

The Building Blocks of Successful Brands:

*Understanding roles of functional and emotional messages*

Strategic MA Capstone Paper

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About the Author:

Throughout college my primary focus and passion were one in the same; advertising. I knew early on that the elements of creativity, business and strategy fueled my interests and my skill set. My objective after completing my bachelor's degree was to land a job at an advertising agency where I could be a part of laying a solid strategic groundwork for each brand I had the opportunity to work on. I believed that if the strategy was present, great things would happen.

After college, I embarked on a career in advertising to do just that. I spent nearly six years at an advertising agency in account management working on first agriculture then consumer packaged goods. I had the opportunity to work with integrated teams from all areas of expertise in the communications realm and with marketers bred in Ivy League institutions. Our teams executed plans within each realm of the communications world; paid, owned, and earned. The one aspect each realm has in common, from the smallest print ad to the most integrated activation, is their strategic merits.

Throughout my career at the agency I found that my favorite clients and best work occurred when working with brands that were less sought after by communications professionals. Whether these were in seemingly uninteresting categories like agriculture or brands with miniscule budgets to work with, these were the brands that allowed magic to happen; my clients were willing to take a recommendation without question and to take a chance on a new way of thinking. I began to wonder why the bigger the brand, the harder our strategy was to execute.

As I became more engrained in my clients' businesses, I began to understand. It was not that clients on big brands felt entitled to be difficult or that they refused to be strategic as I could have easily assumed, it was that they were driven by different goals – short-term goals. Their goals were to prove success in short timeframes and the job of the manager who came before them was the same. The question I wanted answered was, who is looking out for the long-term success of the brand if the brand's own team is not? Often times, it felt as though the agency was responsible for a brand's long-term vision.

In these cases, agencies become broken records that keep asking for expensive, emotional tactics that don't drive *results* in the minds of many clients. And unfortunately, tactics proven to demonstrate sales quickly are often functional and short-sighted. This can leave strategic partners on both the client and the agency side, paralyzed by short-sighted strategies.

My objective has changed over time; as a strategic communications professional my goal is now to challenge the status quo and to find proof that will enable marketers and communication professionals to support long-term brand equity for future success.

Executive Summary:

This paper investigated elements of brands that affect consumer behavior. Areas of specific focus were functional product messages versus high-level emotional brand messages. In an attempt to discover how both types of messages affect consumer purchasing behavior and brand health a literature review and primary research were conducted.

The methods of analysis intended to study the value of functional and emotional appeals of products and brands during the path to purchase; the first method was a qualitative ethnographical shop-along which sought to uncover rich consumer insights, the second was a quantitative survey to substantiate and build on initial findings, and the third method was a qualitative focus group to understand brand decisions and message evaluation.

Findings consistently showed that although consumers can provide valid reasoning for their purchases and brand perceptions. Both functional and high-level emotional attributes of products and brands are important to a consumer's journey. However, the role brand equity plays in this process is often downplayed.

The conclusion of this study supported the hypothesis that higher order benefits are more motivating to consumers than functional attributes alone. And that companies investing in their brand's equity through communicating high-level emotional benefits in addition to relevant functional messaging are found to be more successful in the long-term; Samsung, Apple and Nike are clear examples of this. The studies conducted only partially

supported the hypothesis that brands that primarily focus on functional benefits are less likely to experience long-term success and stability. In low involvement categories this strategy can achieve intended business goals.

The final recommendation for strategic communicators who are responsible for the management of a brand is that they must leverage **both** functional and high-level emotional brand messages in order to reach short-term goals and to maintain a high potential business in the long-term.

Limitations of this report do exist within the execution of the primary research methods. Due to the limited number of respondents and the lack of diversity among their demographic and psychographic makeup the findings are directional and not considered statistically valid. Directions for future research were appraised and recommended to carry on this path of study.

Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the elements of brands that affect consumer behavior. Areas of specific focus are the impact of functional product messages versus high-level emotional brand messages. This paper will attempt to ascertain how these different types of messages affect consumer purchasing behavior and brand health. The ultimate goal of this case study is to provide guidance for strategic communicators who are responsible for the management of a brand. Findings intend to aid brand managers in maximizing the impact of their marketing-communications to meet short-term AND long-term business objectives. Directions for future research will too be appraised.

## Introduction:

The exchange of goods can seem fairly straight forward to an average consumer.

Imagine walking down the aisles of the store on a typical trip for groceries, or to pick up a new pair of socks, or even to grab something quickly to eat on your break; these purchases feel mundane and thoughtless to consumers. This is not considered a complex part of the day, because in the grander scheme of people's lives, there are a lot more important things.

There are times, however, that a purchase is not just a purchase. Consider these scenarios; an 18 year-old who is on their own for the first time, a first time mom with an infant, and a young woman that just landed her first real interview out of college? In each of these scenarios, even the smallest and most mundane acts, like a purchase, seem monumental.

To further understand, the predicaments for all three scenarios are as follows. That 18 year old has *no idea* what laundry detergent to use and feels as though he's drowning in a sea of options, fearful he might make the wrong decision. That new mom wants to give her baby safe products, but it's her first baby and she doesn't know what to buy or who she can openly ask for advice without feeling insecure. And that girl with the big interview *needs* an outfit that reflects her smart and capable nature, but her budget is too miniscule to purchase what she thinks is acceptable. In these scenarios purchases hold great value to consumers and reassurance, peace of mind and confidence are what they need in these moments. Brands that can provide that benefit and value, win! *If only, Tide, Johnson & Johnson and TJMaxx could do all that...*

It is in these instances that consumers overtly consider each step in their path to purchase and evaluate a brand's holistic proposition through past experience, conventional wisdom and knowledge of brand characteristics. Which begs the question; just because consumers do not overtly recognize the process they go through when just picking a few things up at the store, are they not going through the same decision process as these three individuals? In fact, they are going through the same decision making process for big and small purchases. According to Parente (2006), consumers tend to evaluate the attributes of products (physical properties) and move up the 'ladder' of knowledge to the eventual value (psychological property) they hope to obtain from the product to make their purchase decision (Parente, 55-57).

Even a typical trip to the store to pick up a few things is riddled with considerations that require weighing the importance of multiple product benefits, forces consumers to sift through competitive options and discern a brand's value for the need at hand. Some purchase decisions feel more significant than others, but nonetheless consumers have a complex decision process with almost every purchase.

There are conscious and subconscious drivers behind each selection of goods. This paper seeks to deconstruct the elements that play into a consumer's journey. Understanding the role of these elements will provide a greater knowledge for strategic communicators to leverage as they craft thoughtful plans in support of their brands.

There are a number of steps that need to occur before the consumer even has an opportunity to consider a product and it starts with a marketing plan. In simple terms, a

marketer's task is to properly forecast and develop plans that garner positive business results. Once a marketing plan is developed, it must be supported through communication strategies and tactics; advertising should be leveraged as an investment in your marketing plan that seeks to tell consumers what they should think, feel or do (Hiebing & Cooper, 376). Traditional advertising models function under the principal that sending the right message through a proper medium will garner this desired action from an intended consumer audience, but connecting with consumers is becoming more difficult and more expensive.

As markets grow, expand and contract, media landscapes are also evolving. When a strategic marketing-communications plan is able to finally connect the right consumer to a brand message, the success or failure of the plan begins to take shape. This is because at this point, consumers reach a key milestone in the potential path to purchase which requires them to understand the message, evaluate the value proposition of the offering and decide whether they will or *may* take an action.

If a consumer is able to understand a brand's message, that alone it is an accomplishment given the constant barrage of messages they receive; new products, well-known products, stodgy brands and come-back brands are relentlessly vying for the attention of each individual consumer. Rising above the competitive clutter takes a strong strategy and a clear brand proposition.

The expectation of what marketing can do for a business varies by company, but regardless of the weight an organization puts on marketing, it is always an expectation that

marketing assists in providing a return on a company's investment. Determining the level of investment in a product's marketing plan is as complex as the landscape of commerce itself. It is prudent to first understand how an organization evaluates success to understand what the goals of a marketing plan can and should be.

In a typical CPG corporation, it is not uncommon for business leaders to evaluate success of a marketing plan and therefore success of an individual employee by a business-unit's quarterly sales. In this case it is reasonable to believe that a marketer will create a plan that is poised to generate substantial short-term sales to meet the coveted short-term goals; meeting these goals can mean higher compensation for a brand manager and is ultimately considered successful for both the business bottom-line and an employee's bottom-line. It is, however, difficult to maintain a brand's health and to foster long-term equity with a narrow focus on sales in short time frames. The perception of long-term investments is often that they are at the expense of the coveted bottom-line.

The inherent challenge for organizations that value sales in such diminutive time frames is not to abandon short-term goals, but meet them while still investing in the long-term equity of a brand. And while this may not be a popular point of view it is a necessary one especially given the proliferation of private-label products into competitive sets.

Private-label adds greater complexity and competition in many categories and for consumers it is often seen as a built-in, price-first alternative to "high priced" brands; if a consumer chooses to shop at a given retail outlet chances are decent that they are accepting of the quality typically received there, so a private label alternative could

eliminate consideration of a larger set of brands. Unless of course, a brand gives consumers a “reason to believe” or a benefit that generic or private label alternatives cannot.

Relationships and associations between a consumer and a brand become essential in this instance.

Private labels have not only duplicated successful mainstream products, but they have even begun sourcing products from their competitors and marketing them as private label to keep a firm hold on high-margin markets as in the event of Land O Lakes sourcing products for retailer’s private label ventures. A Rabobank report states that private labels are earning the trust of U.S. consumers and are successfully competing against their national brand counterparts. Over the past five years private label sales have increased 6% as compared to 2% growth for national brands over the same period. It is projected that one in three U.S. food purchases will be private label by 2025 (Scott-Thomas, 2012). This advent enlarges categories and makes differentiation more difficult for all brands. In categories that have survived on price, this could be a death sentence for existing brand names. Investing in emotional bond for brands could keep the competition alive or at least prepare for the day that a private label product enters the market.

To understand how consumers evaluate products and brands a literature review was conducted. The following literature review provides key areas of learning and a groundwork of concepts that guides the development of primary research and its evaluation.

Literature Review:

*Marketing Practices and ideologies*

The first concept area that led the path of this case was at the level of marketing practices and ideologies. The Successful Marketing Plan provided a plethora of information regarding marketing best practices and information on how strategies are developed and put into action. The text enables and understanding of ideologies of how marketing, consumers and brands work together. Hiebing and Cooper's point of view is that brands are not owned by marketing departments, but instead by the public. Because consumers actually own the brand, each brand is actually made up of values, personality, and the experience that people associate with the company, product or service. (Hiebing & Cooper, 170). This information laid the groundwork for research questions.

