

# ADWEEK

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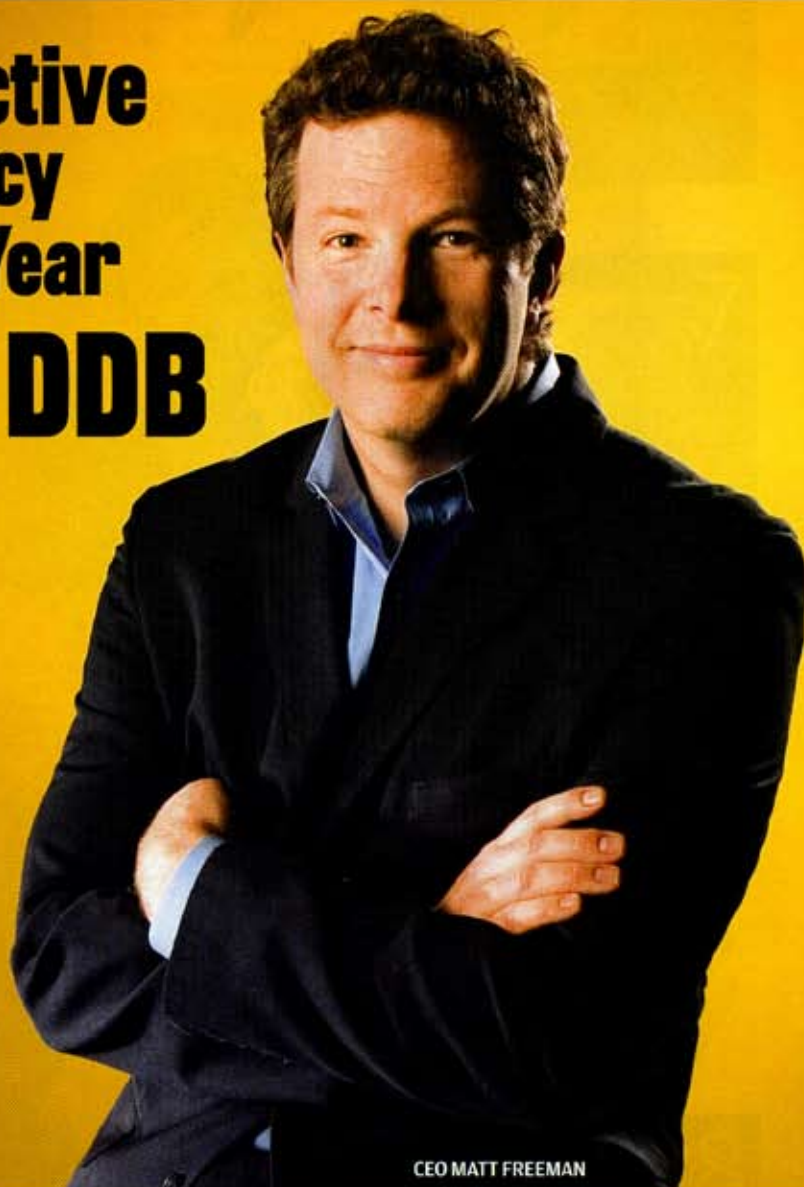
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CEO MATT FREEMAN

## The Brain Trust

### Will neuroscience replace focus groups?

Researchers are tracking heart rates and facial muscles to gauge consumer reactions to ads. Marketers and industry groups are taking notice. Will science play a larger role in shaping future ad messages?

