wp: 289

289

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A GENERALISED SCALE FOR PRETESTING PRINT ADVERTISEMENTS

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A GENERALISED SCALE FOR PRETESTING PRINT ADVERTISEMENTS

Subhash C. Mehta* H.S. Chhabra V.R. Raju

Advertising is used as a non-personal form of communication for increasing the awareness of existing products and introducing new ones to the target customers with the ultimate aim of persuading them to buy the company's offerings. With increased competition and government's regulation of advertising, affecting both the content and the appropriation, the marketing executives are beginning to increasingly concern themselves with productivity and efficiency of advertising. As a first step, companies want to ensure that whatever advertising campaign they launch, it should meet the objectives set forth. The company executives have to determine whether the campaign is likely to perform its expected tasks efficiently or else there is scope for effecting some improvements. Pre-launch measures become all the more important since later advertising effectiveness measurement is highly complex and confounded.

Increasing desire for result oriented advertising on the part of advertisers has led to newer and better techniques for pretesting of advertisements. Pretesting is of particular importance especially when consumer perceptions and opinions about an advertisement might contradict the expectations of the company. If a particular advertisement is supposed to be amusing, and the consumers during the pretest think that

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it is not, such an information Lof vital importance to the company. **∠**is the advertiser thinks that an advertisement conceived by him is very interesting to the consumer and is likely to stimulate consumer's desire to buy the product but the consumer finds it boring and stupid during a pretest that is an equally important finding. In such a case the advertiser would like to take corrective action before he commits large sums of money to the campaign. Similarly, in the case of a particular proposed theme, the company executives would like to know how effective it is likely to be? In case of two or more alternative advertisements or themes they would want to know which one is better for the objectives in mind. Here, there are generally a variety of concerns. Will people understand the advertisement? Will they like it? Will they like one advertisement more than the other? Which advertisement has more stopping power? Do people believe in the claims being made? Which advertisement is more interesting to the consumers? These are only some of the quest⊷ ions on which pretests have to provide some indicative answers to the likely effectiveness of an advertisement.

Different research techniques and methods have been used in the pretesting of advertisements. Each of them serve specific objectives. Some of the most popular research techniques are:

- i) Recognition Measurement Methods;
- ii) Recall Measurement Methods;
- iii) Attitude and Opinion Measurement Methods;
- iv) Comprehension Measures;
- v) Believability Measures;

- vi) Persuasion Measures;
- vii) Buying Pre-disposition Measures; and
- viii) Behavioural Measurement Methods.

For each of these methods, company executives have used different sets of citeria for pretesting of advertisements, the most frequently used being:

- i) Attention getting ability;
- ii) Involvement;
- iii) Recall;
- iv) Communication comprehension;
 - v) Brand image;
- vi) Credibility;
- vii) General Like/Dislike;
- viii) New Learning;
 - ix) Intelligibility;
 - x) Distinctiveness;
 - xi) Persuasive power; and
 - xii) Emotional arousal.

The specific company objectives in a given instance determine which research techniques or set of techniques have to be employed. Most of the methods and techniques discussed above, however, are quite elaborate, and time consuming. Their wide scale use is often limited by the prohibitive cost of advertising research. Since company executives are often faced with the decision problem regarding the selection of the best

advertisement from several alternatives, they need a quick and ready method for choosing the best alternative. In this paper an attempt is made to find a solution to this problem by developing a generalised scale for pretesting and comparing alternative print advertisements.

Research Methodology

A comprehensive list of words/adjectives, hopefully covering all important dimensions over which consumers could possibly perceive an advertisement, was prepared. This list was then screened for eliminating duplications, unusable slangs and words difficult to comprehend. manner 197 words were chosen and these were randomised while administering the questionnaire. Six black and white advertisements, as different from each other as possible, were then selected from an English weekly magazine. While selecting the advertisements, care was taken to avoid duplication in theme, style, and presentation. Each of the six advertisements was rated by 100 well educated respondents on a 5-point scale. The respondents were first asked to carefully examine all aspects of each advertisement. They were then requested to read the list of words one by one and determine how well each word described the advertisement they had just seen. To eliminate the influence of product biases on the ratings, the respondents were told to concentrate on the advertisement per se while rating it and not to bother about the product advertised. The respondents were then asked to put a number between 1 and 5 against each word, depending on whether they considered that the word did not fit the advertisement at all, fitted a little bit, fitted quite a bit, fitted well or fitted extremely well, respectively. To avoid spurious data,

know the meaning of the word. This zero was later replaced by the mean score of the advertisement on the word at the time of data analysis.