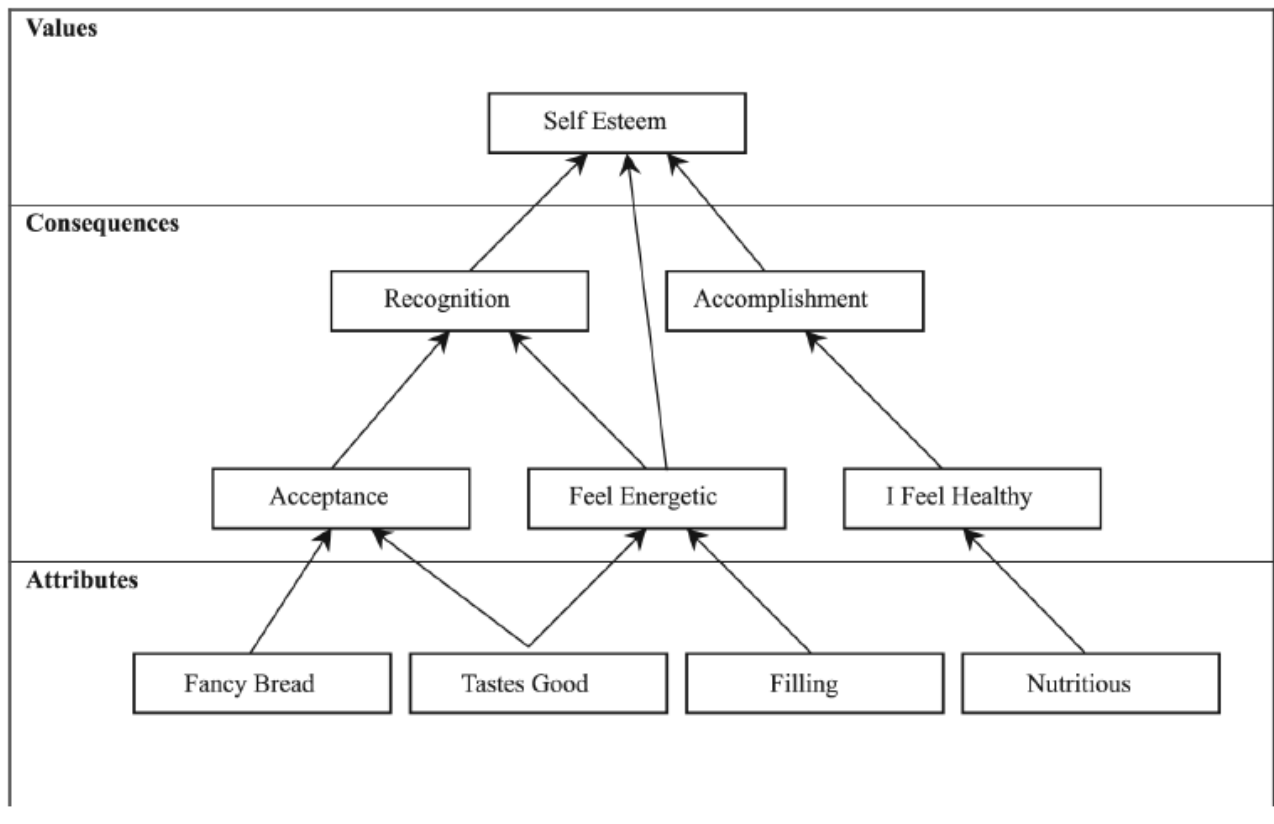
How to turn a brand's strategy into a great brand platform idea was a key question posed in the text. A brand idea platform goes beyond functional attributes of any product or service and alludes to the value of the brand itself (Hiebing & Cooper, 280). This leads to concept of brand equity.

*The Value of Brand Equity*

Brand equity is defined as an intangible value to a consumer according to Advertising campaign strategy: a guide to marketing communication plans (Parente, 122). The concept of brand equity indicates that if a brand loses its equity it may not survive and too often campaigns are short-term with only concern for quick turns and sales (Parente, 124). And

for consumers, brand equity is more than recognition of a brand and purchase; it is a representation of themselves.

In an article called, “Using laddering to understand and leverage a brand's equity” it was shown that consumers assign meaning and emotion to brands based on the meaning of the brand itself. Using the Means-end Theory, the author described how functional attributes only begin to scratch the surface of a brands meaning. The insight gleaned from this article is that the meaning a brand project via its brand and ladders up to an ideal the consumer itself values (Wansink, 112). Below is the figure that Wansik provides to illustrate the hierarchy of attributes to ultimate consumer values.



Hiebing and Cooper echoed the importance of brand equity by stating that;

“Developing a brand and building equity in that brand (the value above and beyond the cumulative physical attributes of the product itself) are the broad components of the branding process. In this process, you have one goal, to generate consistent purchase behavior among a target base, also known as brand loyalty (171).

### *Brands on Top*

The final area of the literature review sought to understand which brands were truly on top. This information was found through the assistance of Millward Brown accessed through their webpage. MB focuses on key areas of brand strategy, creative development, channel optimization and brand performance through research. They developed a “buzz index” to illustrate which brands were succeeding in business AND are admired by consumers around the world. Below is a list of the top brands of 2013 in the US:

**Top US Buzz Rankings**

Rank	Brand	2012
1	Amazon.com	30.6
2	Ford	29.5
3	Subway	29.4
4	History Channel	26.4
5	Lowe's	25.9
6	YouTube	25.1
7	Walgreen's	24.8
8	V8	24.7
9	Cheerios	23.9
10	Kindle	23.8
11	Samsung	22.8
12	Netflix	22.7
13	Aleve	22.5
14	Olive Garden	22.1
15	Home Depot	21.8
16	iPad	21.8
17	iPhone	21.7
18	Apple	21.5
19	Google	21.3
20	M&M's	20.8
21	Target	20.7
22	Geico	20.4
23	Tide	20.4
24	Dawn	20.3
25	John Deere	20.3

Millward Brown notes that the top brands seem to be dominated by US technology brands, and even the one retailer, Amazon, is fundamentally a technology brand. The entertainment brand Disney is also becoming heavily dependent on the digital space". As stated above, top brands turn their brand message strategy into greater brand platform ideas according to (Hiebing & Cooper, 280).

The top brand examples provided in The Successful Marketing Plan are Nike and Apple, as they go beyond traditional marketing communications to become platforms for ideas products, channels and organizations by connecting consumers to their positioning through iconic and even visceral communications with a greater purpose (Hiebing & Cooper, 280)

Hypothesis:

The hypothesis of this case study is that higher order benefits in conjunction with functional benefits are more motivating to consumers than functional attributes alone. Additionally, a company investing in their brand's equity through communicating high-level emotional benefits and functional attributes is more likely to be successful in the long-term. Conversely, brands that primarily focus on functional benefits and avoid investing in higher-level emotional messages have less likelihood of long-term success and stability.

## Primary Research

Insights from the literature review led to three forms of primary research with specific objectives. These research methods intend to study the value of functional and emotional appeal during the path to purchase; the first method is qualitative and seeks to uncover rich consumer insights, the second is a quantitative method to substantiate and build on initial learnings and the third method is qualitative and seeks to understand brand decision and message evaluation.

### **Method 1: Shop-alongs**

The primary objective was to uncover conscious and subconscious influences while on the path to purchase. The intent was to be in-store with a consumer at the point of purchase to allow an in-depth, ethnographic market research approach. This enables the moderator to unearth insights that would not otherwise be known or feasible to understand in a less intimate or unreal setting, like a research facility.

To uncover participant thoughts, influences and motivations there were two tactics followed; the first was allowing participants to have as natural of an experience as possible and the second was to probe on the experience and decisions as they were made. The moderator interviewed the participants prior to the research regarding the nature of the shopping trip, the participants' personal intentions for the trip and any preparations made for shopping. That information allowed the moderator to evaluate the decisions made at shelf. Reactions to packaging, placement, observations about the customer experience,

purchases made and rationale provided by the participant contributed to the majority of the final analysis.

There were three participants with varying backgrounds and shopping intentions.

Key details are below. See Appendix A for detailed analysis and verbatims.

Justin	Jessica	Laurel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Age: 34</li><li>•Shopping Type: Low Involvement</li><li>•Shopping For: Household &amp; Personal Care Items</li><li>•Preparation: List</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Age: 30</li><li>•Shopping Type: Low Involvement</li><li>•Shopping For: Groceries</li><li>•Preparation: List</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Age: 28</li><li>•Shopping Type: Moderate Involvement</li><li>•Shopping For: Graduation Outfit &amp; basic work/casual attire</li><li>•Preparation: None</li></ul>
<p>Purchased:</p> 	<p>Purchased:</p> 	<p>Purchased:</p> 
<p>Store: Target Location: Roseville, MN Conducted: April 3, 2014</p>	<p>Store: Target Location: St. Louis Park, MN Conducted: April 13, 2014</p>	<p>Store: TJ Maxx Location: St. Louis Park, MN Conducted: April 20, 2014</p>

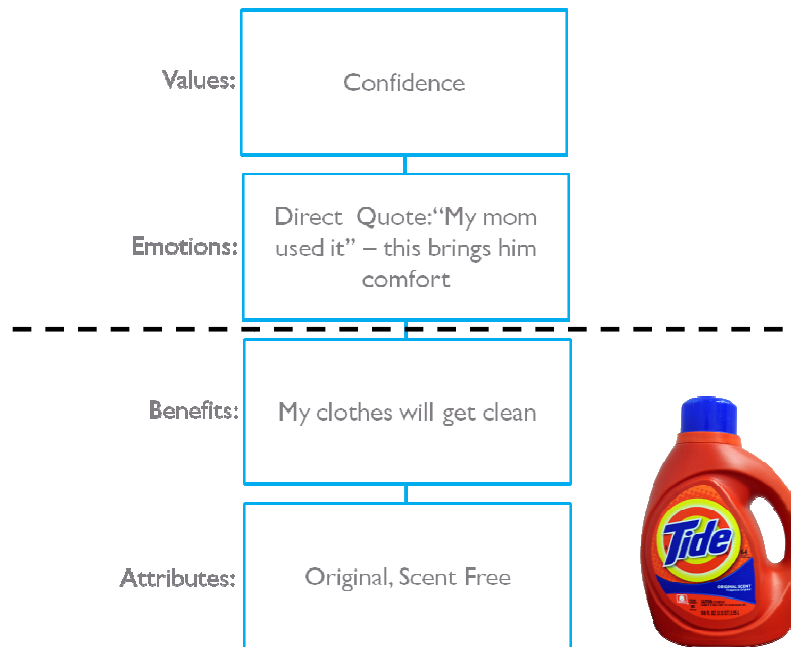
Although each shopping trip had varying purposes there were clear themes that impacted each participant's decision making process. It was also apparent that the amount of thought put into the purchase was dictated by the importance of the purchase. Groceries, for instance, required less thought as they are so frequently purchased. It was as though the participant was on "auto-pilot" while selecting products. Household and personal care items, although a low-involvement category, required a bit more thought

because the purchases were less frequent. Clothes shopping could have been a passive experience, but the participant was shopping for a special occasion that heightened the meaning of the purchase.