Wendy Melillo reports. See page 12

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# Inside the Consumer Mind

What neuroscience can tell us about marketing

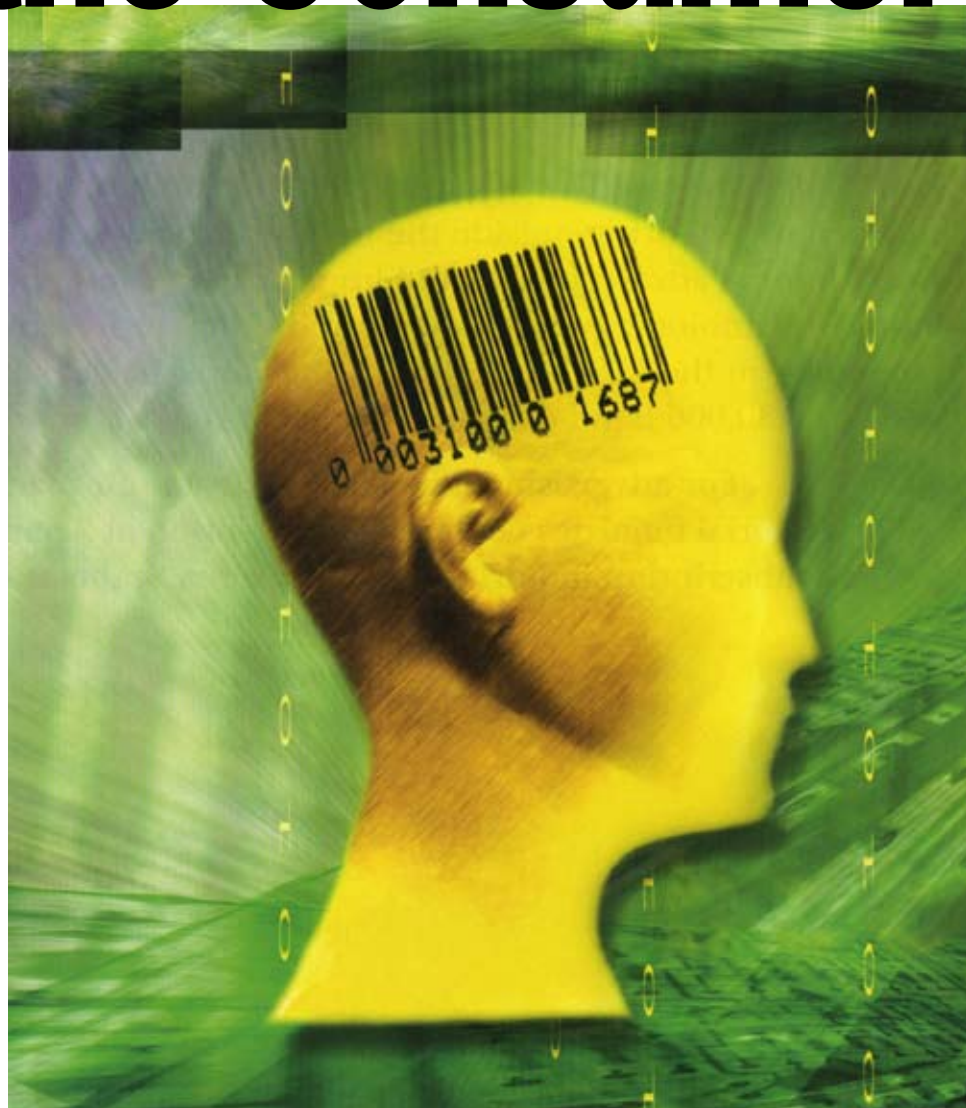
BY WENDY MELILLO

As Coca-Cola's famous "Mean Joe Green" ad unfolded frame by frame, a magnetic resonance imaging machine recorded what was going on inside the viewer's brain. When oxygen carried by blood pooled in the medial pre-frontal cortex, an area just behind the forehead, Jon Morris, a market researcher and communications professor at the University of Florida, knew he had scientific proof that the ad elicited emotion.

Science's study of the brain has yielded some tantalizing clues about how the mind works. Neuroscientists say people actually feel more than they think, and that emotion plays a crucial role in all decision-making. Although science has been uncovering the brain's secrets, especially over the last decade, the advertising industry has been slow to leverage the possibilities, industry advocates say. Traditional questionnaires and focus groups, they say, have been considered a simpler and less expensive route than high-tech machines to gauge consumer response to ads.

That is now changing. Concern that focus groups and copy-testing methods can result in bland and predictable ads is prompting agencies and advertisers to consider using physiological measures to analyze consumer reactions to products and to develop new ones. At this point, industry associations are testing these measures to not only see how people respond to ads, but are using the data to create them. Beyond putting people in MRI machines to see which parts of their brain light up, consumers are also being hooked up to electrodes to measure skin changes and heart rates. Even the movement of a person's facial muscles, imperceptible to the human eye, is being analyzed.