Data Analysis

The first step in the analysis was to subject the consumer ratings on each word to an analysis of variance (Anova) to find out the words that discriminated between advertisements at a chosen level of significance. F-value corresponding to .05 level of significance for the degrees of freedom available is 2.37. Hence all words having F-value less than 2.37 from Anova were climinated, the assumption being that words which produced almost similar mean ratings on the six advertisements, despite the fact that advertisements chosen for the study were quite different, were poor discriminators of the different qualitative aspects of the advertisements. The remaining 115 words (Exhibit 1) were subjected to factor analysis. To keep the computer time and costs within limits, ratings data for only 3 advertisements out of the six available were subjected to factor analysis. To obtain more clear cut factors, varimax rotation was performed. The next step in the analysis was identification of the factors obtained by examining the factor loadings. Exhibit 2 shows the detailed composition of each of the important factors that emerged in the analysis. While some of the words had high loadings onafactor for each of the three ads, others had loadings above .55 on only two or in some cases on one ad. The words under each of the first five factors formed some stable themes which could be identified and named. The final step involved naming the basic themes or factors selecting sand a shorter list from the longer list of words which loaded well on the factor, which to-gather well described the basic theme. The following criteria was used to make the final choice of words representing a particular factor:

- a) high factor loadings;
- b) high F value from Anova;
- c) Consistency of factor loadings across the three advertisements;
- d) merging of the word with the basic theme; and
- e) elimination of duplication.

Identification of Factors

Factor 1

Under factor 1 we find that the words like lovely, wonderful, beautiful, pretty, enjoyable, attractive, delightful, artistic, impressive, charming, exciting, pleasant, touching, romantic, and refreshing (Exhibit 2) got high loadings. These words have the same basic theme, expressing positive feelings and emotions, and the same theme ran across all the three advertisements which were factor analysed. This factor was named as:

SENSUOUSNESS (Positive feelings and emotions)
Using the above mentioned criteria, the words finally selected to
represent this basic theme were lovely, artistic, exciting, romantic
and refreshing.

Factor 2

Under this factor words like misleading, rubbish, false, exaggerated, stupid, nonsensical, pointless, tiring, horrible, confusing, lousy, odd, and foolish (Exhibit 2) got high loadings. These words connoted negative feelings and emotions towards (a) the total presentation of the advertisement and (b) the copy content. The basic theme represented by these words ran across all the three advertisements. This factor was named as ;

SENSUOUSNESS (Negative feelings and emotions)

The final words chosen as per the criteria were misleading, falsæ, stupid, exaggerated, non-sensical, pointless and confusing. The first three of these were primarily related to the copy content of the advertisement and the last four to the total presentation of the advertisement.

Factor 3

words like informative, truthful, believable, convincing, descriptive, explanatory, rational, factual, logical, superficial, etc. under this factor seemed to express a basic theme which ran across all the three advertisements (Exhibit 2) and could be termed as ?

CREDIBILITY (Message and Claims)

The words finally chosen as per the criteria were informative, truthful, believable, and convincing.

Factor 4

Under this factor words like vulgar, sexy, negative, and feminine got high loadings. These words suggested a basic theme which also ran

across all the three advertisements and could be named as :

The words selected as per the suggested criteria encompassing the meaning of this theme, were sexy, vulgar, and feminine.

Factor 5

Under this factor, the words with high factor loadings were silly, lifeless, irritating and dull. Though, none of the words really satisfied well the selected criteria, they somewhat appeared to represent the eye appeal that the advertisement evoked. This factor was remed as the

EYE APPEAL.

The words selected to represent this theme were lifeless, and irritating.

Thus, the basic themes which emerged from the factor analysis were:

- 1. Sensuousness (positive feelings & emotions)
- 2. Sensuousness (negative feelings & emotions)
- 3. Credibility (Message & claims)
- 4. Sex appeal
- 5. Eye appeal

These emerged as the most basic factors or dimensions of an advertisement on which consumer reactions could be gathered in evaluating an advertisement.

