are forged over time and they can be molded, enriched, and strengthened by interventions that marketers can control and steer. Therefore, the task of any marketer is to refresh, enhance, or change the network to keep it relevant and distinctive for today's environment.

CONSTRUCTING A BRAND MENTAL NETWORK

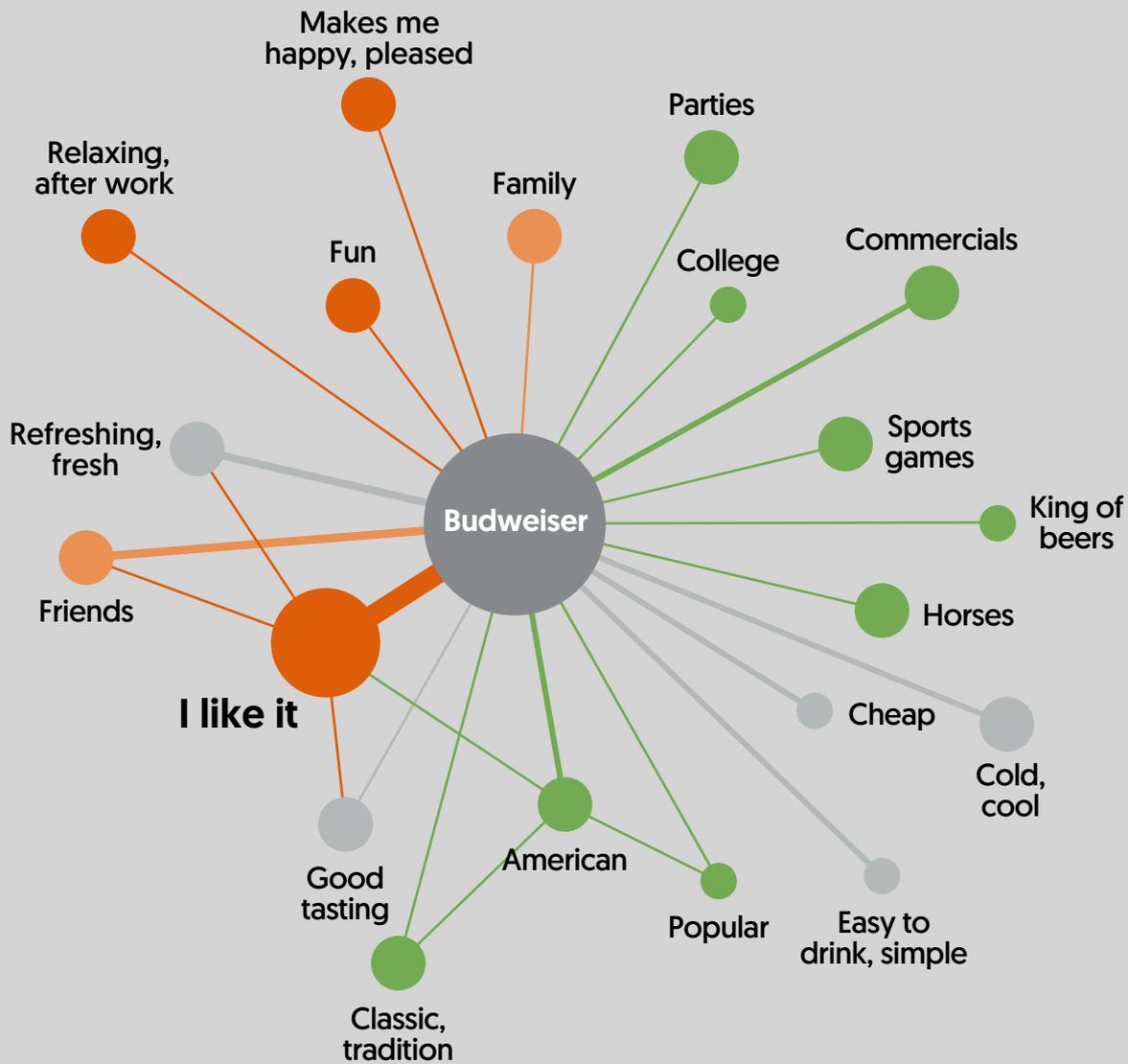
But, if you're going to change a brand mental network you need to know what it looks like! That's where research can help you identify the associations that are ripe for action. The good news is that it is easy to research brand mental networks and this, in turn, helps you understand what makes your brand distinctive and noticeable.