One big spark for agency interest in the value of such methods came when Ken Kaess, CEO of DDB Worldwide, argued in a speech at the 4A's Management Conference in April 2004 that traditional testing methods were contributing to the growing mediocrity in advertising. Later that year, a task force called "Emotional Response to Advertising" was created by the Advertising Research Foundation and the 4A's.



Over the past year, the task force has conducted studies of ads using biological measurements. The preliminary results show why agencies need to put more emphasis on consumers when creating and testing ads, proponents say.

Account planners like Alice Sylvester, a task force co-chair and account planning director at Foote Cone & Belding in Chicago, who advocate these new methods, argue that emotion, not reason, is the prominent factor in making buying decisions. Bombarding consumers with the same commercial message over and over again isn't enough. Creating ads based on the old AIDA model—building awareness, interest, desire and action—is obsolete. Traditional copy-testing methods are not enough to unlock the buying secrets buried in the unconscious mind.

This year, the task force will delve deeper into the unconscious mind. Account planning directors are dusting off copies of classic psy-

chological texts like Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* and Carl Jung's *Man and His Symbols* to better understand how newer methods of tapping into the unconscious work to glean which metaphors, archetypes or stories are important to consumers. The goal is to make the consumer a much more active participant in the creation of new ads, products and brands.

At the same time, retail advertisers are adopting cutting-edge technology such as hypersonic sound to beam commercials at individual store customers. Coming as soon as this year to a grocery store near you, like Safeway or Albertsons, and pharmacies like Walgreens and Rite Aid, will be ads aimed at consumers in a check-out line that only they can hear.

Although some of this sounds like science fiction—think Tom Cruise in *Minority Report* as he walks through a shopping mall hearing ads intended only for him—even the greatest skeptics who question the usefulness of measur-

ing a consumer's physical response to ads are conducting their own neuromarketing studies, marketers say, because they don't want to miss out on what could be the next greatest scientific advancement in market research.

"Everybody is looking for the magic bullet, and we can't afford not to look, too," says Nigel Hollis, evp of global development at Millward Brown, a market research firm in Fairfield, Conn., and an admitted skeptic about whether neuromarketing techniques do a better job of determining what consumers want over traditional market research such as measuring an ad's recall and persuasion levels. "Are we going to do more work like this in 2006? Yes. Am I going to recommend this to my clients? Only if it proves an additional utility to what we do today and it is appropriate to their research objectives."

But others are taking seriously the idea that new methods can dramatically change the way marketers measure how consumers respond to ads or even decide which brands to buy. They see neuromarketing techniques revolutionizing the marketing industry the same way the Gutenberg Bible changed publishing.

"There is a lot we don't know about human behavior, and neuroscience is an area that is increasingly interesting to agencies," says Tracy Lovatt, evp of strategic services at BBDO, New York. "Advertising now has to be powerful and engaging enough for the consumer to want to opt in." Lovatt says she has a cultural anthropologist on her staff and wouldn't rule out hiring a cognitive scientist.

Since the task force's April 2004 launch, marketers have remained optimistic that neuroscience can turn existing assumptions about advertising upside down, and they are not alone. Gerald Zaltman, a Harvard Business School professor emeritus whose Boston firm Olson Zaltman uses a patented metaphor elicitation technique to probe a consumer's thoughts, believes an overhaul of marketer thinking about advertising is long overdue.

"The traditional model of advertising is still the hypodermic model where you inject

their customers."

## From focus groups to brain scans

When Scott McDonald, svp of research at Condé Nast Publications, lectures on the importance of neuroscience in marketing, he talks about "modes of learning that are far removed from the statistically based ... methods" that make up advertising research. He refers people to Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning 1998 book, *Consilience: The Unity*



"Existing methods don't go nearly far enough in helping [marketers] move to **A CLOSER UNDERSTANDING** of their customers."

-NEUROSCIENTIST GERALD ZALTMAN

*of Knowledge*, in which he coined the term "consilience" to describe all knowledge that connects seemingly unrelated fields.

