

Brand Relationships: Strengthened by Emotion, Weakened by Attention

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This article explores the way in which advertising builds brand relationships. Behavioral research by Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson (1967) suggests it is the emotional not the rational content in communication that drives relationships. This assertion is tested using a new research copy-testing system—the CEP™ Test—and the results confirm that favorability toward brands is strongly correlated with emotional content in advertising, but not with factual content. However, learning from psychology indicates that high attention weakens the effect of emotional content, so the implications are that advertising aimed at building strong brand relationships might be more effective if processed at lower levels of attention.

INTRODUCTION

The historian Terrence Nevett is quoted as saying that the role of advertising from its earliest days has been to communicate factual information (Nevett, 1982). This accords with the common assumption that decision making is a rational “thinking” activity (Elliott, 1998), and that advertising works persuasively, by delivering a clear message designed to change beliefs (Jones, 1990). This persuasive “information processing” model dominates the world of both advertising practitioners and advertising and marketing academics (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999). For example, Meyers-Levy and Malaviya (1999), in a comprehensive analysis of persuasion in advertising, “. . . consider only theories that adopt an information-processing perspective” (p. 45). And Jones (1990), referring to the persuasion model as the “Strong Theory” of advertising, claims it is “. . . all, but universally believed in the United States” (p. 233).

The idea that advertising is based on the processing of information underpins all of the formal advertising models used in the United States. For example, the Lavidge and Steiner Model (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961), Cognitive Response Theory (Brock and Shavitt, 1983), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), the Mo-

tivation Opportunity Analysis Model (MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989), and the Rossiter-Percy Grid (Rossiter, Percy, and Donovan, 1991) all place greater importance on cognitive informational learning than they do on affective or emotional learning. Even the Hedonic Experiential Model (Holbrook and Hirschmann, 1982) sees emotion as an adjunct that operates alongside information processing: “Abandoning the information processing approach is undesirable, but supplementing and enriching it with . . . the experiential perspective could be extremely fruitful” (p. 138).

This cognitive dominance in turn leads to an assumption, universal throughout marketing textbooks, that attention toward advertising is invariably beneficial. Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, and Wong (1999, p. 800) assert that “The advertiser has to turn the “big idea” into an actual ad execution that will capture the target market’s attention and their interest.” Likewise Rossiter and Percy (1998, p. 279) state that “. . . advertising associations attempt to accomplish three things: attention, brand awareness, and persuasion.” Adcock, Bradfield, Halborg, and Ross (1998, p. 270) introduce their chapter on advertising with a quote from *The Tatler*, which says, “The great art of writing advertisements is the finding out (of) a

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proper method to catch the reader's eye." Even the U.K.'s most celebrated marketing academic, the late Peter Doyle (1994, p. 240) wrote, "For an advertisement . . . to be effective it must achieve first exposure and then attention."

The assumption that high attention is always beneficial has never been tested, partly because attention is so hard to measure. But then it has never really needed to be questioned, because of the nature of the metrics used to evaluate the effects of advertising. Historically these have focused on persuasion and recall (Haley and Baldinger, 1991), and because both have been shown to be facilitated by high levels of attention (Gardiner and Parkin, 1990; James, 1890), it has always been assumed that high attention equates to high recall which equates to high advertising effectiveness.

But not all academics subscribe to the information processing model as being the only valid model. Krugman (1965) observed that much of the content of TV advertising was "trivial and sometimes silly" [sic] and did not fit the traditional persuasion models prevalent at the time. "Does this suggest that if television bombards us with enough trivia about a product we may be persuaded to believe it? On the contrary, it suggests that persuasion as such . . . is not involved at all and it is a mistake to look for it. . . ." (Krugman, 1965, p. 353). Later, Ehrenberg (1974) pointed out that the "informational persuasion-based" theory fails to explain many of the facts of marketing communication, such as the lack of empirical evi-

dence relating advertising and sales, the persistence of small brands in the face of massive advertising spend by competitors, and the survival of brands when advertising spending is cut.