It's a simple process; we use an open-ended question that we know delivers rich, natural, and spontaneous feedback. This can either be done at an overall brand level or within the context of a job to be done, occasion, need, etc. We obtain this feedback for both your brand and key competitors in the market (up to 3 others). We then use text analytics to analyse the verbatim and extract the prominent associations for each brand.

DEFINING A STRONG MENTAL NETWORK

The Budweiser example shows a brand with a strong mental network. Which begs the question how do we define a strong mental network?

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1. When it is rich

The more diverse the network is the more hooks, or shortcuts, consumers will have that make them think of a brand, for example: product features, functional benefits, emotional connections, personal associations, brand cues and assets, recall of advertising, etc.

2. When the associations are interconnected

An interconnected network amplifies the chances of it being retrieved. If one association is connected to another, it is more likely to trigger the recall of other connections. In turn, the more interconnected associations that are recalled, the more likely it is that the brand will be remembered and considered in multiple contexts.

3. When the association is shared by many people

The more people who hold a positive association about a brand, the more able it is to grow. This is because it

will be more salient, for more people, at the moment of choice. If the positive association is something that is distinctive to your brand, then all the better.

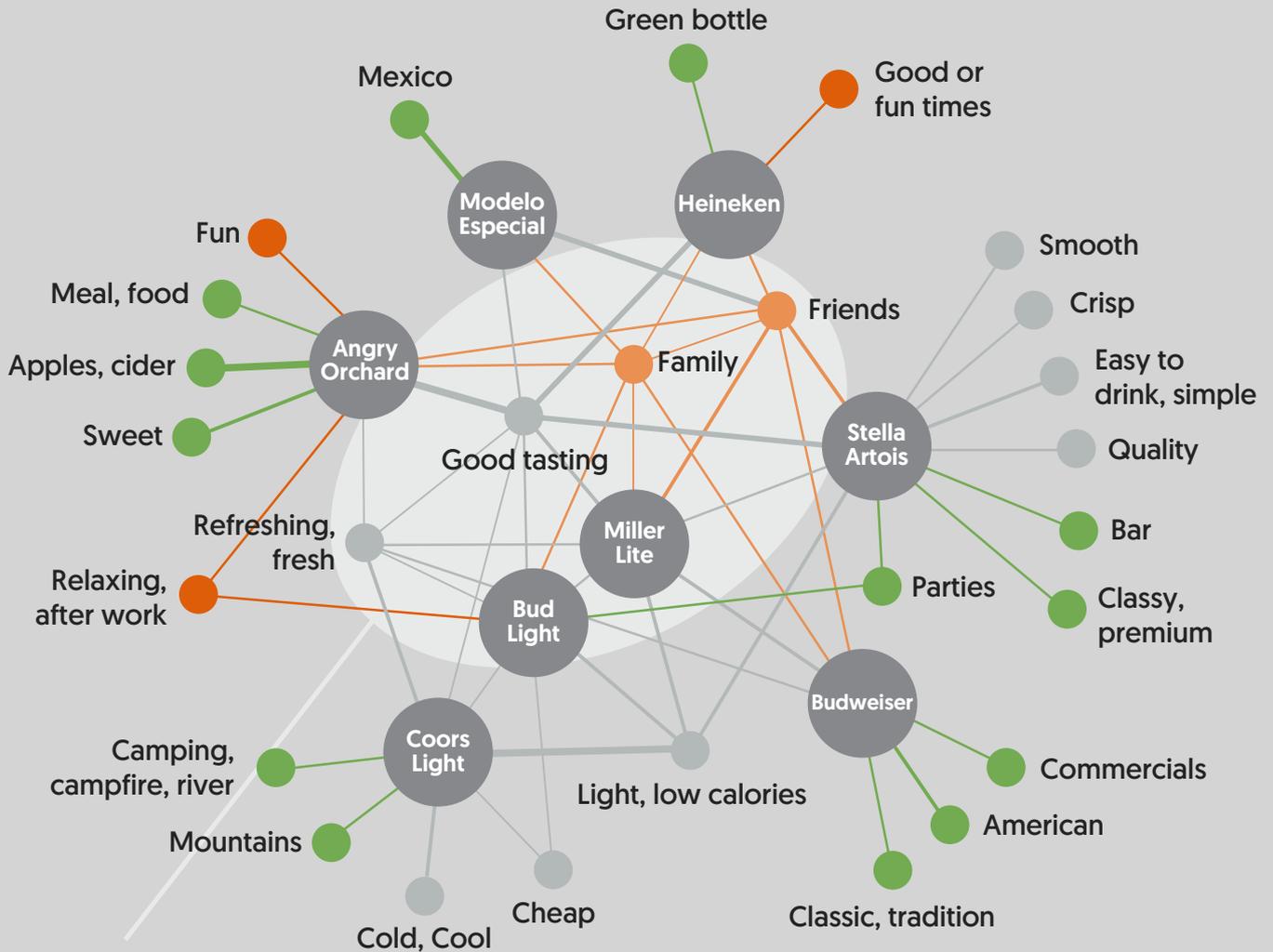
THE BENEFIT OF BRAND MENTAL NETWORKS

Looking at the brand mental networks for your brand is helpful, but we also want to look at how this overlaps with other brands in the category. This then highlights what are category generics vs. distinctive positions in the minds of your consumers. Meaning we can identify the mental shortcuts that will trigger your brand, and only your brand, in the moments that matter.

We should acknowledge that this type of research is big picture stuff, it uncovers what is most important to people about brands and, as such, it isn't a replacement for in depth strategy work. Having said that it gives you the ability to answer these types of questions straight from the horse's mouth, or at least people's minds!

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IT UNCOVERS WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT
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Themes that are linked to one brand only are characteristic/dinstinctive of that brand.



Brand similarity:
Themes shared by
all brands cluster
in the middle



BRAND POSITIONING: WHAT SHOULD I REINFORCE, REFRESH OR CHANGE TO BUILD SALIENCE?

- Does my brand have a strong mental network? Is it consistent with the strategic direction of the brand or do I need to course correct?
- Is it distinctive from the competition? If not how can I change the brand mental network to make it more distinctive
- Are there any negative or ambiguous associations?
- What can the brand do to remove these mental barriers to choice?

COMMUNICATION: HOW CAN I USE MY COMMUNICATION TO AFFECT THIS CHANGE?

- Does my communication or at least elements of it come through in the brand mental network?