The Generalised Scale

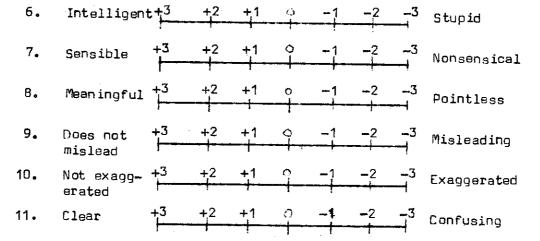
Having identified the words which can be included in a generalized scale for evaluating and comparing advertisements on the important dimensions, it appears appropriate to suggest that these items be used in the form of a semantic differential scale for obtaining consumer

ratings. The reason is that since the selected list of words includes both positive and negative items, a measurement bias may come which can be well taken care of by transforming the scale into a bi-polar 7 or 9 point semantic differential scale. Even otherwise it is inappropriate to ask a consumer to rate an advertisement on words like "stupid" or "False" while the same objective can be served by asking him to rate it on "Intelligent - Stupid" and "True - False" dimensions. This would also have the added advantage of knowing that if a particular advertisement is not "Stupid", how "Intelligent" it is perceived to be. The final scale, thus, would be in the following form :

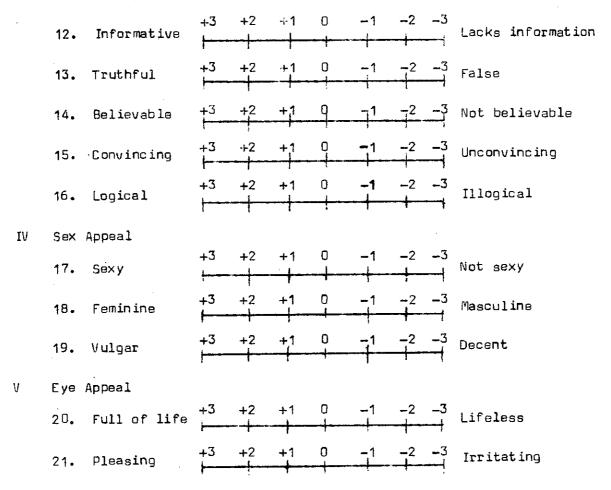
Sensuousness (Positive feelings and emotions)

-	1.	Lovely	+3 	+2	+;	7	~ 1	- 2 	-3 -⊢	Not L o vely
	2.	Artistic	+3. +	+2	+1	0	-1 	- 2	-3 +	Unar t istic
	3.	Exciting	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	- 2	_3 	Unexciting
	4.	Romantic	+3 	+2	+1	0	-1	- 2	-3 - - 1	Unromantic
	5.	Refreshin	9 +3	+2	+1	<u> </u>	-1	- 2	-3 -4	Not refreshing

II Sensuousness (Negative feelings and emotions)



III Credibility (Message and claims)



These 21 words can be randomised, and will form the questionnaire for eliciting consumer responses. The purpose of randomisation of the words in the questionnaire is to eliminate the possibility of the respondents looking through them as a set of words which may thus bias wheir ratings.

Advertisement Profiles

This generalised scale can be used to develop a profile for the test advertisement(s) to see the items where particular strengths or weaknesses are perceived by the consumers. Such an exercise was done on the data for the three advertisements which were used for factor

analysis in this study. The profiles that emerged are shown in Figure 1.

Advertisement 1 was perceived as weak on Factor 1 (Sensuousness: Positive feelings and emotions), but on Factor 2 (Sensuousness: Negative feelings and emotions) it was not seen as very poor, meaning thereby that it did not evoke strong negative feelings. On Credibility dimension (Factor 3) this advertisement scored fairly well. On sex appeal (Factor 4), it was seen as feminine but not vulgar or sexy and on Eye appeal (Factor 5), it evoked an average response. If one were to improve this advertisement, one would look for ideas to make it more exciting and eye appealing without disturbing its strengths on credibility and decency. Similar profiles can be examined for Advertisements II and III. Perhaps profiles would be somewhat sharper and clearer with the use of a semantic differential scale, which was not done in the present case.