"There is a risk for any of us to say there is only one way to know something, and that risk is methodological dogmatism," says McDonald, who used Zaltman's technique to measure how consumers react to television and print ads. Condé Nast used the data to shape its branding and print "Point of Passion" campaign, which ran in trade publications, online and on billboards in major cities last year.

Even if agency creatives and account planners never crack Wilson's book, they have good reason to be excited about the use of neuromarketing techniques: the rise of an alternative to the very market research measures of recall and persuasion that can kill a great creative idea.

Joe Plummer, chief research officer at the ARF, knew matters were reaching a boiling point when he read a draft of the speech by DDB's Kaess. As the industry mulled over what to do about the problem, Plummer found himself trying to referee two opposing camps.

very hard for our clients to buy gut feel because every time they approve [a campaign], their jobs are on the line," Harries says. "Neuroscience promises to measure the gut feel, and that is exciting for us. It makes it easier for us to sell what we believe is right."

In late 2004, the emotional-response task force invited market researchers like Gallup & Robinson, Millward Brown, MSW Research, and ConsumerWorks, along with university professors, to measure consumers' physiologi-

cal and emotional response to ads. Four beer ads that the 4A's and ARF deemed successful were subjected to physiological tests last year that ranged from brain scans with MRI to facial response tests. The ads included three storytelling or emotional ads-Budweiser's 60-second "Whassup," Bud Light's 30-second "Ice," and Heineken's 30-second "The Weasel"- and one set of 15-second cognitive or more rational ads-Miller Lite's "Each Hand" and "Great Taste."

Researchers found that consumers reacted more favorably to ads like Budweiser's "Whassup," which used storytelling to elicit emotion, than they did to ads that compared one product to another, like the two Miller Lite ads. Whether a consumer liked the main character in an ad was an important predictor of whether they responded favorably to the entire ad.

Abby Mehta, research director at Gallup & Robinson in Needham, Mass., uses electromyography to measure facial muscle movement- the minute neurological impulses that take place in the facial muscles. Electrodes are hooked up to two muscles-the zygomatic muscle around the mouth area called the "smile" muscle, and the corrugator muscle in the brow area called the "frown" muscle. Mehta says the test measures the intensity of emotion being felt and whether it is positive or negative. The technique is similar to facial recognition technology prosecutors use to prove if a potential assailant recognizes a weapon from a crime.

The facial muscles of 40 male beer drinkers, ages 21 to 35, were measured every tenth of a second as they watched the ads. Mehta studied whether each ad elicited a positive response, provided a link to the viewer's personal values, reinforced the message during the ads' branding moments and how viewers reacted to special creative effects in the ad.

As "Ice" aired, Mehta observed both positive and negative reactions as the coach berates the players, who have their hands and feet in buckets of ice, for being too soft. But Mehta says



"Neuroscience promises to measure ... gut feel. It makes it **EASIER FOR US TO SELL** what we believe is right."

-JONATHAN HARRIES, FCB'S WORLDWIDE CREATIVE DIRECTOR

meaning into customers," says Zaltman. The techniques in his 2003 book, *How Customers Think: Essential Insights into the Mind of the Market*, are capturing more attention in the agency world. "If we say it often enough, we get it across, and that is just wrong. What has changed is that companies have realized that existing methods don't go nearly far enough in helping them move to a closer understanding of

One group wanted to write a manifesto about everything that was wrong with current market research methods. Another wanted to solve the problem by exploring the new frontiers neuroscientists were opening up. Proponents of the latter approach won; the task force was created.

Jonathan Harries, FCB's worldwide creative director, for one is happy that agencies are paying more attention to cognitive science. "It is

all the emotional reactions turned positive at the end of the spot, when the coach leaves and the players pull out bottles of Bud Light from the buckets. Among all the ads, “Whassup” had the highest positive response, and the Miller Lite ads had the lowest, Mehta says. Because the Miller Lite ads mentioned a competitor when comparing carbohydrate content, viewers had trouble remembering which brand the ad promoted. “I think the facial EMG is a really good tool to understand if the execution is on target,” Mehta says. “We can fine-tune the creative and better understand the impact.”