### Key takeaways

After analyzing the consumer journeys and participant responses, it was learned that consumers can rationalize and articulate their objective for shopping and usually know the products they intend to purchase. However, the participants did not consciously understand the deeper meaning behind their decisions. When asked to elaborate it took considerable effort to get from the “what they chose” (IE: product put in basket) and the functional “why they chose it” (IE: purpose the product serves) to get to the “higher-order benefit” that particular product served; meaning, the deeper rationale for why the participant chose a product or brand and not the alternative options.

An adapted Means-end theory can be used to layout the rationale for a respondent’s purchase of Tide laundry detergent. Expanding Means-end theory from attribute, consequence and value buckets to a true ladder of attributes, benefits, emotions and finally values provides a more robust illustration on the consumer perception of products. See illustration of this concept on the following page.



The bottom two boxes can be used to describe what the respondent consciously knows and typically provides as rationale for a purchase when asked to explain; the attributes and the benefits of the product. The fact that it was the original, scent-free Tide product was important to the respondent because it led to the functional benefit of properly cleaning his clothes. When asked why other products were not considered even though they had similar or even identical attributes for less money, the respondent believed the fact that his mother used it was, above all, important. Eventually it was uncovered that his past experience and child/mother association to the brand made him feel comfortable that he had made a good decision. The ultimate value he was expressing through this purchase was confidence.

Although it was subconscious, the emotion felt was the driving motivator. The brand Tide has strong brand equity and positive associations. This participant was not the only one to have similar experiences that laddered up to higher order benefits.

There were five themes that consistently came up. Each theme is not necessarily indicative of an emotional benefit or a value, but rather driving forces for purchase:

1. Ingrained Trust: This trust did not always come from the same place. In the Tide example the trust came from childhood associations. Trust also came into play with food. Jessica remembers Campbell's Sound from her childhood and has an emotional connection to that brand. This trust is unlikely to succumb to Progresso's attempts to obtain Jessica as a purchaser without drastically impacting her life.
2. Perceived Value: This is when a product displays a combination of desired attributes. For instance, attractive price + desirable quality = perceived value. Perceived value is relative to whomever is making the purchase and driven by what qualities are important to them. This was found for Laurel in a Rebecca Taylor Dress; it was a "high quality" designer name and was greatly discounted from its original price. Although the dress was still nearly \$200, it was a value purchase 'to her'.
3. Personal Reflection: This manifested with responses such as, "this looks like it's for me". This theme was important because it enabled social acceptance. Lever 2000 This soap is for men, not women
4. Functional Need: There were times when functionality was the only consideration. For Justin, this came in the form of Ibuprofen. The form of the product, the milligrams and the quantity were the only considerations.
5. Familiarity Default: There were instances where there were no brand associations to be made for the participants on their path to purchase. Jessica purchased Sabra

Hummus because she didn't know any other hummus brands. The idea that she'd heard the name before was enough to reassure her it was a good choice. The product filled a need or a desire and awareness of a brand or necessity of a function allows a consumer to make a default purchase.

The themes identified led to a questions that could further learning about what is important to consumers consciously and subconsciously. It also led to more questions about the role of functional and higher-level benefits to consumers. To further understand the roles of product and brand attributes a survey was developed.

### **Method 2: Survey**

The primary objective of the survey was to build on the qualitative findings to further understand how consumers evaluate functional attributes and brands in the purchasing process through a quantitative means. The secondary objective was discovering if there were brands that would rise to the top from an emotional brand affinity standpoint if respondents were unprompted.

The survey was conducted online through the use of Qualtrics survey technology for a span of three weeks beginning April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014. There were 65 total respondents mostly in the millennial age group. The survey was set up in four general sections; a low-involvement purchase section with the proxy of grocery shopping, a moderate-involvement purchasing section with the proxy of clothes shopping and a high involvement purchasing section with car shopping as the proxy. In these sections the intent was to understand whether functional attributes or emotional benefits were the main drivers for the varying types of

purchases. In the fourth and final section respondents were able to select when brand or price was the most important driver and which brands they admire by use of open-ended questions.

#### Low-Involvement Category, Grocery:

Quality & price were top drivers of purchase which was similar to the shop-along experience and could be due to the frequency of purchase or the commoditized nature of food products. For instance, it could be more difficult for a brand to change the mind of a consumer if they are selling a banana that has the exact same attributes as the brand next to it.

#### Moderate Involvement Category, Clothing:

The importance of attributes were reported as style being the priority attribute followed by, function, quality, price and brand being of the lowest importance. Conversely, 57% of respondents reported knowing what brands they would purchase prior to entering a store. This result indicates a major contradiction among the reported importance of brand within the clothing category.

#### High-Involvement Category, Automobiles:

An overwhelming 71% of respondents claim to know what brand of car they would purchase prior to shopping for a vehicle. However, similar to the moderate-involvement category, when respondents were asked to prioritize attributes for car purchasing, price was most important followed by quality, function, style and leaving brand as least important. Again, there is a contradiction occurring here, consumers claim to generate their

purchasing path based on brand prior to beginning the car shopping process, and yet claim that brand is the weakest driver of their final purchase.

#### Brand and Attributes:

In the fourth section of the survey there were a few directional learnings garnered. Price was considered a high consideration across the board. Brand, however, was noted as most important in two product categories with 41% of respondents selecting it as important when purchasing a car and 34% selecting it with regard to electronics. The open-ends collected hundreds of brand names that were seen as admirable to respondents. There was one brand that stood out amongst the sea of brands, it was Apple. 30% of respondents listed Apple within their top three most admired brands.

After a complete analysis of the survey there were three key findings. First, the survey confirmed that respondents rely on functional attributes heavily in low-involvement categories. Second, in moderate to high-involvement categories it was reported that brand plays a much larger role than in low-involvement categories. And third, it's important to recognize that the survey results did not provide a clear indication of what role brands specifically play in the purchasing process. It was clear that branding plays an important role, but consumers' understanding of how brands truly affect them is slight.

#### **Method 3: Focus Group**

The primary objective was to understand how brand choices are made and how consumers evaluate functional versus high-level emotional messages. To build on the shop-along and survey methods, this focus group used stimuli that included real brands and

branded messages (see Appendix C). In order to garner richer insights the research was set up in two sections; competitive product sets and branded messaging. The research had seven participants; a convenience sample of two male and five female Millennials. This study was conducted in person and moderated by myself in my home on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

The first section in the discussion guide was all about products and the stimulus was broken out into four product categories. Respondents were to select the brand they would purchase amongst a competitive set they were given and provide a rationale for their decision privately on paper. After selections were made all participants shared what they had written and the group discussed. At this time the moderator probed to understand respondent choices more deeply through specific questions of individuals and fostered greater conversations when themes were present.

The second section was a series of three brands and each were paired with two branded messages; one functional and emotional message for each brand. Similar to the first section respondents were to select the message that was most compelling and provide a rationale for their decision privately on paper. After selections were made all participants shared what they had written and the group discussed. Again, the moderator probed to understand respondent choices more deeply and fostered greater conversations when themes were present.

A summary of key insights and themes are below, they are grouped into three key insight areas and conclude with implications. A detailed report of the focus group can be found in the Appendix D.

*Brand Equity Plays a Significant Role:*

Based on this focus group brands have specific meanings to consumers and consumers don't overtly recognize every aspect this. They often think their perception is unique because of their personal experience as children with macaroni and cheese and laundry detergent for example, or because of a specific connection to a product they dismiss the role the brand plays as was true with the males regarding televisions. Although it was not statistically supported, it could be that respondent perceptions are direct results of the strategic initiatives executed by a brand itself. More research would have to be done to support that hypothesis. Regardless of whether every perception is a result of branded communications, the idea that brands hold meaning to consumers above functional attributes was supported. The concept of generic products (lacking a traditional brand or a private label brand) was mortifying to respondents and evoked uncertainty and genuine discomfort.

*Awareness and familiarity are valuable attributes:*

Aggregate branding through a holistic master brand strategy is working for Samsung. This brand is a powerhouse in evoking quality and relevance even to those who are uninterested in the categories in which they have offerings. There was not only a resounding affinity for the brand during focus groups, but it is among the top global buzz brands of 2013 according to Millward Brown; this is a brand to study.

*Repositioning is difficult, but can be done:*

Changing a brand perception or a product position is difficult and can lead to initial consumer reluctance. Respondents pushed back on Scotch's more purpose driven approach and didn't want to see TJ Maxx dabbling in cosmetics, but on the other hand they completely accepted Nike's dual purpose messaging; one all about function and the other all about purpose and values.

This research method sought to understand how brand choices are made and how consumers evaluate functional versus high-level emotional messages. The findings support the idea that functional as well as emotional attributes and messaging both play a role. The results seem to say, directionally, that depending on the objectives of the brand, functional messages and emotional messages need to be managed and implemented thoughtfully because they are ultimately tools to achieve different goals; for instance functional messages can provide reasons to believe in finite purchasing scenarios that call for pragmatic decision making, and on the other hand emotional messages can create brand affinity overtime that play into multiple consumer purchase decisions over time.

Research Limitations:

There were a number of limitations throughout the development of this case. Both qualitative and quantitative research was limited by the number of participants studied. This limitation produces directional findings only that cannot be considered statistically valid. The lack of diversity in participant backgrounds, demographics and psychographics likely skewed the findings and again results must be seen only as directional, and not scalable to a broader population.

Recommendation:

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the elements of brands that affect consumer behavior. Areas of specific focus were the impact of functional product messages versus high-level emotional brand messages. The hypothesis was that functional and higher order benefits together would be found more motivating to consumers than functional attributes alone. The hypothesis was partially supported. For moderate to high-involvement categories this hypothesis was strongly supported. The notion that high-order or emotional benefits have a significant impact on consumer perceptions of products and brands was supported consistently.

The implication of this study for strategic communicators responsible for a brand is that thoughtfully investing in their brand's equity above and beyond messaging just functional attributes, in the long-term, poises their brand to have more meaningful associations to their target audience. Conversely, brands that primarily focus on functional benefits alone have less likelihood of long-term success and stability.

It has been shown through the research that functional attributes and high-level benefits both play a role in positive consumer perception. However, there is not enough information to lay out formal figures to guide the marketing investment necessary to communicate functional versus high-level emotional benefits. Different categories, sizes of business and objectives require different levels of investment and further research would be required to substantiate that direction.

The key recommendation for strategic communicators today is not to focus solely on functional attributes or short-term sales tactics because this ignores the opportunity to create greater meaning for your brand with consumers through emotional brand building over time. Given the hyper-competitiveness in most consumer categories, low-involvement categories included, every opportunity to be competitive should be considered. Investing in emotional messaging is a long-term strategy to maintain competitiveness in the future.