- Are there any personal associations to people, places, memories or traditions that matter to people and could be illustrated through or reinforced by communication?
- What is the language that marketers need to use in communications to set the right tone or strike the right emotional chord?

DISTINCTIVE ASSETS: DO ANY COME THROUGH IN THE BRAND MENTAL NETWORK?

- Which of my assets should I use in packaging or POS or communications in order to most strongly attract attention to the brand at these touchpoints?

Brand mental networks are a deceptively simple tool. Unlike other methods for establishing how a brand is received by a consumer base, brand mental networks reveal an organic image of which associations with a brand are strongest. The technique does not lead or bias the participant and can reveal not only a brand's strongest associations, but also the areas where they are distinct from competitors.

Brands are made by marketers, but live and die by the associations that they make with consumers. Knowing what sticks with people and, therefore, what you need to reinforce or refresh to take your brand further on its growth journey is key. As I drive off to the North I'll be looking out for the moment the Golden Arches appear on the horizon proving once again that salience sells!

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FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:



HEAD OF CONTENT AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Eleanor heads up our Content and Creative development offer. She is particularly interested in recent advances in our understanding of how the brain works and our ability to bring this knowledge to bear on developing great communications.

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With over 25 years' experience in brand and communications research, Jon is something of a guru in the area. He heads up our Client Offer and ensures that our latest thinking and best practice are brought to bear to benefit our clients.

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GLOBAL DIRECTOR

Claudia is responsible for product innovation in brand and communications research. Her main area of focus these days is on unstructured data, and how to harness the power of different data streams for effective brand management.

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Ipsos Connect

ABOUT IPSOS CONNECT

Ipsos Connect are experts in brand, media, content and communications research. We help brands and media owners to reach and engage audiences in today's hyper-competitive media environment.

Our services include:

- **Brand & Campaign Performance:** Evaluation and optimisation of in-market activities to drive communications effectiveness and brand growth.
- **Content and Communications Development:** Communications, content and creative development from early stage idea development through to quantitative pre-testing alongside media & touchpoint planning.
- **Media Measurement:** Audience measurement and understanding.

Ipsos Connect are specialists in people-based insight, employing qualitative and quantitative techniques including surveys, neuro, observation, social media and other data sources. Our philosophy and framework centre on building successful businesses through understanding brands, media, content and communications at the point of impact with people.