One of the other key weaknesses of the information processing model is that campaigns which apparently fail to convey informational messages have been astonishingly successful. The Renault Clio is a case in point: launched at a premium price in the United Kingdom in 1992, to a market generally hostile to French cars, it promised "Small car practicality with big car luxury." Given the marketing environment Renault might have been expected to run simple informative advertising, but instead they opted for advertising that featured affluent French people indulging in that most stereotypical of French activities—philandering. To quote from the 1992 IPA effectiveness paper: "The storyline follows the supposedly clandestine extracurricular activities of a father (Papa) visiting his mistress and his daughter (Nicole) visiting her boyfriend. The Clio RT was featured in both instances in the role of an accomplice" (Chandy and Thursby-Pelham, 1993, p. 241). The consequence was that the only thing people remembered was "Papa" and "Nicole" and their flirting. And research showed clearly that the factual informational message of "Small car practicality with big car luxury" was completely obscured and never recalled.

Despite this apparent communication failure, the launch of the Renault Clio was an outstanding success. In the first

year alone it exceeded its ambitious sales targets by 32 percent and achieved a 7 percent share of the small car market. In an award-winning review of the launch, the brand's success was directly attributed to the advertising, which ran for another six years and was calculated to have earned Renault some £59 million in additional revenue (Chandy and Thursby-Pelham, 1993).

The success of the Renault Clio advertising suggests is that it was some aspect of the emotional appeal of the scenario being portrayed that influenced viewers. This same might be true of the U.K. advertising for Andrex toilet tissue. Their advertising campaign, which has featured a small Labrador puppy for nearly 35 years, has driven the brand to a state of total dominance, increasing market share fivefold in 20 years and outselling the nearest branded rival Kleenex by anything up to 3:1 despite commanding a significant premium price (Stow, 1993). The advertising featured in the early days a clear factual message that the product was "softer, stronger, and longer" than its rivals, modified later (when tests showed this to be untrue) to "soft, strong, and very long." But what is important is that perception of Andrex' product quality is little better than that of Kleenex and has changed not at all during the life of the campaign. The success is therefore attributed not to the message, but to the emotional appeal of the puppy itself. As Stow (1993, p. 53) says, ". . . this (sales) effect is due in major part to a Labrador puppy, who has appeared consistently in Andrex' TV advertising since 1972."

So how exactly might these two "emotional" campaigns have worked? One model that appears to explain them is Ehrenberg's "Reinforcement" model. Ehrenberg (1974) proposed that advertising worked not by *changing* attitudes, but by reinforcing attitudes already held by a

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consumer who had extensive usage experience and knowledge of products. He challenged the traditional notion that advertising "works by any strong form of persuasion or manipulation" (p. 25), and instead asserted that "advertising's main role is to reinforce feelings of satisfaction with brands already being used" (p. 33). But close examination shows this is unlikely to explain the success of either campaign. In the case of the Renault Clio, the brand was entirely new, and so it is hard to see how any prior attitudes might have been created that advertising could then reinforce. In the case of *Andrex*, there appeared to be no superior performance perception that the advertising could reinforce, and even if there had been, the idea that it might have been reinforced by a puppy is far-fetched to say the least.

So we have a situation where two campaigns appear to have worked without imparting any specific facts or information about the brand, but rather by working on the emotions. We can hypothesize that the flirting might have made people feel that Renault Clio drivers are rather sexy, and the Frenchness might make them feel that the car itself is rather stylish. And we can also hypothesize that the puppy might make people feel that *Andrex* was associated with love and family values. In both cases we might therefore say that the advertising created some sort of emotional relationship between the potential user and the brand.

EMOTION AND BRAND RELATIONSHIPS

Early discussions about the way people feel about brands centered mainly on the concept of brand personality. For example, Plummer (1985, p. 81) describes brand personality as: "... an articulation of what we would like consumers out there in the world to feel about our brand over time." And although he does not use the term relationship, he is clearly envisaging a relationship situation when he imagines those who use and favor brands saying "... I see myself in that brand and that brand in myself" (p. 81).

Common usage of the term brand relationships grew in the late '90s, alongside the drive to develop improved customer satisfaction. This has led some to assume that brand relationships have little to do with advertising and come into existence only when a product or service is being used. Duncan and Moriarty (1999), for example, see brand relationships as key to the future success of advertising agencies, but they clearly regard advertising itself as just an information processing mechanism: "Advertising is one-way communication: creating and sending messages. . . . Agencies need to be more involved in post-sale communications because that is often what makes or breaks brand relationships" (p. 44). Market research companies also tend to separate the two, generally characterizing brand relationships as deriving from functional performance constructs. Wyner, of Mill-

ward Brown, proposes "knowledge," "relevance," "delivery on promised benefits," "competitive advantage," and "being best overall" as measures of brand relationship (Wyner, 2003, p. 6). But at the same time he uses the term "attachment" in the context of brand relationships, which he defines as "... how much the brand has entered the consumer's mind and influenced behavior" (Wyner, 2003, p. 6). This implies that brand relationships can exist among those who do not use brands, and that both feelings and thoughts may be involved.