Future Research:

Given the limitations of the research conducted, the continuation of this study would be best served with follow-up quantitative surveys with a narrower focus and segmented audiences; being more brand-specific and narrowing phases of research to specific product categories, such as athletic wear or breakfast cereal, would allow for clearer analysis through the use of homogeneous sets. This approach would require multiple survey types and a wide range of demographics and psychographics in order to capture scalable findings.

Additionally, because shop-alongs garnered such rich insights, a build on that research method is recommended. Conducting additional shop-alongs that are in specific shopping categories, such as back to school supplies shopping or electronics shopping for example would again allow for clearer analysis through the use of homogeneous sets. Follow-up interviews to investigate product satisfaction would enable a deeper level of learning and evaluation of the continued consumer journey.

Lastly, focus groups should be repeated with a larger sample of respondents that are representative of a broader demographic and psychographic mix. Repeating a similar method with similar stimuli is appropriate and would serve to further substantiate insights and generate stronger more reliable correlations.

## Annotated Bibliography

Bagozzi, R. P., & Canli, Z. (2002). *The social psychology of consumer behaviour*. Buckingham [England:

Open University Press.

This text brings together theories in social psychology and studies and theories of consumer behaviour. Themes noted in the text are processing and social cognition, communication processes, attitude models, emotion, social identity theory, and action theory.

Ginneken, J. v. (2003). *Collective behavior and public opinion rapid shifts in opinion and communication*.

Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

This text provides an in-depth and theoretical look at collective behavior by way of communication. It deconstructs real event and provides an academic and psychological point of view to explain how and why phenomena as sudden crazes and crashes, fads and fashion, hypes and manias, moral outrage and protests, gossip and rumors, and scares and panics occur.

Gorn, G. Unconscious transfer of meaning to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 215-225.

Retrieved April 30, 2014, from the EBSCOhost database.

This article talks through three experiments conducted in an effort to study meaning applied to products by consumers. The goal was to understand the level of and why consumers apply meaning to products and brands and the impact it has. The findings showed that branding does subconsciously affect consumer's perception of products.

Hiebing, R. G., & Cooper, S. W. (2012). *The successful marketing plan: how to create dynamic, results-*

*oriented marketing* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

This text is a guide for marketing and marketing communications planning. It starts from the beginning of determining a valid marketing/business case and takes readers through the process of in-market communication strategies and finally to evaluation and application of learning and optimizing. Branding is a specific focus of this text.

Parente, D. (2006). *Advertising campaign strategy: a guide to marketing communication plans* (4th ed.).

Mason, Ohio: Thomson/South-Western.

This text is specific to the advertising development process. It begins at the evaluation of marketing plans and objectives all the way to translating them into consumer facing communications to meeting the stated objectives. Notable campaigns and examples are used throughout the text to bring to life the concepts and best practices.

Wansink, B. Using laddering to understand and leverage a brand's equity. *Qualitative Market Research:*

*An International Journal*, 6, 111 - 118. Retrieved March 26, 2014, from the EBSCOhost database.

This article explains research conducted using Means-end theory. The intent was to uncover insights related to the source and the nature of a brand's equity. 1200 mental maps were developed based on Means-end Theory to guide. The result was that there were seven basic values at the core of most brand purchases.

Weber, B. Brands on the brain: Do consumers use declarative information or experienced emotions to

evaluate brands?. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 75-85. Retrieved April 30, 2014, from the

EBSCOhost database.

In this article an MRI study conducted was explained. The intent of the study was to understand if consumers use information or emotion to evaluate brands. The study showed that activations in brain areas associated with linguistic encoding were higher for unfamiliar brands, but activations in brain areas associated with information retrieval were higher for strong brands. Weak brands were engaged simultaneously in both processes. Areas of the brain associated with positive emotions showed activity for strong brands. The study concluded that consumers use experienced emotions rather than declarative information to evaluate brands.

Wright, R. L. Age of acquisition and the recognition of brand names: On the importance of being

early. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 43-52. Retrieved April 30, 2014, from the EBSCOhost database.

This article explains three experiments conducted in an effort to understand recognition of brand names and if there is a correlation between the timing of the introduction of the brand or not. The overall result was early surviving brands were recognized quickest of all. The significance of these effects for manufacturers and marketing are discussed.

#### Websites:

Understanding Consumer Decision-Making with Means-End Research - Rockbridge Associates, Inc.

(Rockbridge Associates, Inc.)

<http://rockresearch.com/understanding-consumer-decision-making-with-means-end-research/>

This site explores consumer decision-making through the use of the Means-end theory. The content deconstructs the traditional research paradigm versus the Means-end approach that uses laddering which is a more rigorous research method that leverages a laddering interviewing technique.

Earned Buzz (Earned Buzz),

[https://www.millwardbrown.com/BrandZ/Top\\_100\\_Global\\_Brands/Previous\\_Years\\_Results/2012/Earned\\_Buzz.aspx](https://www.millwardbrown.com/BrandZ/Top_100_Global_Brands/Previous_Years_Results/2012/Earned_Buzz.aspx)

The Millward Brown site focuses on key areas of brand strategy, creative development, channel optimization and brand performance. With a team of researchers, consultants and neuroscience experts in market researchers, consultants, storytellers and neuroscience experts in the industry. The documents of interest are called "Earned Buzz Index" reports. This document weights positive mentions, together with the Millward Brown BrandZ™ measure of online fans (FanZ Index). The Brand Momentum Index measures the prospects of future earnings on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the most positive score. The Top 10 "Earned Buzz" brands averaged a score of 8 in Brand Momentum compared with a score of 6 for the bottom 10.

Land O Lakes








<http://www.landolakesinc.com/utility/news/industry/ECMP2-0172728>

This site is part of the Land O Lakes public company website that provides company information and aggregates industry news. The article of particular interest that



provided information was, “Private Label Food Products Wage Turf War with National Brands”, Business News Daily, October 11, 2012 - “SymphonyIRI asks: Is there a ceiling to private label growth?”, Caroline Scott-Thomas, October 17, 2012

## APPENDIX

Shop-Along Primary Research Report

Participant	Shopping Type	Store	Shopper Mindset & Objectives	Any Special Preparation	Item 1 & Thought Process	Item 2 & Thought Process	Item 3 & Thought Process
Justin	Low Involvement Household / Personal Consumer Packaged Goods 	Target	Characterized by participant as a typical errand to replenish household and personal care items.  Always goes to Target for these types of errands	Yes - Brought a list with  List was product specific, no brand mentions  Stuck to list, did not stray  	Ibuprofen - went automatically to the generic store brand. Only consideration was size of bottle and tablet form.	Tresemme Hairspray: - Treseme Extra Hold Aerosol was the exact product he was looking for - Likes the aerosol feature - It has man packaging, was the least girly - Treseme is the only brand easily recalled	Clearasil face wash: - Brand Recognition - has known the brand for a while so he trusts it, is less aware of other brands. He can recall Clearasil advertisements - has all the functional attributes he cares about: oil free, no fragrance, packaging not too girly - other competitor he knew was Cetafil, but only associates bar soap with this brand
Jessica	Low Involvement Household / Personal Consumer Packaged Goods 	Target	Characterized by participant as grocery shopping  Does not always go to Target for grocery shopping, but a couple other necessary items could be also found out at target, therefore it made things simpler for her.  Leveraged Target as the location to get the whole list checked-off at one time.	Yes - Brought a list with  List was product & brand specific  Did not strictly stick to the list  	Sabra Hummus: - It's the only brand she was aware of - It made her feel most comfortable purchasing a brand that she's at least heard of.	Campbell's Chunky Soup: - got Campbell's over Progresso and Market Pantry - believes Campbell's is superior to Progresso and any generic soup because of the taste - Campbell's Chunky is more filling, other products have more broth - can remember eating Campbell's as a child, thought of Progresso as the less tasty, less "warm" brand	Jack's Pizza: - Believes Jack's pizza is the best value for frozen pizza and that everybody likes it - California Kitchen pizza was considered, but it is more expensive and didn't have the variety options she was looking for - She prefers the brand name for frozen pizza and would be skeptical of lesser known or private label
Laurel	Moderate Involvement Clothing	TJ Maxx	Characterized by participant as outfit shopping for a special occasion, graduation - a dress.  Secondary objective was to find dual-purpose tops IE: pieces that could dress up for work or dress down for after work.  Chose this store because it has a wide selection of brands that she trusts at a reasonable price - and good quality, wont fall apart.  Hoped to find Michael Kors because of it's classic look and high quality. Other brands like MK are Kate Spade, J. Crew, Banana Republic.	No Prep  Intent was to look around specific areas and see what caught her eye  2 areas of interest - designer section and dresses	Love Moschius Dress: msrp is \$300 TJ price was originally \$179, Sale price was \$44 - Felt like a great deal - Can wear to semi special occasions: Sat. Brunch, bridal shower, etc.  	Pleione Top: \$25 - nice top for work - Brand didn't matter  	Velvet Art Top: \$25 - This top will go out of style, so the fact that its \$25 or less is important - Brand doesn't matter for a trendy top like this - Can wear at casual Friday - Material felt quality too  