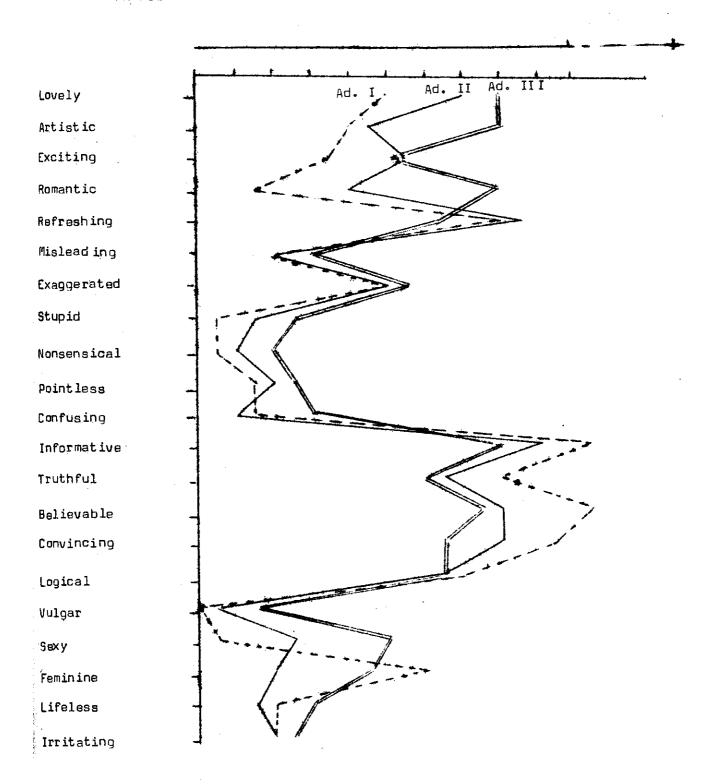
Conclusion

The generalised scale developed here can be useful in a number of ways:

1. Perhaps the most important use of the scale is that it can help in matching company expectations with consumer perceptions. The scale developed here enables the company to determine whether there is a match between its objectives and consumer perceptions on the most relevant basic dimensions or concepts of an advertisement. It also enables a company to review the proposed advertising campaign before launching the campaign and committing large funds for this purpose.

Figure 1

PROFILES OF THREE ADVERTISEMENTS ON GENERALIZED SCALE



- 2. This scale helps the advertiser to compare different advertisements over the basic dimensions or concepts for choosing the best one as per the objectives set forth.
- 3. The third important use of this generalised scale is that it helps determine changes in the consumer perceptions over repeated exposures to an advertisement. This information is extremely useful in deciding the time when changes in advertising presentation and copy are called for.
- 4. Finally, the scale may be helpful in the development of new advertisements. The feedback received on an advertisement can be helpful in redesigning future advertisements.

Limitations of the Study

- 1. It is possible that certain respondents rated some of the words without properly grasping the meaning, despite instructions to use zero when they did not understand the meaning of the word. Some of them might not have wished to admit that they did not know the meaning of a certain word.
- 2. Though each respondent was instructed to rate the advertisement per se and not bother about the product, it is likely that some respondents were influenced by the product advertised in rating the advertisement.
- 3. The study should be viewed primarily as a demonstration of a methodology and the resulting scale may need to be further validated through similar analysis of ratings over a larger number and variety of advertisements.