Bruce Hall, CEO of AnswerStream, a market research firm in Raleigh, N.C., tested the same four beer ads last year by measuring electrical conductivity in the skin and changes in heart rate. The skin measurements indicated whether an ad held the viewer’s attention, while the heart rate results showed whether the person liked the ad. Sensors were attached to the fingertips, and the results were fed into a laptop.

Hall found that in Heineken’s “The Weasel” spot, some viewers thought the main character was likable while others were turned off by the character’s behavior of pretending to bring Heineken beer to the party. Those viewers who disliked the main character also were turned off to the brand—a “visceral negative reaction” that Hall says a focus group is less likely to unveil.

Hall argues that the different physiological

Plains, N.Y. “Neuromarketing techniques could have the potential to give us greater insights into how consumers react to different messages and different visual cues.”

Champagne also says such techniques help avoid a common problem with focus groups—consumers who filter their responses based on what they think is socially acceptable

## Analyzing unfiltered feelings

In the October test at the University of Florida, researcher Morris put 12 viewers in an MRI machine to measure Coke’s “Mean Joe Green” ad, and Evian’s “Our Factory” spot, which features the Evian water factory in the snow-capped French Alps. Morris put headsets on people while they were in the MRI machine. With the aid of a hand-held device, viewers scored the ad while their brain was scanned. The two-part test showed the ad elicited high levels of emotion in the brain that correlated with how well the viewer liked the ad. Viewers used words like “soft-hearted,” “relaxed,” and “joyful” to describe how they felt about “Mean Joe Green,” Morris says.

The Evian ad, meanwhile, elicited less excitement than the Coke ad, but Morris said that was a good thing for the advertiser because the spot conveyed the intended peaceful feeling to consumers.

Morris acknowledges that the use of MRI

this is richer data, and it is highly predictive of behavior.”

Those who believe that emotions guide reason and spark attention also agree that biological measurements are not enough to tap into how consumers really think. The emotional response task force also plans to analyze the methods designed to uncover what goes on inside a consumer’s unconscious mind. Such a journey involves an understanding of symbolism and metaphors in the case of Zaltman’s technique; an appreciation of cultural anthropology, which is the basis of work done by Sal Randazzo, a former agency account planner turned qualitative researcher and CEO of ConsumerWorks, a Toms River, N.J., market research firm; and knowledge of archetypes, the preferred tool of the controversial psychologist and marketing guru G. Clotaire Rapaille, known in Detroit circles as the “car doctor.” Rapaille’s archetype discovery process will not be studied by the task force, but advertiser Brown-Forman used his technique to redesign its logo for Jack Daniel’s.

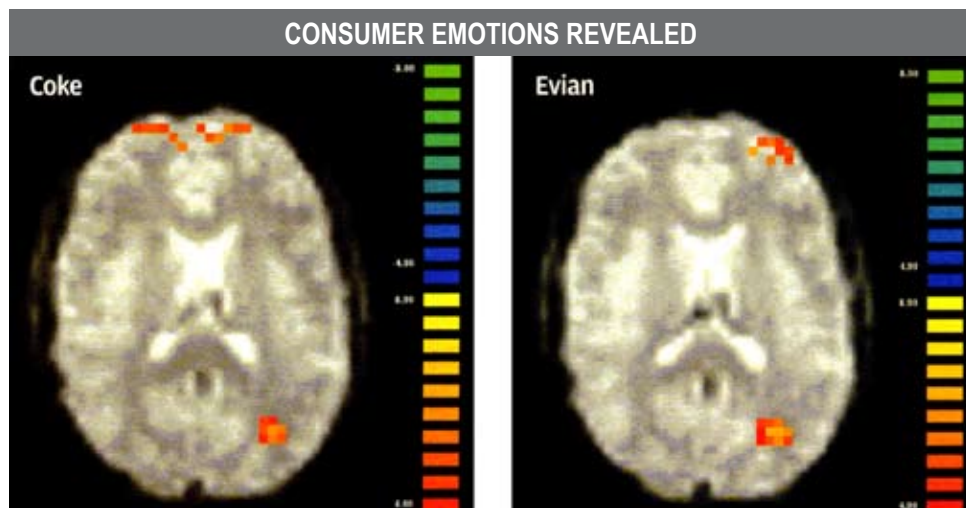
Harvard’s Zaltman is big on convincing advertisers that the consumer is the key to “co-creating” stories that can then be used in ads. In a 2005 speech, he said, “It is essential to understand the meaning that is created as consumers use their existing ideas to make sense of advertising content.” He asks open-ended questions that focus on feelings to uncover a consumer’s deep metaphors. For example, the word “container” is considered a metaphor of something that protects. Parents want to protect their babies. Consider the imagery used in the Michelin tire ad in which a baby is seen standing inside a tire surrounded by stuffed animals. The tire conveys safety.