Shop-Along Primary Research Report

Participant	Item 4 & Thought Process	Item 5 & Thought Process	Item 6 & Thought Process	Item 7 & Thought Process	Key Takeaways
Justin	<p>Tide Laundry Detergent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trust of the brand was the driving factor, "Mom used it, how can you NOT trust it?"</li> <li>- Willing to pay more for this brand even in lieu of competitors being on sale. Would never consider another brand</li> <li>- Recognize the red/orange as Tide</li> <li>- Rationalized the love for the brand with the known attributes and past experience with it: won't ruin my clothes, quality product, won't irritate skin.</li> </ul>	<p>Glass Cleaner - purchased 409:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Was looking for a multisurface cleaner so he could have 1 bottle versus multiple.</li> <li>- compared 409 and Windex - felt both were comparable in function and reputation</li> <li>- If Windex had been on sale, would've gotten it, but 409 had more ounces</li> <li>- Participant felt as though he couldn't have cared less about purchasing glass cleaner</li> </ul>	<p>Soap - Lever 2000:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is not sure why he purchases Lever 2000 over other soaps</li> <li>- He feels the packaging indicates its more for him than other products; "it's more masculine looking compared to Dove for instance that is 'clearly' for women"</li> <li>- cost is not a driver in this aisle, just want to make a quick purchase and get out of there (referring to the femininity of the aisle which makes him feel out of place)</li> </ul>	<p>Saline Solution - Renu:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Compared to Up &amp; Up, chose renu because it's a brand name for only \$.40 more</li> <li>** Renu matters because being a brand name means higher quality</li> </ul> <p>Quotes - "Isn't that why people buy brand names?" "Why chance it?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Cares deeply about brands that have childhood relevance</li> <li>*believes brands hold value and indicate quality</li> <li>*categories that do not have a brand he deems meaningful seems to be lower involvement to him - bases decision on functional attributes or price</li> <li>*His gender plays a role is product/brand choice in aisles dominated by female targeted products (personal hygiene, soap)</li> </ul>
Jessica	<p>Land O Lakes Butter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This butter had canola oil so was believed to be more versatile for cooking</li> <li>- preferred LOL brand, simply because she knows it</li> <li>- does not buy butter often, so familiarly is key</li> </ul>	<p>Oscar Meyer Turkey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Always gets this turkey</li> <li>- likes package because it is resealable</li> <li>- knows the Oscar Meyer brand well</li> <li>- does not even think about other brands even if there is a sale</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Subscribes to the idea that brand names equal quality</li> <li>*Does not believe that products that are brand name are interchangeable, fundamentally believes that products vary by brand (even butter)</li> <li>*Seems less price sensitive (could be due to the nature of groceries)</li> <li>*Wants other to accept her purchases and tends to lean to the more familiar</li> </ul>
Laurel	<p>Olive &amp; Oak top: \$16.99</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it's a cute style for a great price</li> <li>- can wear to work and out casually</li> <li>- Didn't know brand</li> </ul> 	<p>Rebecca Taylor Dress: \$179</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Had never heard of the designer before, but could tell it was high end:</li> <li>*by the price points</li> <li>*by the stand alone rack of all Rebecca Taylor clothing</li> <li>*by the location of the rack in the designer brand area</li> </ul> <p>Had the dress not been on that rack, I would likely looked over it because I didn't know the brand and wouldn't have trusted it's potential quality.</p> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*The perception of the item's overall value was key (combination of desired price+ quality=overall value)</li> <li>*Can indicate designer clothing based on location and price point</li> <li>*designer was more preferred for special occasion</li> <li>*style and low cost for everyday was best for her because she could maximize her dollars for more clothes</li> </ul>

# Initial Report

Last Modified: 04/29/2014  
Filter By: Report Subgroup

1. Choose the statement that most accurately represents your feelings:

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	I enjoy grocery shopping		14	22%
2	I don't mind grocery shopping		34	54%
3	I hate grocery shopping		15	24%
	Total		63	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	2.02
Variance	0.47
Standard Deviation	0.68
Total Responses	63

2. When I enter a grocery store, I typically know which brands I will purchase

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	True		45	71%
2	False		18	29%
	Total		63	

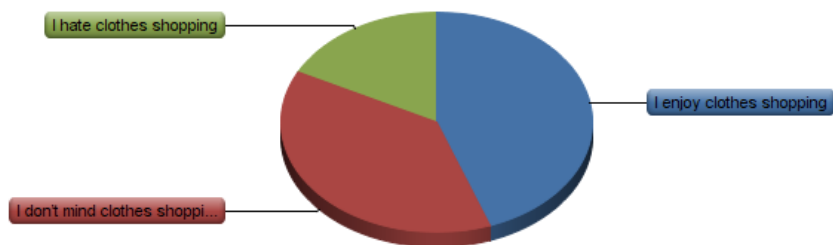
Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.29
Variance	0.21
Standard Deviation	0.46
Total Responses	63

3. Prioritize the importance of the below factors when grocery shopping:(most important on top)

#	Answer	1	2	3	4	5	Total Responses
1	price	20.63%	41.27%	25.40%	9.52%	3.17%	63
2	style	1.59%	4.76%	3.17%	36.51%	53.97%	63
3	function/utility	9.52%	17.46%	31.75%	26.98%	14.29%	63
4	quality	57.14%	22.22%	15.87%	3.17%	1.59%	63
5	brand	11.11%	14.29%	23.81%	23.81%	26.98%	63
	Total	63	63	63	63	63	-

Statistic	price	style	function/utility	quality	brand
Min Value	1	1	1	1	1
Max Value	5	5	5	5	5
Mean	2.33	4.37	3.19	1.70	3.41
Variance	1.03	0.78	1.38	0.92	1.76
Standard Deviation	1.02	0.89	1.18	0.96	1.33
Total Responses	63	63	63	63	63

4. Choose the statement that most accurately represents your feelings:



#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	I enjoy clothes shopping		28	44%
2	I don't mind clothes shopping		24	38%
3	I hate clothes shopping		11	17%
	Total		63	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	1.73
Variance	0.56
Standard Deviation	0.75
Total Responses	63

5. When I enter a clothing store, I know which brands I will consider purchasing

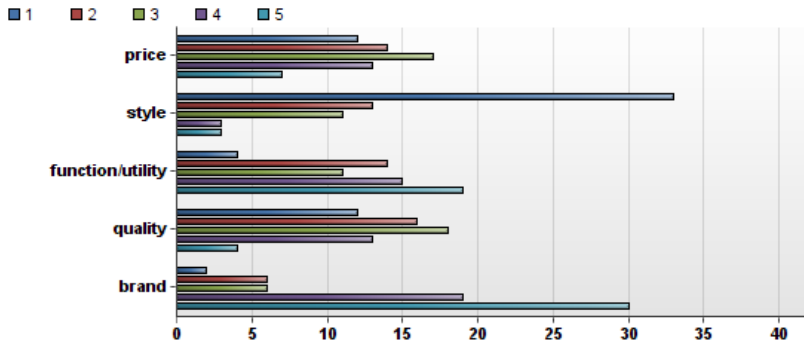
#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	True		36	57%
2	False		27	43%
	Total		63	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.43
Variance	0.25
Standard Deviation	0.50
Total Responses	63

6. Prioritize the importance of the below factors when purchasing clothing:(most important on top)

Statistic	price	style	function/utility	quality	brand
Min Value	1	1	1	1	1
Max Value	5	5	5	5	5
Mean	2.83	1.89	3.49	2.70	4.10
Variance	1.63	1.33	1.71	1.41	1.25
Standard Deviation	1.28	1.15	1.31	1.19	1.12
Total Responses	63	63	63	63	63

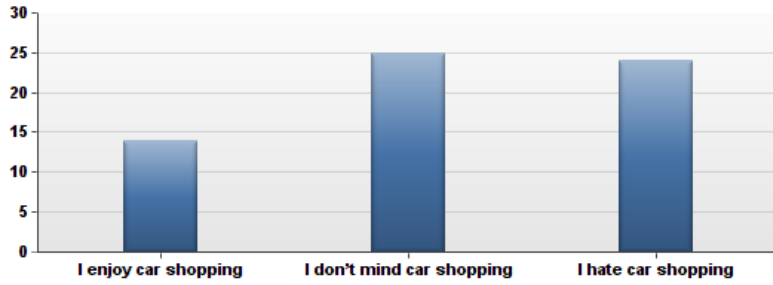
#	Answer	1	2	3	4	5	Total Responses
5	brand	2	6	6	19	30	63
3	function/utility	4	14	11	15	19	63
1	price	12	14	17	13	7	63
4	quality	12	16	18	13	4	63
2	style	33	13	11	3	3	63
	Total	63	63	63	63	63	-



#	Answer	1	2	3	4	5	Total Responses
2	style	33	13	11	3	3	63
4	quality	12	16	18	13	4	63
1	price	12	14	17	13	7	63
3	function/utility	4	14	11	15	19	63
5	brand	2	6	6	19	30	63
	Total	63	63	63	63	63	-

Statistic	price	style	function/utility	quality	brand
Min Value	1	1	1	1	1
Max Value	5	5	5	5	5
Mean	2.83	1.89	3.49	2.70	4.10
Variance	1.63	1.33	1.71	1.41	1.25
Standard Deviation	1.28	1.15	1.31	1.19	1.12
Total Responses	63	63	63	63	63

7. Choose the statement that most accurately represents your feelings:



#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	I enjoy car shopping		14	22%
2	I don't mind car shopping		25	40%
3	I hate car shopping		24	38%
	Total		63	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	2.16
Variance	0.59
Standard Deviation	0.77
Total Responses	63

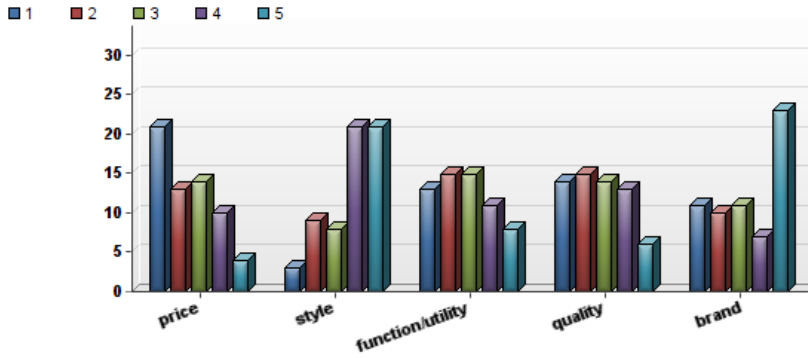
8. When beginning my car search I know which make/brand of car I will consider purchasing:

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	True		45	71%
2	False		18	29%
	Total		63	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.29
Variance	0.21
Standard Deviation	0.46
Total Responses	63

9. Prioritize the importance of the below factors for car shopping:(most important on top)

#	Answer	1	2	3	4	5	Total Responses
4	quality	14	15	14	13	6	62
3	function/utility	13	15	15	11	8	62
1	price	21	13	14	10	4	62
5	brand	11	10	11	7	23	62
2	style	3	9	8	21	21	62
	Total	62	62	62	62	62	-



#	Answer	1	2	3	4	5	Total Responses
1	price	21	13	14	10	4	62
2	style	3	9	8	21	21	62
3	function/utility	13	15	15	11	8	62
4	quality	14	15	14	13	6	62
5	brand	11	10	11	7	23	62
	Total	62	62	62	62	62	-

Statistic	price	style	function/utility	quality	brand
Min Value	1	1	1	1	1
Max Value	5	5	5	5	5
Mean	2.40	3.77	2.77	2.71	3.34
Variance	1.65	1.46	1.75	1.68	2.39
Standard Deviation	1.29	1.21	1.32	1.30	1.55
Total Responses	62	62	62	62	62

10. What are two car brands you love or admire?

Click to write Choice 1	Click to write Choice 2
Mini Cooper	Land Rover
Honda	Volvo
BMW	Audi
Ford	Fiat
Toyota	Honda
Mazda	Isuzu
Jeep	Merecedes
lexus	toyota
BMW	Ferrari
Volkswagen	Subaru
Ford	Honda
Toyota	Lexus
VW	Subaru
chevy	gm
subaru	Chevrolet
Mercedes	Land Rover
Audi	Tesla
Ford	Lincoln
chevy tahoe	gmc acadia denali
Honda	BMW
Subaru	Lexus
Chevrolet	Ford
Range rover	BMW
Audi	Porsche
Honda	Cadillac
Germany made - all	Jeep
Honda	Acura
chevy	dodge
Honda	Toyota
Nissan	Toyota
Toyota	Volkswagon
BMW	Lexus
Jeep	Ford
BMW	Toyota
Dodge	Hyundai
VW	Jaguar
Honda	Acura
Honda	Toyota
Chevy	Jaguar
Mercedes	Audi
Ford	Nissan
Gmc	Lexus
Honda	Subaru
Jeep	Porsche
BMW	Toyota
ford	chevrolet
Nissan	Audi
Ford	Infinite
Nissan	Lexus
Mercedes	Volvo
Honda	BMW
Volvo	Volkswagen