Exhibit 1

Initial Words list for Ratings

Words	F-value*	Words	f-value*	Words f-	-value*
Absorbing	12.00	Deceptive	1.09	Gentle _	6.63
Abstract	/2.27	Defensive _	0.57	Genuine	3.13
Assthetic [†]	3.13	Delightful ⁺	5.38		13.31
Advising+	4.26	Descriptive	6.00	Gloomy	0.87
Aggressive	1.73	Depressive	1.74	Heavy _	2.88
Agreeable	2.02	Different	0.63	Heart-warming	2.79
Amusing	3.95	Direct	0.72	Helpfu <u>l</u> T	7.36
Annoying	2.92	Distinctiv <u>e</u>	J.33	Homely	7.73
Apologetiç	1.85	Disoustina	3.34	Honest	1.46
Appealing	4 . 5 5	Dramatic ₊	7.00	Horrible	2.76
Appropriate	3. 69	Dreaming	18.27	Humourous	3.57
Arouses		Dull ⁺	5.45	Ideal .	1.14
Curiosity		Easy to +	10.03	Imaginatiγe [™]	6.40
Artistic ⁺	8.3 9	remember		Imitation	5 .7 9
Assertive	0.61	Easy to _	2.83	Important	2.48
Assuring	1.91	understand T		to me [™] +	
Attenti <u>o</u> n	3.38	Educative_	3.78	Im p ressive	2.76
getting' +		Effective	2.55	Inadequate	1.15
Attractive	6. 66	£mbarassing ₊	1.45	In good taste	2.05
Awful'	3.10	Ego-8oost <u>i</u> ng	4.05	Indifferent	1.68
Beautiful	14.14	Emotional	10.60	Influential ₊	0.93
Believable	4.35	Enjoyable + ₊	4.69	Informatiye	2.51
Biased' _	2.3 5	Exaggerated	4.13	Insulting	3.89
Boastful'	4.50	Exceptional	1.09	Interesting ₊	2.15
Bogus ₊	2.13	Exciting ₊	2.94	Intolerable	2.69
Boring' +	3.74	Explanatory +	5.01	Intelligent'	5.45
Charming'	17.08	Eye Cat <u>c</u> hing	10.11	Irrelevant ₊	0.86
Clever	0.47	Factu <u>ą</u> l'	3.67	Irritating	2.89
Classic	2.08	False	3.79	Lifeless	3.18
Clear +	3.55	Familiar	0.85	Likeable	1.35
Comical	4.33	Fascinating	0.93	Lively +	9.21
Common'	2.76	Feminine	36.91	Logical	2.64
Conforming	1.81	Fictitious	2.0 7	Lousy +	3 .77
Conflicting	0.85	Foolish	4,03	Lovely	6.35
Confusing'	4.96	Forceful	0.56	Makes Me	1.19
Controversial		Fresh	8.97	Want to buy	2 22
Conventional	1.07	Frightening	0.28	Meaningfu <u>l</u> Memorable	2•22 6.01
Convincing'	3.82	Frustrating	1.41	Memorable,	6.01 3.02
Crazy +	3.48	Full of ideas	2.01	Misleading +	3.92
Creativ <u>e</u>	4.99	Funny +	1.88	Mischievious Mada r a	2.74
Crowded'	19.10	General	2.42	Modern	4.28

^{*} Figures spainst each word sive F-values from shove, which was done to see if r tinger of six ads. on a word differed significantly. All the words with F-value above 2.37 produced at least one of the means among 6 ads. significantly different than the others beyond .05 level.

⁺ Only words with plus (+) signs were included for factor analysis.

Words	F-value*	words	F-value*	Words	F-va.
Natural ⁺	6.38	Romantic ⁺	25.56	Strange	2.06
New .	1.73	Remarkable	0.81	Stimulating	2.00
Negative	2.85	Realistic	4.07	Striking	3.34
Nonsensical ^T	3.96	Reasonable	J. 72	Stupid	3.91
Noteworthy	0 .6 6	Reliable	2.21	Superficial	6,20
Not for me	1.26	Recognizable	1.42	Suapicioya	1.93
Novel	1.64	Responsibl <u>e</u>	2.66	Suitable	4.51
Odd T	4.82	Repetitive	5.64	Supe rþ	1,01
Offensive	, 1.21	Relevant	1.54	Sweet	6.94
Old fashioned	⁷ 3.32	Ridiculous	3.85	Tempting	1.23
Passive	1.70	Rubbish	2.45	Tense	0.86
Peculiar +	2.29	Rude	1.45	Terrible	1.4D
Pleasant	5.75	Sad	2.31	Thrill <u>i</u> ng	0.95
Pertinent	2.05	Sarcastic	0.36	Tiring	5.79
Polite ,	1.69	Satisfying	1.52	Thoughtfyl	1.31
Popular +	4.91	Sensational	1.76	Touching	7.90
Pointless	3.14	Sensitive	3,50	Trustwor t hy ^T	2.50
.Powerful	1.23	Sensible	2,96	Truthful ^T	3.76
Pretty	14.69	Serious	2.87	Unequalled	0.43
Practical T	2.57	Shocking	2.03	Unique	1.83
Professional	1.55	Silly	2.61	Unusual	2.12
Promising	2.05	Simp <u>l</u> e	1.63	ประfu <u>l</u>	10.39
Radical	3.54	Sexy	31.20	Vague [™] _	2.55
Rare ,	0.73	Snobb <u>i</u> sh	0.66	Vulga r ⊤	3.36
Rational	3.33	Sober	2.57	witty"	3.73
Refreshing	12.34	Soothing [†]	5. 95	Wonderful [3.23
				Worth looking at	7.87
				Worth_Rememb- ering	4,00

