

Like the ad. Like the brand? Chicken, or egg?

Erik du Plessis and Charles Foster, Impact Information, revisit an old problem, and show how neurological science can help

In 1990 (1) Alexander Biel published a paper entitled: 'Love the ad. Buy the product?' This reported the results of the Advertising Research Foundation's (ARF) Copy Research Validity Project which showed ad liking to be the most predictive measure of advertising effectiveness, as detailed by Haley and Baldinger in the *Journal of Advertising Research (JAR)* (2).

Subsequently there have been many papers by research companies that felt their methodology for testing advertising is threatened by this 'loving of advertising' proposition, arguing against the proposition that loving the ad can lead to buying the product.

Among those arguing against the effects of ad liking and its value as a measure of an advertisement is Rice.

'While users of a brand have higher ad liking and ad noting than non-users, the difference is not that great'

He states, in the *JAR*, that: 'Liking does not cause noting, neither does noting cause liking. Usage causes both' (3). In other words, people who love the ad do not buy the product, but people buying the product love and note the advertising.

The basis of this rebuttal of the 'love the ad' proposition has to be taken back to Ehrenberg's finding that people who buy a product are more inclined to note its advertising, the so-called 'double jeopardy' effect. There is a certain ridiculousness in the extreme position of this argument, which states that advertising only works on the converted. But then the question becomes: Where does this

conversion come from? A very chicken-and-egg situation.

A less extreme position against ad liking is taken by Nigel Hollis, also in the *JAR*, who claims: 'Like it or not, liking is not enough' (4).

These days, while nobody proposes that advertising effect is a series of sequential steps that occurs in the consumer's mind (hierarchy of effects), both the above views suggest a one-dimensional, sequential model of effects. The Rice model implies that the sequence of effects is that brand usage leads to ad noting and ad liking. The Hollis model appears to imply that there are one-dimensional advertising effects, of which ad liking is only one.

What if everyone is right? The ARF, Haley, Biel, Rice, Hollis, Ehrenberg,

between brand usage, ad noting and ad liking

- empirical data that ad liking relates to ad noting (which has previously been shown in *Admap*)
- new empirical evidence that brand usage leads to higher ad liking
- new empirical evidence that brand usage leads to higher ad noting
- that while users of a brand have higher ad liking and ad noting than non-users, the difference is not that great; and that there is an egg-and-chicken logic involved.

Snakes and attention

At the forefront of neurological research and understanding is the development of understanding how attentioning works. Professor Joseph LeDoux (Centre for Neural Science at New York University) is acknowledged as the leading exponent in this area. He explains: 'When you walk in a forest and see a shape that could be a twig or a snake, you will freeze for a moment, identify it to be a twig shaped like a snake and then walk on normally; maybe your heart will pound a bit as a result of this experience. You might say: "I was startled", "I had a fright", etc' (5).

We know that what happened was that we saw something that could have been a snake, it gave us a bit of a fright and we froze momentarily (an emotional reaction), we looked closer (attentioning), realised it was only a twig (rational interpretation), we walked on.

This story could have had a different outcome. We see something shaped like a snake and we freeze (developing perception), we get a fright (emotional reaction), we look closer (attentioning), we realise it is a snake (rational interpretation). At this stage our life ➤

Jones and the Dutch SPOT study? What if they were looking at the same multi-dimensional phenomenon from different angles, but only univariately?

This article shows:

- modern neurological science and cognitive science views about how the brain processes information
- that the modern view is not about emotional versus rational processing, but that rational processing takes place inside an emotional context
- that emotional reaction not only sets the context for rational processing, but it also acts as a gateway to attentioning
- empirical evidence that, as science would predict, there is a close interaction