Honda	Toyota
Audi	Subaru
Ford	Bently
BMW	Lexus
Honda	Bmw
Ford	Volkswagon
Toyota	Honda
toyota	nissan
Subaru	Honda
Honda	Ford
Volkswagen	Ford

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	63

11. What is the make/model of the car you currently drive? (If you do not have a car, enter n/a)

Text Response
Saab 9-3 Sedan
Honda CR-V
Mini Cooper Countryman
Ford Escape
Chevy
Mazda 3 Hatchback
Ford
audi tt
BMW 535i
Mini
2014 Ford Edge
Toyota Prius
VW Jetta GLI
Chevy Malibu lt2
Chevrolet Cruz
Pontiac G5
Honda accord
Mini Cooper
chevy equinox
N/a
Subaru forester
2009 Chevrolet silverado
2004 Nissan Altima
VW cc
Honda crv
Mazda3
Honda Civic Hybrid
Ford Escort
Honda
2006 Volkswagen Passat
Toyota highlander
BMW 3-series
Ford Edge
Jeep Grand Cherokee
Ram 1500 quad cab
2002 VW Jetta. She's gorgeous.
Honda
Ford Mustang
1998 jaguar xj8l
Toyota Camry
Pontiac Grand Am
Lexus
Honda Civic
Ford explorer
Chevy Malibu
dodge caravan
Ford edge
Scion TC
Nissan Altima
Hyundai/sonata
Honda pilot

Volvo C30
Honda Pilot 2012
Subaru Forester
Ford Focus
Audi
2009 Honda fit
Ford Focus
Chevy Van
toyota corolla
Subaru Forester
Honda accord
Ford focus

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	63

12. Name 3 brands you purchase most often at the grocery store: IE: "Surge" soda, "Baker Fresh" bread, "Diamond" canned goods, etc.

Click to write Choice 1	Click to write Choice 2	Click to write Choice 3
Market Pantry	Simply Balanced	Campbells
365 Whole Foods	Trader Joe's	Annie's
Kashi cereal	Kraft mac n cheese	Fiber One Granola Bars
Safeway generic	Lucerne dairy	n/a
Fit & Active	Clancy's	Market Pantry
"Blue Diamond" almonds	"Simply Orange" juice	"Gushers" fruit candy
Fage	Green Giant	Chex
fage yogurt	drisco l berries	365 almond milk
Frank's Red Hot	A1 Steak Sauce	Just Bare Chicken
Cheerios	Land O Lakes	Organic Valley
General Mills Cereals	Kraft Mac and Cheese	Doritos
Trader Joe's	365	Rudi's breads
LaCroix Water	Smart Chicken	Tostitos Artisan chips
Pepsi products	general mills	Sara lee
Fage yogurt	Organic Valley milk	Amy's frozen meals
Morningstar sausages	Driscolls raspberries	Newman's Own pasta sauce
General Mills	Kroger	Market pantry
Kenps milk	Fage yogurt	Hone crisp apples
market pantry	coke pop	kirkland
Kraft Mac and Cheee	Tyson frozen chicken tenders	Gold Peaks Ice Tea
Cherry coke zero	Hormel turkey pepperoni	Barilla pasta
Hormel	Roundy's	Archers's farms
Tostidos tortilla chips	1st national bagel company bagels	Siggi's Skyr yogurt
JIF	Kirkland	Kemps
Trader joes anything	Boars head deli meat	Blue diamond almonds
Caribou Coffee	Land o Lakes Fat Free half & half	Chippewa Water
Cinnamon Toast Crunch	Kirkland Signature Whole Wheat Bread	Kirkland Signature Stir Fry Frozen Vegetables
Heinz Ketchup	coke	craft macaroni and cheese
Hidden Valley Ranch	Country Bread	Kellog Cereal
"Organic Valley" dairy product	"Garden of Life" supplements	"Silk" almond milk
Diet coke	Crystal Farm	Chobani
Diet Coke	I can't believe it's not butter	Orville Redenbacher Popcorn
Simply orange	Tombstone pizza	Jacks pizza
Cherry Coke soda	Tostitos chips	Kraft cheese
coca cola	bushes beans	green giant
Bare Chicken	Market Pantry	Jif
Boar's Head Deli Meat	Bush's Baked Beans	Silk Almond Milk
Newman's Own	Progresso	General Mills
Cub foods	Everyday essential	Coke
Kraft	Braila	Amanna meat
Kraft	General Mills	Market Pantry
Pills bury toaster strudels	Rice a roni	General Mills cereal
Pepsi	Jiffy	Kemps
Golden plump	Market pantry	Archer farms
Fresh Express Spinach	Prego Spaghetti Sauce	Arnold Oatnut Bread
Great Value	Market Pantry	Green Giant
Coffee mate	Kraft	Nabisco
Land O Lakes	Prima Della	Budweiser
Minute Maid	Pillsbury	Kraft
Stacy's	Olivia's	Cedars
Diamond	Tostidos	Kashi

Fage Yogurt	Totinos Pizza	Heinz Ketchup
Jif	Kelloggs	Tayste
Chobani fat free black cherry yogurt	Organic valley nonfat milk	Progresso low sodium soup
"Birdseye" Veggies	"Sabra" Hummas	"Oreos" Cookies
"Cracker Barrel" Cheddar Cheese	"La Croix" Sparkling Water	"Athenos" Feta Cheese
Cub brand everyday essentials	General Mills	Pacific
Jacks pizza	Zatarains Jambalaya	Kraft Macaroni and cheese
Makers Mark	Food Club	Millville
Jif peanut butter	General Mills Reeses cereal	Kemps skim milk
7Up soda	Thomas Bagels	Campbell soups
Frito lay	Malt O meal	Land O lakes
Full Circle	Organic Valley	Up & Up

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	63

13. Name 3 brands you usually purchase at Target (or other general retailer): IE: "Pretty Brand" clothing, "Ms. Clean" cleaning supplies, etc.

Click to write Choice 1	Click to write Choice 2	Click to write Choice 3
Market Pantry	Simply Balanced	Up&Up
Up and Up	Trident	Mossimo
Merona clothing	Mio Water flavoring	C9 activewear
Up & Up	Market Pantry	Mossimo
Market Pantry	Suave	Campbells
"Mossimo" clothes	"up&up" acid reducer	"Crest" toothpaste
Bounty	Downy	Clorox
tampax tampons	durecell batteries	kleenex tissues
Tide	Old Spice	Crest
Archer Farms	Bounty	Neutrogena
Hefty Garbage Bags	Pantene Shampoo	Tums
Cottenelle	Up&Up	Loreal
Dove body wash	Colgate toothpaste	Up & Up paper towels
pampers	Frito lay	kleenex
Mrs. Meyer Clean Day cleaning supplies	Burt's Bees (lotion, face cleaner, body wash, etc)	Champion sports clothing
Up & Up toilet paper	Market Pantry milk	Neutrogena face wash
Home	Up & up	Room essentials
Market pantry	Archer farms	Simply balanced
market pantry food	mosimo clothing	coke pop
Archer Farms seasonings	Neutrogena face lotion	Up & Up detergent
Barilla pasta	Cherry coke zero	Magnum condoms
Fruit of the loom	Hanes	Frito-lay
Threshold housewares	Aussie awesome volume hairspray	Cetaphil face products
Up & up	Mossimo	Archer farms
Hershey's	Jack links	Zip lock
Burt's Bee Chapstick	Neutrogena face wash	Refresh Tears eye drops
Kirkland Signature (everything)	General Mills cereals	nothing else comes to mind
loreal hair color	almay make up	windex window cleaner
Up & Up Anything	Clorex Cleaning Products	Windex
Mossimo clothing	Archer Farms food	Converse One Star clothing
Up and up	Yoplait	Meyers
Diet Coke	Tide	Tampax
Right guard deodorant	American crew hair product	DQ gift cards now available at target
Bounce fabric softener	Glade candles	Bounty paper towels
up and up	Lyso	charmin
Colgate	Dove	Up & Up
Tide Free Detergent	Ivory Bar Soap	Ziploc Bags
H&M	J. Crew	Zara
Market pantry	Dove	Johnsonville
Target	Ms clean	Corning
Kraft	General Mills	Market Pantry
Dawn dish soap	Market pantry food items	Hanes under garments
Target brand	Kemps	General Mills
Market pantry	Archer farms	Neutrogena
Colgate Toothpaste	Windex Spray	Charmin Toilet Paper
carters	mossimo	up and up
Mossimo	Up and up	Threshold
Lays	Fruit of the loom	Nike
Rock & Republic	Mossimo	Vera Wang
Quilted northern	Ziploc	Up and up
Twinings	International Delight	Tide

Threshold decor	Quilted Northern toilet paper	Dr. Bronner's soap
Downey	All - Laundry Soap	Cascade
Bounty	Smart water	Method
"Hallmark" cards	"Old spice" hygiene products	"Lysol" cleaning supplies
"Tidy Cat" kitty litter	"Bounty" Paper Towels	"Charmin" Toilet Paper
Pacific	Carter	Up target brand
Missouno	C9	Up & Up
Mossimo	Lego	Nerf
Purex laundry detergent	Market Pantry sliced cheese	Jacks Pizza
Windex cleaner	Glad garbage bags	Up & Up paper towels
Pampers	Up and up	Tide
Up & Up	Seventh Generation	Tide

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	63

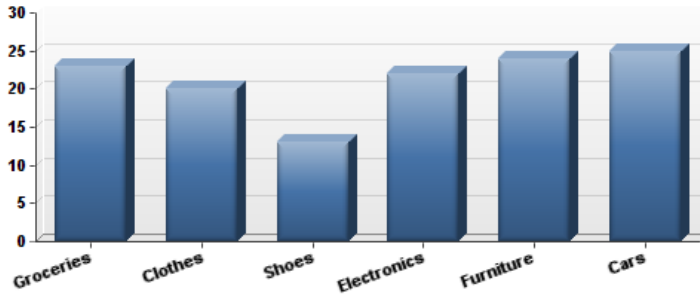
14. Name 3 brands you'd prefer to purchase online: (if there are no brands that fit this, then fill in products, or n/a)