Blackston (1992) is among the first to identify an overt connection between feelings and brand relationships. He sees brand relationships as analogous to relationships between people: "The concept of a relationship with a brand is neither novel nor outrageous. It is readily understandable as an analogue—between brand and consumer—of that complex of cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes which constitute a relationship between two people" (p. 80). This suggests that feelings operate equally alongside performance and usage in defining relationships, but most people now believe that feelings tend to exert the greater influence. As Gordon puts it, "There is no such thing as 'rational' versus 'emotional'—the two are intertwined. Sometimes 'rational' appears to take the high ground, but 'emotional' is the underlying force" (Gordon, 2006, p. 9). And although experimental work has been done on the nature and properties of different types of personal brand relationships (Aaker and Fournier, 1995; Aggarwal, 2004), and also on the potential causes of break up of personal brand relationships (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel, 2004; Fajer and Schouten, 1995), little has been done to examine exactly how emotion in advertising contributes toward and strengthens brand relationships. As Plummer observed in a recent

Journal of Advertising Research editorial: "Practitioners acknowledged that effective advertising, which helps build powerful, lasting brand relationships, is a balance of 'head and heart.' Little investment in research and theory development, however, has been dedicated to measuring the heart response" (Plummer, 2006, p. 1). In fact, most research companies simply ignore brand relationships and focus on the ability of advertisements to "persuade" nonusers of the brand to switch to the brand as the primary, and sometimes only, purpose of advertising.

EMOTIONAL COMMUNICATION AND BRAND RELATIONSHIPS

Work done in the field of psychotherapy and interpersonal behavior, however, does shed light on how emotional communication and relationships interact. One of the foundation texts used by those who study interpersonal communication is the work of Paul Watzlawick (Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson, 1967; Watzlawick and Beavin, 1967). Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson (1967) establish five axioms for communication, and it is the first three that are most applicable to advertising. The first axiom is that in an interpersonal situation communication is always taking place: "One cannot not communicate" (p. 51). They establish that even when two people are saying nothing they are still engaged in communication, via their body language and the very fact that they are maintaining silence. This they expand further in their second axiom: "Every communication has a content and a relationship aspect such that the latter classifies the former and is therefore a metacommunication" (p. 54). The communication is the message itself, and the metacommunication might be described as all the nonverbal paraphernalia that accompanies the message.

Watzlawick et al. find it is not *what* you say that builds relationships, but *how* you say it.

In their third axiom, Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson (1967) draw an analogy between these two types of communication and the concept of "digital" versus "analogue." They see "communication" as the rational digital message, which is clear, unequivocal, recognizable, easily analyzed and classified, but lacks emotional values. In contrast, the "metacommunication" is the analogue qualifier, which is highly emotional in character, and is often subtle, disguised, hard to classify, sometimes even difficult even to identify. It needs only a little imagination to see that Watzlawick et al.'s description of interpersonal communication is analogous to the terms that advertising practitioners use when describing advertising: where Watzlawick et al. talk of "rational digital communication," the practitioner talks of the "message"; and where Watzlawick et al. describe "emotional analogue metacommunication," the practitioner talks of "creativity."

Watzlawick et al.'s study of the way in which relationships develop and break down sheds further light on how these two types of communication operate. They found that when relationships between couples were on the verge of collapse, the "communication" was often perfectly reasonable and sensible, but it was the "metacommunication" that was causing the breakdown. In other words, although people were saying good things, the *way* in which they said them was causing friction and negativity. They found that by correcting the metacommunication they could often repair the relationship rift, even when damaging and negative things were occasionally said. From this, they conclude that it is this analogue meta-

communication aspect of communication that is the main driver of relationships. So Watzlawick et al. find it is not *what* you say that builds relationships, but *how* you say it. Or, in advertising terms, it is not the rational message that builds brand relationships, but the emotional creativity.