In the Condé Nast study, Zaltman’s firm asked consumers to bring six to eight pictures that described their thoughts and feelings about TV and magazine ads. They were put through an intensive 2.5- to 3-hour interview process that consists of “storytelling,” responding to questions like, “How does this image relate to your thoughts and feelings about TV and print ads and the role they play in your life?”

What Condé Nast officials learned didn’t surprise them, but they believed they had data to help convince advertisers that print media is a more effective way to reach consumers than television. Zaltman’s technique showed that print readers were more highly engaged with magazines, and that magazine ads didn’t interfere with the act of reading the way television ads interrupted the viewer’s enjoyment of a program. TV ads work by treating consumers like objects on a battlefield, Zaltman’s study found.

“Because magazines don’t challenge the control of the consumer or interrupt the media, if a person is interested in the ad, they can pause and look at it and put themselves in it, or they can turn the page,” McDonald says.

Condé Nast developed a brand platform



**GRAY MATTER:** The brain scan of a consumer who watched Coke’s “Mean Joe Green” spot showed a greater emotional stake than when the consumer watched Evian’s “Our Factory,” a peaceful spot featuring snow-capped Alps. The orange pixelated squares in the medial prefrontal cortex (top of images) detailed the emotion levels.

measurements are important because they can uncover the varied responses to a spot like “The Weasel” that advertisers should consider. “It is hard to come up with universal rules because things work in different ways,” Hall says.

Heineken, for one, is open to using neuromarketing techniques. “In the competitive category that we are in, any different way you can look to evaluate your communications could give you an edge,” says Eric Champagne, senior research analyst at Heineken USA, in White

in marketing is in its infancy and will have to hurdle a number of obstacles. For one, test results of emotion are more complicated for agencies to interpret. “Emotions are difficult to understand, and it is not as easy as measuring recall,” Morris says. “One group responds one way, and one group responds another way and it is important to understand why those groups react so differently. Often, advertisers and agencies react by saying this is too complicated. I think they are making a mistake because

that magazines are a “point of passion,” and they created an ad campaign showing people hugging one of the media company’s 29 publications. They used the Zaltman research to show that consumers are more connected to a print medium and the ads within than they are to television. The whole package was presented to 5,000 clients in 20 different markets in the last six months.

So far, the results have been mixed. Richard Beckman, president of Condé Nast’s Media Group, found advertisers learned how passionate magazine readers are about the publications they read, but they still wanted to know how effective print advertising is. They also wanted to know how print and the Internet work together at stimulating consumer interest. The next phase of the “Point of Passion” campaign will address those questions, Beckman says, but he declined to elaborate.

People like Gary Van Dis, Condé Nast’s vp and corporate creative director, find such advertiser response frustrating. Van Dis argues that advertisers really want a way to measure that an ad in a magazine leads to the sale of so many products, and that’s not really possible to gauge, not even with TV ads. You can show the number of subscribers and viewers, but the key to moving a product starts with an understanding that almost every purchase has a high level of “passionate emotional connectivity” to it, Van Dis says.

## Exploring new media, technology

Advertisers themselves are not immune to the dilemma. In fact, the Association of National Advertisers and its partners, the 4A’s and ARF, joined by advertisers Procter & Gamble, Masterfoods and Ford, have launched a project to replace the old gross rating point measurement system—which combines reach and frequency—with a new measure to account for the exploding media world from online advergaming to MP3 players to satellite radio. ANA doesn’t have the answer yet, but evp Barbara Bacci Mirque suggests the result may lie in a combination of measuring how good the creative is with a new gauge that considers all the new media. “We need to find a balance between the science of the media mix and the art of the creativity and interpretation,” she says. “You can’t just look at the media metric all the time.”