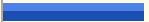

Click to write Choice 1	Click to write Choice 2	Click to write Form field 3
Shoes	Jewelry	Xmas gifts
Amazon	J. Crew	Victoria Secret
n/a	n/a	n/a
n/a	n/a	n/a
n/a	n/a	n/a
DVDs/Blu Rays	Electronics	Posters/decoration
Kuerig Coffee	Electronic Cases	na
oribe hair products	tory burch shoes	wacol bras
Banana Republic	Domino's	Jimmy John's
JCrew	ModCloth	Banana Republic
Old Navy	GAP	N/A
music	books	vitamins
n/a	n/a	n/a
na	na	na
J Crew	NA	NA
N/A	N/A	N/A
Quilted	Crest	Gillette
N/a	N/a	N/a
pampers	disney	toms
N/a	N/a	N/a
Funny items	Ammo	Shirts
Cabela's	Gander Mountain	Apple
Modcloth clothing	Unique gifts, like off etsy	All clothing
Vs	Nada worry	N/a
Books	Electronics	Tickets to events
Banana Republic clothes	Nespresso	Bare Essentials makeup
clothing	home electronics	tools
home goods	jewelry	glasses
Victoria's Secret Clothes	Kohl's Clothes (any brand)	n/a
Garden of Life	SeaSnax grab & go snacks	Red Mill flours
Charmin	Bounty	Tide
books	music	running gear
NA	NA	NA
Diesel clothing	Records	Shoes
n/a	n/a	n/a
Skechers	Apple	Fishing gear in general
Aveda	Clinique	n/a
Warby Parker	Fruit of the Loom	Charmin
Music	Games	Tickets
No t/a	N/a	N/a
Honest Co.	Old Navy	Gap
N/a	N/a	N/a
Cherokee Workwear	Nike	The Chive
Workout clothes	Victoria's Secret	Old navy
Express Clothing	Vitamins	Books
n/a	n/a	n/a
Na	Na	Na
N/a	N/a	N/a
Tobis	Lulus	Delias
Na	Na	Ma
N/A	N/A	N/A

J.Crew	iTunes Music	Victoria's Secret
Filters (fish tank, Furnise etc)	Books	Coldwater Creek
Charmin	Pantene	Purina
Books	Electronics	Cuff links
"Victoria's Secret" bras	"The Limited" pants	Books (Amazon)
Etsy... No brand	Amazon... No brand	Craig's list... No brand
Asos	Modcloth	Nike
n/a	n/a	n/a
na	na	na
n/a	n/a	n/a
Gap	Old navy	N/A
NA	NA	NA

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	63

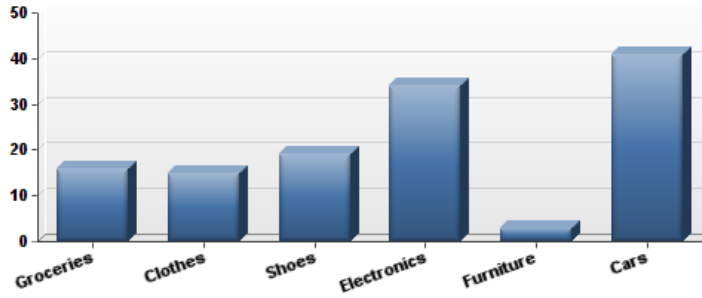
15. In which two purchasing scenarios is Price most important to you?



#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Groceries		23	37%
2	Clothes		20	32%
3	Shoes		13	21%
4	Electronics		22	35%
5	Furniture		24	38%
6	Cars		25	40%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Total Responses	63

16. In which two purchasing scenarios is Brand most important to you?



#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Groceries		16	25%
2	Clothes		15	24%
3	Shoes		19	30%
4	Electronics		34	54%
5	Furniture		3	5%
6	Cars		41	65%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Total Responses	63






17. Name 3 brands from any category that you admire:

Brand 1	Brand 2	Brand 3
Cole Haan	Virgin Atlantic	Apple
Honda	Annie's	Ben and Jerry's
I don't know.	NA	NA
Jawbone	Apple	Ford
Apple	Sony	Avid
Saucony	HBO	Jameson
Apple	Nike	Johnson & Johnson
tory burch	louis vuitton	vince
BMW	Nike	Apple
Cosmopolitan Hotel	JCrew	Disney
Asics	Nike	Addidas
Apple	Gibson	Trader Joe's
J.Crew	n/a	n/a
BKE	Sperry	Microsoft
Aveda	Mrs. Meyers Clean Day / Caldrea	subaru
Sigg'i's	J.Crew	Up & Up
Nike	Under armor	Google
BMW	Frye	Tory burch
chevy	mosimo	disney
Honda	Apple	Crate & Barrel
Magnum	Glock	Coke
Apple	Sony	General Motors
Jcrew	CeraVe	Threshold
Apple	Lululemon	Up & up
Trader Joe's	Chobani	Mac
Apple	Coca cola	Banana Republic
Samsung	Sony	Google
born shoes	loreal hair color	maybelline mascara
Lucky Jeans	Big Star Jeans	Mec Jeans
Nike	Nissan	Garden of Life
Apple	Chipotle	Warby Parker
Apple	Google	REI
Marmot	Banana republic	Dairy Queen
Apple	Diesel	Camper Shoes
addias	Levi	fila
Summit	Audi	Apple
Apple	Sharp Electronics	Founders Brewing Co.
Warby Parker	Charmin	Toms Shoes
Chevy	Cub foods	Carhart
Samsung	Ken more	Disney
Honest Co.	Gap	Old Navy
Nike	General Mills	Pillsbury
Sony	Apple	Norwex
Apple	Prada	Express
Apple	Lush	urban decay
Market pantry	Great Value	General Mills
Nike	Miss me	Samsung
Nike	Ford	Craftsman
Nissan	Nike	Jessica Simpson
Olivia's	Volvo	Alex and ani
Honda	Beautifeel	Jones New York
Apple	J.Crew	Room and Board

Jif	Kelloggs	All
Room and board	Apple	Coca cola
Bentley	Brooks Brothers	Coca Cola
Lululemon	Oreo	CorePower
Apple	Tommy Hilfiger	Pottery barn
Apple	Dollar shave club	Covergirl
Bose	Lego	Sony
Toshiba	toyota	samsung
Subaru	Up & Up	Campbells
Pampers	Tide	Kraft
Lucy	Food Should Taste Good	Weber



Statistic	Value
Total Responses	63

18. What is your age?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Under 18		0	0%
2	19 – 29		31	49%
3	30 – 35		21	33%
4	36 – 45		6	10%
5	46 - 55		2	3%
6	56 or over		3	5%
	Total		63	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	2
Max Value	6
Mean	2.81
Variance	1.12
Standard Deviation	1.06
Total Responses	63

19. What is your gender?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Male		18	29%
2	Female		45	71%
	Total		63	

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.71
Variance	0.21
Standard Deviation	0.46
Total Responses	63

# Focus Group Stimuli & Discussion Guide

7 participants

Conducted May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014

## Thanks for participating!!!

Ground Rules:

- I want to hear what you think
- There are no wrong answers
- All thoughts are welcome

There are 2 sections

- In both sections, I will ask you to:
  - Make your personal selection by writing down your answer
  - Then after you've selected we will share with the group & discuss

# Products

1.

# Laundry Detergent

sustainableisgood.com



2.

## Macaroni & Cheese



3.

## Flat screen 42" LCD TV



4.

## Metal Plate Covers



# Brand Messages

# SCOTCH TAPE

# 5.

Which message is more compelling?

A. Now 2x stronger



B. Make Amazing



**NIKE**

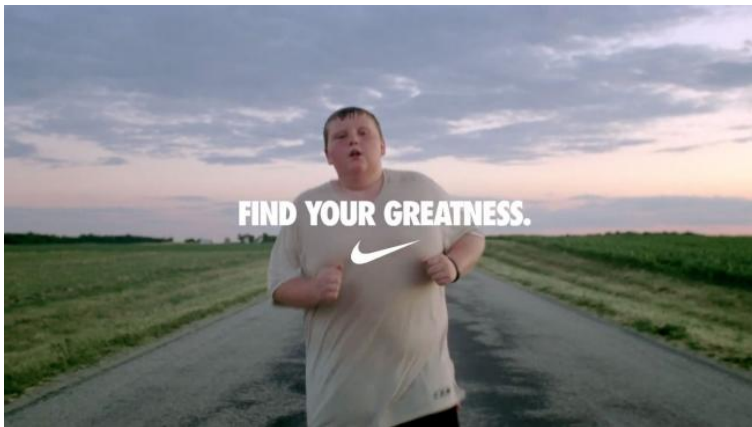
6.

Which message is more compelling?

A.



B.



# TJ MAXX

# 7.

Which message is more compelling?

A.



“KEEP CALM AND SHOP”  
*Ruth Tan, New York*

**UNCAGED  
MAXXINISTA**

*She sees things differently--  
style and inspiration are everywhere,  
in her life and the clothes she wears.*

TJ-maxx  
www.tjmaxx.com

This advertisement features a woman, Ruth Tan, wearing a yellow beanie, a dark blazer, and a light skirt, walking in front of a large parrot. The text is set against a blue background.

B.



look fabulous. for less.  
now open. the newly expanded beauty dept.

**TJ·maxx**



This advertisement features a light blue background with a white lotus flower icon at the top. The text is in a clean, sans-serif font. To the right is a black and white close-up portrait of a woman's face.

Primary Qualitative Research , Conducted 5.4.14

## Focus Group Research

### Transcription & Final Analysis

#### Section 1 – Products

Key question for each product set is “which would you purchase & why?”

##### 1. Laundry Detergent:



#### Respondent Transcription:

- Jenna - Tide – always used, familiar with, colorful, grew up using it
- Alex - All – always used it
- Emily - Mighty – a lot less space (smaller, small apartment)
- Olivia – Gain – if there isn't gain will get Tide
- Will – target, don't care its cheaper – guys don't give a shit, just cost
- Laura - Would never buy Wal-Mart private label and hate the store experience – Wal-Mart is taboo; big store difference Target only varies a little
- Laurel – Arm & Hammer (usually use 7<sup>th</sup> generation all natural) A&H is the closest because of the ingredients, baking soda – has an all natural halo compared to other mainstream brands

#### Key takeaways:

- Trust of the brand was important to defining the relationship in this category
  - “I grew up with it” common phrase
  - “always used it” common phrase
  - If Gain isn't there, I'll just default to Tide
  - “I would never buy the Wal-mart brand” – this brand wasn't even present and it came up as a brand with significant aversion among the group
- Functionality was key – All “Mighty” being more concentrated and small gave respondents a reason for purchase above and beyond its primary function.
- Price was an important factor -

- Niche reason to believe was the natural way in. This

## 2. Macaroni & Cheese:



### Respondent Transcription:

- Laurel – Annie’s, brand I trust and grown up with, mom fed it to me. Don’t typically trust the yellow die
- Will – Kraft – would normally get whatever’s cheapest, but Kraft is better. Annie’s not in my consideration set
- Olivia – Annie’s – only chose it because I get sick from Kraft, but I love mac and cheese and Kraft is better (it’s the best alternative to kraft) I’m not on the all organic natural train – I like good tasting stuff. I judge about being organic
- Laura – Kraft, because I grew up eating it. Cheaper brands don’t taste as good. Satisfied enough with Kraft
- Emily – grew up with Annie’s brand, but I don’t typically buy mac and cheese
- Alex – I don’t eat mac and cheese, I would eat Kraft, and would be skeptical about Annie’s - would be willing to try Annie’s.
- Jenna – Kraft because I like the Kraft with the shapes, I don’t like the cheaper stuff

### Key Takeaways:

- 5 out of 7 chose Kraft as their favorite.
- Niche way in: Annie’s was the niche favorite. 2 of the respondents grew up on it and most didn’t know that it existed when they were children; they assumed it was a modern brand following a recent ‘organic’ / ‘natural’ trend. Laurel and Emily were the self proclaimed ‘weird ones’ that weren’t allowed to have typical mainstream food. Other respondents politely agreed with that notion and said they knew kids like that growing up.