TESTING WATZLAWICK'S THEORY

In order to test if Watzlawick et al.'s theory applies to advertising, we need to do two things. First, we have to find a measure that quantifies the strength of the relationship between a consumer and a brand. Second, we have to find a measure that quantifies communication and metacommunication. Once that is done it will be possible to see what, if any, correlations there are among the three constructs.

The relationship construct is relatively easy to quantify. A simple measure of relationship is the favorability that a consumer has for a brand. Favorability is not only a metric that can apply both to users and nonusers, but, as Hofmeyr and Rice (2000) show, it can be quantified easily using an expanded semantic scale. In our case we used a 10-point scale ranging from 1 = "extremely favorable" to 10 = "extremely unfavorable."

The quantification of communication and metacommunication is a little more complicated. Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson (1967) describe communication as essentially rational and metacommunication as emotional in nature. So the level of communication is going to equate to the rational content in the advertising, and the level of metacommunication is going to equate to the level of emotional content in advertising. A new research system

being operated by OTX, the CEPTMTest (Cognitive Emotive Power Test), is designed to measure exactly this rational and emotional content.

The CEPTMTest has been developed as part of an online copy testing system to help evaluate the absolute and relative levels of emotional and rational content in advertising. Using a battery of 10 proprietary statements, the CEPTMTest quantifies two constructs. The first of these is Cognitive PowerTM, which measures the potency of the message and rational information in the advertisement using statements based on newsworthiness, differentiation, and factual content. The second is Emotive PowerTM, which measures the potency of the emotional content in the advertisement using statements based on emotion, mood, and tone. These two constructs—Cognitive and Emotive PowerTM—closely parallel Watzlawick et al.'s communication and metacommunication. So if Watzlawick et al.'s axioms are applicable to advertising, then it should be the Emotive PowerTM that correlates with strong brand relationships, rather than the Cognitive PowerTM.

EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH— UNITED STATES

The first experiment was run via two parallel online surveys in the United States and the United Kingdom. In the first survey, a group of 23 TV advertisements from a number of different product categories currently on air in the United States was chosen and assessed among a general population sample of respondents, using the CEPTMTest measures. This gave the scores for Cognitive PowerTM and Emotive PowerTM for each advertisement.

In order to measure the ability that each advertisement had to improve brand relationships, a second independent general population sample was recruited off the internet, and a similar research approach

to that used in Heath and Nairn (2005) was adopted. Respondents were first asked the favorability question, and then shown selected video sections of each of the advertisements to ascertain whether or not they had seen them before. The brand favorability scores were then split between those who recognized and those who did not recognize the advertisement. This produces a "shift" in favorability (referred to below as Fav-Shift) that indicates the extent to which the advertising has improved the brand relationship while on air. Note that levels of usage were controlled to ensure that there was no bias introduced by having significantly more users in either the recognizer or nonrecognizer samples.

This enables the relationship between shift in Brand Favorability, Emotive PowerTM, and Cognitive PowerTM to be established. A graphical representation of the U.S. results is shown in Figure 1. Those advertisements that achieved a low

shift in favorability toward the brand are squares; those that produced a moderate shift are triangles; and those that produced a high shift are diamonds. It can be seen that the shifts appear to correlate with the vertical axis (Emotive PowerTM), but there is no apparent correlation between the horizontal axis (Cognitive PowerTM) and Brand Favorability Shift.

The significance of the correlations among Brand Favorability, Emotive PowerTM, and Cognitive PowerTM was examined using stepwise multiple regression. The results shows a highly significant positive relationship between Emotive PowerTM and Favorability Shift ($R^2 = 0.283$, $B = +0.014$, $p = .009$), but an insignificant positive relationship between Cognitive PowerTM and Favorability Shift ($R^2 = 0.290$, $B = +0.002$, $p = .661$). Table 1 confirms this, showing the correlations between Emotive PowerTM (Emotive), Cognitive PowerTM (Cognitive), and Favorability Shift (Fav-Shift).

