

CASE STUDY | AFFDEX DISCOVERY

Ad Testing's Demonstrative Results:

How facial expression technology pinpoints the best bicycle message for young girls

Category:

Consumer Products

Methods:

Nationwide web-based qualitative interviews with an Affdex Discovery component for tracking facial reactions to videos

Summary:

Brunner is a full-service independent advertising agency with offices in Pittsburgh and Atlanta. The agency serves a wide variety of national clients, including YellaWood, Bob Evans, Cub Cadet, GNC, Phillips Healthcare and Musselman's. In early 2015, the firm helped a major U.S. bicycle manufacturer launch its newest product for little girls. The bike featured a device that would help the young rider better imagine that one of several cartoon characters was "accompanying" her on her ride.

With the charge by the manufacturer to develop an advertising message that was not only compelling but also effective in convincing little girls that the bike would provide a wonderfully imaginative riding experience, Brunner developed two rough-cut commercials reflecting different creative/messaging directions. Each video was identical but the voiceovers were different. One centered around a child's poem describing how the bike could help a girl bring to life her own fairytale; the other described the adventure she imagined having while on her bike.

But which direction would be the most effective with 4-6-year-olds?

To answer that question, Brunner conducted ad evaluation research using online interviews and chose 20|20 Research's Affdex Discovery technology to help identify the message that could best take the product to market. The research team was comprised of Brunner of Pittsburgh (direct client), New View Research of Miami (moderator) and 20|20 Research of Nashville, TN (research technology).

Strategic issues:

A solution was needed that would help Brunner ensure the opinions belonged to the little girls, and were not being influenced by mom or dad sitting nearby. Also, Brunner needed to be sure the youngsters fully understood the product/features and could imagine themselves enjoying the biking experience. The research additionally had to reflect a national market, while working within a limited research budget.

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Strategic issues Continued:

During proposal conversations, 20|20 suggested Brunner use the research company's Affdex Discovery product, which employs sophisticated facial expression recognition software and a computer's webcam to detect and identify emotional reactions while the subject is watching ads or video. Affdex Discovery would allow Brunner to see the girls' reactions to the commercial in real time, second-by-second, and not force the researchers and agency to rely on a 4-to-6 year old's recall to know when something caused an important reaction. With this positive or negative feedback, moderators could immediately probe the meaning behind the respondent's reaction and uncover raw emotional insights.

Research objectives:

- Evaluate the performance of the two ads among the target audience (girls 4-6 years of age).
- Identify the stronger ad by identifying factors of each ad that contribute to product, special features and brand recognition, as well as intent-to-purchase.
- Identify the ad with the clearest message by identifying perceptions and/or misperceptions that the ad may be conveying.
- Identify issues with the product or possible new features.
- Gain input from a national audience and do so cost effectively.

Research design and methods:

The study required 30 girls ages 4-6 from across the nation. The girl's with their parents could take part in the study from the comfort and convenience of their own homes, sitting in front of their own webcam-aided computer. Their parent would be close by. This environment would be very similar to how the young girl would view the commercial in everyday life. An added benefit was that the webcam interview methodology was budget-sensitive.

With the required subject age being so young, 20|20 pre-tested the process using an audience of 20|20 employee parents to be sure that Affdex could, indeed, deliver the results needed and that the process and technology would not be overwhelming to a mom/dad and their child.

Mothers of 4-6-year-old girls in 20|20's nationwide panel were then recruited via phone and questioned to ensure that their daughters were not rejecters of specific cartoon characters and would be interested in bicycling or scootering. The child then attended a "tech check" where they experienced the technology to ensure a smooth interview. Thirty girls were recruited with a completed sample of 29 interviews.

The technology eliminated any need for travel. 20|20 ran the interviews from Nashville, with the moderator located in Miami. Brunner representatives watched from Pittsburgh and representatives from the manufacturer watched from their headquarters in another state. Each webcam interview, which involved 29 different locations across America, lasted 20 minutes and was moderated by New View Research. Streaming video was available after the sessions for review by the moderator and client teams. Due to time constraints involving young interview subjects, the interviews were conducted over two afternoons.

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Results:

Both commercials performed well. The young consumers could accurately recall the messages of each. Affdex Discovery results (graphs) identified that in the two ads the same three key moments delivered the highest level of positive response from the girls regardless of the voice over. But the facial expressions and moderator probing clearly showed that the young girls had a greater positive reaction to the opening line of one version over the other, regardless which position during the interviews the ad was presented. Additionally, the Affdex expression graphs that accompany the video report displayed more intense responses for one of the commercials. This led the research team to more confidently recommend that version, since it had a greater likelihood to capture and maintain the imagination and attention of both daughter and parent to the ad's key messages.

"Using 20|20's Affdex Discovery we were able to develop well-thought-out recommendations for our client and could justify which commercial would be most effective in marketing this new product," said Lisa Silipigni, senior research manager for Brunner. "Pulling insights from 4-to-6 year old girls is a difficult task but this tool made it easy and provided the statistical evidence that backed us up. Doing all we did within our budget was an added bonus. This process was a confidence maker and I'm sure we'll use it again for other similarly challenging advertising assignments."

The experience also provided further insight into those message highlights that resonate well with this audience and provided Brunner a sense of how they might structure similar commercials in the future.