- Generic Box is terrifying!!! – The group was so uncertain what they were going to get when they opened the box. Even those who didn't seem to care much about the product were certain; they would NEVER purchase the generic product.
- The Nice brand was pretty much unknown – it did not have the stigma that Wal-Mart had during the laundry detergent product discussion

### 3. Flat Screen 42" LCD TV:



#### Respondent Transcription:

- Laurel – Samsung, no reason. I love my Samsung phone. Brand I trust. I know that it's a successful company.
- Will – Samsung or Vizio depending on life stage. Got a Vizio in college. Parents have Samsung and they are a lot more sleek looking
- Olivia – Vizio, because I own one and I love it. Good quality for the price. Got it at target. Would consider Panasonic or Samsung but Vizio is such good quality for the price
- Laura – Samsung. I just bought a TV, online reviews were very positive and friends and family recommend – huge fan of Costco, and they carry it.
- Emily – Samsung, never bought a TV in my life, but I have one it's a Samsung and I like it

- Alex – Samsung – Dynex, Vizio and Polaroid are shitty, Panasonic is most expensive. Vizio for low end value / Samsung is high-end value. Vizio is the number one seller, I think. Panasonic is barely superior to Samsung, but I'd rather save a few bucks
- Jenna – Samsung – because I don't know anything about electronics. S is familiar and I've owned other S products in the past

#### Key Takeaways:

- Preferred Brand: Samsung won hands down – it was unanimous that of the options, Samsung wins
  - The reasons spanned from knowledge of its superior technology, style and even to simple brand recognition and familiarity, distribution was also mentioned
- Value: Vizio can in second with the best overall value – it wasn't as good as Samsung, but for the price it was a competitive option.

#### 4. Metal Plate Covers:



#### Respondent Transcription:

- Laurel – ace because of rewards program there or home depot because close. I have gone out of my way to use the rewards in the mail, but would go to home depot if it weren't for that
- Will – ace, then home depot, then Lowes – it's a generic brand. I shop at ace so that's where I'd get one
- Olivia – I would chose ace, only go to home depot because its close, but I grew up with ace. I don't care for this product though.
- Laura – no preference, I would go to the store that was closest to me. If I absolutely had to chose it would be home depot because of the in store experience. Helpful staff
- Emily – I would chose Lowes because it's the brand I trust the most, it's the most welcoming and I need hand holding that I would need. Ace in my home town was really shitty. Would probably go based on proximity

- Alex – proximity, but if they were next store to one another. I'd go home depot good price, only subpar education. Lowes is higher priced. Ace is shitty small store with highest prices
- Jenna – Home depot because I've never been to either of the stores and I would know that I could get this there

Key Takeaways:

- Interesting that not many seemed to care that it was a 'private label', but some respondents did reference that proximity could drive their decision.
- All felt that this was a basically unknown product and the brands were reconciled by the reputation of the store itself
- Group assessed the positioning of each retailer very clearly:
  - Lowes services those who need help and you pay more for it
  - Ace is the neighborhood hardware store
  - Home depot and Lowe's are similar

Section 2 – Brand Messages

5. **Scotch Tape:**

Which message is more compelling?

A. Now 2x stronger



B. Make Amazing



Respondent Transcription:

- Laurel – B. Make amazing – because when I purchase tape most of the time it's for a project. I already trust that scotch is a better stickier tape. "Make Amazing" tells me

something new from an arts and craft standpoint. Gave me a diff perspective than I had before Scotch and about tape.

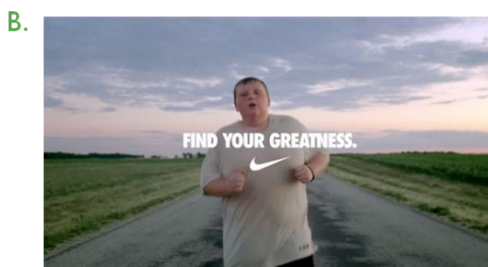
- Will – A. 2X stronger – I don't wrap things up. I only use paper bags and the funnies to wrap gifts so I only need strong tape.
- Olivia – A. 2x stronger because it's more clever. I don't need "unmatching" tape. Can't tell that make amazing is scotch tape
- Laura – A. 2x stronger, it's a quantified claim. When I buy tape I just want to know it will do its job. Make amazing doesn't tell me what I can make with it
- Emily – A, 2x strong – scotch has taken flack for not changing and other brands are getting way closer. The functional claim is more relevant to what I need. My primary use is really functional
- Alex – A. now 2x stronger. I would want it to be clear. Totally functional.
- Jenna – A. it's going to get the job done – It didn't resonate with me

#### Key Takeaways:

- This simple takeaway is that people understood the relevance of A's functional claim for the Scotch brand much more.
- Respondents admitted that A did not make them think more or better of Scotch, it simply reinforced what they already knew.
- B's "Make Amazing" copy did not compel respondents, but did admit that it made them think differently about tape – it forced a different usage that this entire group did not resonate with

## 6. Nike:

Which message is more compelling?



Respondent Transcription:

- Emily – B Wins - hate the first ad. It plays into Nike's brand persona that they sell to douche guys who. I like B because it show that they stand for health and wellness
- Alex – A wins – thought it was amusing. Its flashy. Nike is athletic yet fashionable
- Jenna – B wins – I had not seen the video because I've always been a fan of Nike's emotional ads that make you feel like you can do anything.
- Laura – B wins– I've seen the ad and it resonates – its emotional, inspirational, motivational. Great message that greatness is obtainable. A is so functional and very masculine
- Olivia – B wins because the commercial is top 5 greatest commercials ever. It's whatever greatness is to you. First one is clever but less compelling. Makes me think more of Nike, it makes them better
- Will – like both. The ad on the bottom is an awesome ad. These ads represent 2 different faces of Nike – like the mullet reference. If you are the traditional Nike guy you will see A, and you'll never see B. They speak to different audiences. B speaks to a larger audience
- Laurel – B wins– it puts a softer more meaningful face to a brand that I usually associate with jocks only – for everybody, but doesn't alienate the jock.

Key Takeaways:

- A's message was only appealing to men

- All except 1 respondent was very compelled by message B.
- General consensus was that there are two faces to Nike:
  - o an athletic side that represents the look, feel and function of the brand's products speaks to specific groups
  - o And the other is a purposeful, meaningful side of the brand that speaks to EVERYBODY that represents greatness and achievement for all people.

## 7. TJ Maxx:

Which message is more compelling?

A.



B.



Respondent Transcription:

- Olivia – A – because maxxinista is genius – brilliant. Everyone knows what it means. It means you are a fashionista. I hate the keep calm and shop reference (totally overdone) would be stronger if you removed it. Don't buy all my clothes there, but maxxinista is totally ownable and unique. I would never buy my makeup there – its mixed in with all that beauty crap

- Laurel – A because it's broader, and I like the maxxinista reference. I connect with this girl. I wouldn't trust the beauty .
- Emily – A I love maxxinista – showing a whole outfit together – hate keep calm language.
- Alex – B, I get it, A didn't like, less attractive
- Jenna – Liked A, not B – B sounds cheap.
- Will – Liked B, B is simple and straight forward. You already know that this means TJ Maxx, it is who they are. I wouldn't have read the copy on A and I didn't resonate with the maxxinista. Didn't give me a reason.
- Laura – B – simple it was. The reason I go there is for me. A was way too busy, hate the keep calm quote, it's outdated and makes me think that the clothes are going to be outdated.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Responses here were generally very interesting. It seems that each piece of communication had a distracter.
  - o In A it was the "Keep Calm &..." meme that respondents rejected and focused on.
  - o In B it was the focus on beauty products instead of clothing – this felt outside of TJMaxx's jurisdiction – clothes were accepted, make up caused skepticism
- What was unanimous was the ownable nature of the value message – beyond that there was great subjectivity that tended to make neither as strong as they could have been.
- The bottom line learning was that TJMaxx clearly stands for something in the minds of consumers, so much so that respondents had an opinion on how TJMaxx spoke about themselves

#### **Overall Learnings:**

##### *Brand Equity Plays a Significant Role:*

Based on this research brands have specific meanings to consumers and consumers don't overtly recognize every aspect this. They often think their perception is unique because of their personal experience as children with macaroni and cheese and laundry detergent for example, or because of a specific connection to a product they dismiss the role the brand plays as was true with the males regarding televisions. Although it was not proven, it could be that respondent's perceptions are direct results of the strategic initiatives executed by a brand itself. More research would have to be done to prove that hypothesis. Regardless of whether every perception is a result of branded communications, the idea that brand's hold meaning to consumers above functional attributes was supported. The concept of generic products was mortifying to respondents and evoked uncertainty and genuine discomfort.

*Awareness and familiarity are valuable attributes:*

Aggregate branding through a holistic master brand strategy is working for Samsung. This brand is a powerhouse in evoking quality and relevance even to those that are uninterested in the categories in which they have offerings. There was not only a resounding affinity for the brand during focus groups, but they are among the top global buzz brands of 2013 according to Millward Brown; this is a brand to study.

*Repositioning is difficult, but can be done:*

Changing a brand perception or a product position is difficult and can lead to initial consumer reluctance. Respondents pushed back on Scotch's more purpose driven approach and didn't want to see TJ Maxx dabbling in cosmetics, but on the other hand they completely accepted Nike's dual purpose messaging; one all about function and the other all about purpose and values.

This research method sought to understand how brand choices are made and how consumers evaluate functional versus high-lever emotional messages. The findings support the idea that functional as well as emotional attributes and messaging both play a role. The results seem to say, directionally, that depending on the objectives of the brand, functional messages and emotional messages need to be managed and implemented thoughtfully because they are ultimately tools to achieve different goals.