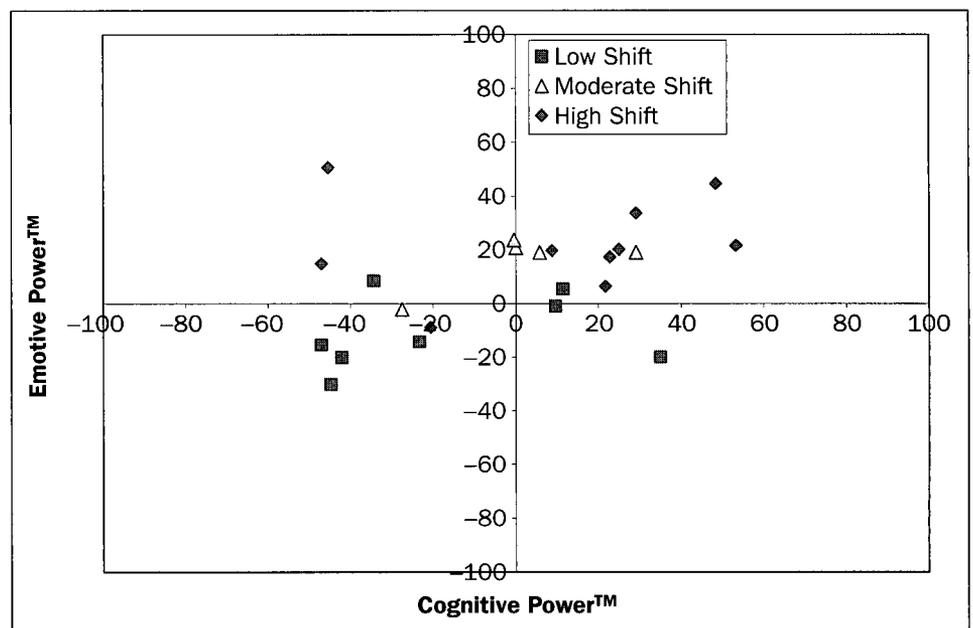


Figure 1 U.S. Results of Correlations among Brand Favorability, Emotive PowerTM, and Cognitive PowerTM

TABLE 1
Correlation Coefficients—U.S. Data

	Cognitive	Emotive	Fav-Shift
<i>Cognitive</i>			
Pearson correlation	1		
Significance (2-tailed)			
N	23		
<i>Emotive</i>			
Pearson correlation	0.403	1	
Significance (2-tailed)	0.057		
N	23	23	
<i>Fav-Shift</i>			
Pearson correlation	0.291	0.532 ^a	1
Significance (2-tailed)	0.178	0.009	
N	23	23	23

^aCorrelation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH—
UNITED KINGDOM**

To test if the results were applicable only in the United States, a second identical experiment was run in the United Kingdom, using a group of 20 TV advertisements currently on air in the United Kingdom. A graphical representation of the results is shown in Figure 2. Once again the Favorability Shift correlation appears to be with the vertical axis (Emotive PowerTM) not the horizontal axis (Cognitive PowerTM).

The U.K. results show a different pattern, with a tendency for advertising to run from High Emotive PowerTM/Low Cognitive PowerTM to High Cognitive PowerTM/Low Emotive PowerTM. However, regression shows an even stronger significant positive relationship between Emotive PowerTM and Favorability Shift ($R^2 = 0.345$, $B = +0.006$, $p = .006$), and in

this case an inverse nonsignificant relationship between Cognitive PowerTM and Favorability Shift ($R^2 = 0.364$, $B = -0.001$, $p = .486$). These relationships are again confirmed by the correlations shown in Table 2.

COMBINED RESULTS

Combining the two samples gives a total of 43 cases. This raises the significance of the Favorability Shift–Emotive PowerTM correlation to 99.9 percent ($R^2 = 0.255$, $B = +0.008$, $p = .001$) and the negative relationship between Cognitive PowerTM and Favorability Shift vanishes ($R^2 = 0.258$, $B = +0.001$, $p = .673$).

Finally, we can see that the Pearson Correlations in all three samples are confirmed by the Partial Correlation Coefficients, as shown in Table 3.