To convince advertisers of the importance of emotion, ConsumerWorks’ Randazzo uses the Subaru example. In 1993, Subaru sales were in a death spiral, company figures show. Enter the actor Paul Hogan of *Crocodile Dundee* fame who started pitching for Subaru’s Outback in 1996, and sales increased over the next seven years.

The *Crocodile Dundee* story is based on an archetypal theme of the stranger in a strange land. The psychologist Rapaille, who is president of Archetype Discoveries Worldwide in Tuxedo Park, N.Y., considers archetypes, or universal

## BEER SPOTS GET PUT TO THE TEST

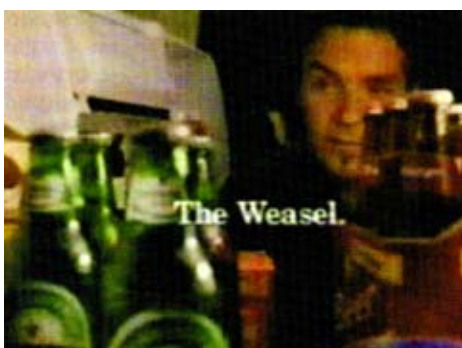
Facial responses and heart rates measured consumer reactions



**STRONG REACTION:** Budweiser’s “Whassup” spot fared the best in a facial muscle movement test.



**MIXED RESULTS:** Facial responses were mixed, then turned positive for Bud Light’s “Ice” ad.



**TURN-OFF:** Skin and heart-rate tests showed some viewers disliked Heineken and its “Weasel” character.



**WHOSE BEER?:** Miller Light confused consumers by mentioning its competition.

stories, to be the central way advertisers should appeal to consumers. Rapaille bases his theory on what he describes as the old or reptilian brain, where emotions reside. When it comes to decision-making, “the reptilian brain always wins,” Rapaille argues.

Brown-Forman began working with Rapaille in 2003, using his archetype discovery process to redesign its logo for Jack Daniel’s. Through Rapaille’s work, Jack Kennard, Brown-Forman’s director of global marketing services, says the company learned that Jack Daniel’s is associated with the freedom of the West in American culture and relates to the rebel within. As a result, Brown-Forman’s ad agency, Arnold Worldwide in Boston, designed ads that ran last year featuring a man walking down the street with a guitar case displaying the Jack Daniel’s logo. The copy reads: “Mr. Jack Daniel was no saint. But he did start something of a religion.”

By tapping into the universal theme of the rebel, Kennard says that Brown-Forman has seen a six to seven percent growth in revenue for Jack Daniel’s.

If the goal of neuromarketing is to understand how and why consumers make buying decisions, perhaps the most effective tool may come from technology and the way new devices affect the brain. Hypersonic sound, for example, works on the basis of regular audio principles, where air is vibrated to create an audible wave.

Unlike regular audio, the technology uses a thin film that sends out an ultrasonic tone that mixes with the air and is beamed with laser-like precision in a two-degree arc of dispersion. The result is a headphone-like experience for recipients.

Robert Putnam, a rep with the San Diego-based American Technology Corp., which invented hypersonic sound, said his company signed its first major deal in August with In-Store Broadcasting Network, an electronic retail media company, to imbed the technology in flat-screen panels at grocery store check-out counters. IBN provides audio systems for Safeway and Walgreens, among others.

“More and more grocery stores and large retail outlets will see this technology popping up,” says Putnam.

But there are detractors. To bioethicists, hypersonic sound is nothing more than Orwellian mental manipulation.

“The real question is how comfortable we are learning as much as we are likely to learn about the brain,” says Jonathan Moreno, director of the Center for Biomedical Ethics at the University of Virginia Health System, “and whether the kind of interventions people will be able to do to get us to think differently are interventions society is comfortable with. If you think the stem cell controversy was hot, you haven’t seen nothing yet.” ■