Exhibit 2

Factor Loadings For Three Advertisements*

(From Rotated Factor Matrix)

VARIABLES							
0 / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /	Adver	tiseme	nt		Adver	tiseme	nt
	I	II	III		I	II	III
Factor 1							
Pleasant	.77	.64	•55	Confusing	.61	. 10	•66
Lovely	.76	.80	.67	Misleading	.61	.69	.59
Wonderful	. 75	.50	•66	Exaggerated	.58	.62	.33
Beautiful	.74	.75	.71	H orri ble	. 58	.19	.51
Pretty	.74	.67	•59	Foolish	•50	• 72	.72
Eye catching	72	.68	.66	Nonsensical	.50	• 72	.63
Enjoyable	.72	.68	.64	Lousy	. 43	•50	.66
Sweet	•71	. 73	•55	Irritating	.40	•59	. 43
Attractive	.68	.68	.69	Vague	.30	.17	.62
Delightful	.66	.74	. 77	Stupid	.27	. 77	.75
Artistic	.66	•59	•59	Pointless	.21	.58	.74 .67
Heart-warming	.65	.67	.50	0dd	• 16	.38	
Impressive	•64	.70	.67	Ridiculous	• 15	.30	.59 .66
Charming	. 63	.82	.61	Negative	. 09	.01	•00
Memorable	.63	• 49	.64	_			
Lively	.63	.50	.47	Factor 3			
Intelligent	•61	• 40	.48	Informative	. 73	.03	•56
Exciting	.60	.65	. 70	Descriptive	.69	. 13	•42
Sensitive	.59	. 43	. 43	Explanatory	•65	.11	.30
Fresh	.58	.57	. 42	Believable	.64	.16	•67
Gentle	•55	.40	. 23	Truthful	.64	.01	. 73
Romantic	•52	.64	.70	Rational	.63	•15	.33
Touching	-48	.72	•57	Factual	.62	. 17	.40
Important to me	.47	•59	.50	Logical	.61	.01	.40
Attention getti	ng.40	•65	.58	Convincing	.60	.33	•57
Creative	• 40	.62	.66	Sensible	.58	.04	.53
Effective	.37	• 27	•62	Practical	.56	.06	. 13
Emotional	.30	.63	•52	Ad vis ing	.56	.24	• 40
Striking	•22	•24	.62	Useful '	.51	.01	•58
Refreshing	.015	.58	•64	Realistic	.50	.02	.62
				Trustworthy	•34	•22	.61
Factor 2				G e ntle	.33	.40	•55
Rubbish	. 75	. 73	.72	Common	•22	•57	.23
False	.65	. 40	.67	Superficial	. 18	.64	. 09
Tiring	.63	15	. 40				
Trang	,	- !-					

^{*} Only data on three ads. were factor analyzed. Figures against each word give the factor loadings for each of the three advertisements, respectively.

	Ad	vertise	ment
Factor 4	I	11	111
Vulgar	.83	.23	.10
Saxy	•55	. 46	. 19
Negative	.28	.73	.08
Feminine	.25	.03	.59
Confusing	. 06	.68	.20
Tiring	.31	.67	.40
Factor 5			
Ostional	.88	.59	05
Rational Silly	.74	•22	.09
Lifeless	65	.02	.17
Negative	.64	. 03	06
Annoying	.63	.27	.17
Irritating	.55	.18	.13
Dull	.54	.06	.25
Sansible	.17	.64	. 83
Glamourous	.11	.15	•5 6
Factual	.10	.69	.17
Logical	. 09	.59	08
Fon-boosting	. 02	.30	.60