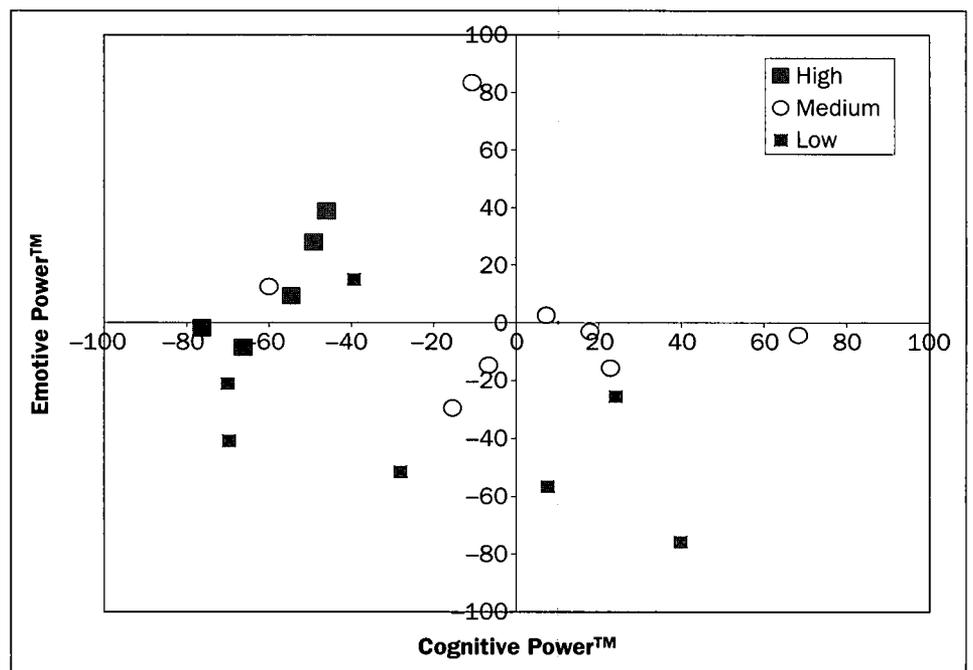


Figure 2 U.K. Results of Correlations among Brand Favorability, Emotive PowerTM, and Cognitive PowerTM

TABLE 2
Correlation Coefficients—U.K. Data

	Cognitive	Emotive	Fav-Shift
<i>Cognitive</i>			
Pearson correlation	1		
Significance (2-tailed)			
N	20		
<i>Emotive</i>			
Pearson correlation	-0.241	1	
Significance (2-tailed)	0.307		
N	20	20	
<i>Fav-Shift</i>			
Pearson correlation	-0.275	0.587 ^a	1
Significance (2-tailed)	0.240	0.006	
N	20	20	20

^aCorrelation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Despite differences in advertising styles across the two countries (United Kingdom and United States), the results, summarized in Table 3, are remarkably consistent. Emotive PowerTM showed a significant linear relationship with the shift in favorability, while Cognitive PowerTM showed no relationship, particularly when controlling for Emotive PowerTM. This confirms that Watzlawick et al.'s theory applies to advertising, and that it

is the emotional content in advertising that is responsible for building brand relationships.

So the experimental results show clearly that it is the emotional "creative" content in advertising that builds strong brand relationships, not the rational message. This questions the assumption in most advertising models that it is the communication of the factual message that gives advertising its persuasive power. We find there is hard evidence that advertising can

work just as well by being *emotionally* persuasive and building strong brand relationships, as it can by being rationally persuasive and imparting factual information. And certainly it seems to be the case that those who want their advertising to build strong relationships between the consumer and the brand would be well advised to focus more attention on the emotional metacommunication—the creativity—in their advertisements, than they do on the rational message communication.

But this is not the end of the story. This new level of importance for emotional content in advertising carries with it some very important implications for attention and engagement. These are discussed in the next section.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ATTENTION

One of Watzlawick et al.'s most important findings is that the content of communication (i.e., the message) fades and vanishes over time, whereas the more subtle patterns evoked by the emotional metacommunication endure. This, they believe, is because the patterns in metacommunication are processed and learned by us automatically, regardless of how much attention we pay. Thus they imply that the influence of the rational communication content of advertising will fade quickly, but the relationship-building influence of the emotional metacommunication content will endure, even if processed subconsciously and without active attention.

Automatic learning is also known as implicit learning, and the power and durability of this type of learning, along with its independence from attention, have already been discussed in other papers (Heath, 2000, 2001; Heath and Nairn, 2005). Le Doux (1998) has been responsible for giving most publicity to the idea that we can process emotional content effectively at low levels of attention, but it was Zajonc

TABLE 3
Pearson (Zero Order) Coefficients versus Partial Coefficients

	Countries Combined		U.S. Advertisements		U.K. Advertisements	
	Zero-Order	Partial	Zero-Order	Partial	Zero-Order	Partial
Cognitive	+0.09	+0.07	+0.29	+0.10	-0.28	-0.17
Emotive	+0.50 ^a	+0.50 ^a	+0.53 ^a	+0.47 ^a	+0.59 ^a	+0.56 ^a

^aSignificant correlation at 0.95 level of confidence.

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(1980) who first hypothesized this over 30 years ago. But it is Damasio (1994, 2000, 2003) who can take the credit for modern theories about exactly how emotions are processed. Damasio uses the concept of a “limbic” system in the brain, a construct developed by MacLean (1952) to represent the original mammalian brain, which lies beneath the more recently developed neocortex. The limbic system, sometimes also called the “visceral” brain, was originally responsible for the processing of mammalian instinctive and survival functions (e.g., fear, sexual drive, hunger, etc.), and it is this system that is now our center of emotional processing (Damasio, 1994). As it originated as part of the body’s defense system, the limbic system operates precognitively and autonomically—if it did not, humans would probably have been eaten by predators and become extinct long ago.

More recently an improved psychological explanation of emotional processing has been provided by Damasio (2000). He provides evidence that emotions and feelings are formed in what he calls the “proto-self” [sic], whereas thoughts are formed in what he calls *core consciousness*. He shows that activity in the proto-self always precedes activity in core consciousness, which confirms that emotions and feelings will *always* be formed precognitively and preattentively, *before* any information processing takes place (Damasio, 2000, p. 281). This is the exact opposite of the assumptions made in most advertising models.

Damasio’s findings have been supported by Fitzsimons et al. (2002), who

identify three types of affective response: evaluations, moods, and emotions. They claim “There is considerable evidence of non-conscious processes within each of these main categories of affective responses” (p. 274). But this then raises the question of what happens when nonconsciously processed emotional content is processed consciously. The answer, according to the psychologist Robert Bornstein (1989), is that its effectiveness is weakened.

Bornstein initially used a meta-analysis of mere exposure research to demonstrate that emotional attitudes are more greatly enhanced in subliminal exposure; “. . . exposure to subliminal stimuli actually results in attitude enhancement greater than that produced by briefly presented recognizable stimuli” (Bornstein, 1989, p. 278). Kihlstrom (1987) provides an explanation for this, which is that “conscious counter-control” [sic] processes are available to counter-argue against recognizable stimuli, but these processes are not available when the exposure is subliminal. But of more relevance to advertising is Bornstein’s later hypothesis, which is that Kihlstrom’s idea will not only apply to subliminal stimuli, but also to “unnoticed,

unattended stimuli” (Bornstein, 1989, p. 281). Bornstein suggests that “The most obvious application probably lies in the area of advertising, in which repeated, unreinforced exposure . . . has long been one general approach used to enhance attitudes towards a product” (p. 283). In subsequent work he confirmed that the less aware consumers are of emotional elements in advertising, the better they are likely to work, because the viewer has less opportunity to rationally evaluate, contradict, and weaken their potency (Bornstein, 1992).

DISCUSSION

Bornstein’s findings indicate that emotional content in advertising will actually work better if *less* attention is paid to it. Put together with our earlier findings, this implies that if you are trying to build brand relationships, it may be better if your advertising receives slightly less attention, as this way your emotional appeals will be less likely to be counter-argued and weakened.

This makes some sense if you consider the Renault Clio and Andrex campaigns. Close scrutiny of the antics of “Papa” and “Nicole” does nothing but render the stereotypical associations they develop with “Frenchness” and sexiness absurd and irrelevant. Likewise, if you spend a lot of time thinking about the Andrex puppy, his cuteness is revealed as no more than a ploy to lure you into thinking that the makers are really nice friendly people who

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Our evidence shows that if advertising wishes to build strong brand relationships, it needs to incorporate high levels of emotional content, and this emotional content will be most effective if less attention is paid to it.

believe in family values and affection. So both advertisements are indeed likely to be weakened by high levels of attention.

Of course, the opposite is the case with message-based information processing communication, where more attention will provide more recall and more persuasion. Advertising that has the tactical aim of communicating factual information (i.e., product improvements, performance advantages, promotions, telephone numbers, prices, website addresses, etc.) will benefit from more attention, because that way you remember better what the message is.

So this article raises something of a dilemma for the issue of engagement. Advertising that needs to get a factual message over works best if high attention is paid. But our evidence shows that if advertising wishes to build strong brand relationships, it needs to incorporate high levels of emotional content, and this emotional content will be most effective if less attention is paid to it. We invite further discussion on how this problem can best be solved. **JAR**

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