

Fueling Up: International Advertising Research

Case History

Category: Retail Automotive Fuel Products

Methods: International Research, Advertising Research, CopyTest®, SellingPower™

Summary

A global, retail automotive fuel products company was interested in testing its magazine and TV advertising in several countries in an effort to drive improvement in brand awareness, familiarity, and sales.

Strategic Issues

The client company is known globally to consumers through its three key brands of automotive fuel products and patented additives. These brands have achieved very high customer satisfaction and trust ratings in the United States and around the world. While the company enjoys high satisfaction rankings among consumers who are aware of and use their brands, the firm tends to lag behind some competitors in some markets and regions in terms of overall brand and advertising awareness. This is true for both of their core fuel brands and their premium additives.

Accordingly, the client developed a series of print and broadcast advertisements—aimed at leveraging its trust image—in an effort to improve awareness and drive sales. The company was interested in testing the ads and making any necessary improvements that would help with clarity, brand recall, brand registration, persuasion, and other key messaging elements.

Research Objectives

The overall research and business objectives included:

- Based on normative and relative measures, determine—of the two U.S. and two Latin American print ads and the three U.S. and two Latin American TV ads—which ads should be run, if any.
- For all ads, understand what improvements would need to be made, if any, to further enhance the client's brands in the target markets.



Research Design and Methods

The print and TV ads were in post-production format and were ready to be published, though changes could be made if needed. Decision Analyst's monadic CopyTest® system was used for this project since it was designed to be used for finished or near-finished ads. In a monadic approach, each respondent evaluates only one advertisement and answers questions specific to that ad. Two separate CopyTest® studies were commissioned for this project:



- Print Ad Study—two print ads were tested in the U.S. among approximately 200 consumers in specific target markets. Two print ads were tested in Latin America among approximately 200 additional consumers in two countries.
- TV Ads—three TV ads were tested in the U.S. among approximately 300 consumers in specific target markets. Two TV ads were tested in Latin America among approximately 200 additional consumers in two countries.

Both surveys were conducted online among the representative samples of category users. After viewing one ad, respondents completed a proprietary sequence of key metrics and several diagnostic batteries such as persuasion, brand reinforcement, potential increase in usage, attention value, brand registration, and brand remembrance.

The results were entered into Decision Analyst's proprietary SellingPower™ analytical model to calculate overall advertising effectiveness. Based on historical normative data, internal diagnostics, and analytical models, the results predicted the effectiveness of each ad and what needed to be changed to improve the advertising.

Results

For the U.S. and Latin American print ads, one ad tended to stand out; however, both ads fell below category norms in several areas. On average, persuasion and brand reinforcement scores were very low, as were other brand-related metrics. Suggestions were made to the client about specific components that could be improved, based on objective ratings and open-ended comments. In addition, in Latin America there was a specific wording reference that was causing confusion (and possibly offending some) due to its

many possible interpretations. A few specific words were changed to reflect a more focused, less ambiguous, and less confusing message.

The U.S. TV ads tested well against category norms and overall. Any of the ads would have enhanced the client's image and position. There was one ad, though, that was the clear winner across most metrics; it delivered stronger imagery (both on objective ratings and open-ends) and resonated more with the target audience. Much like the print ads though, all three had relatively low persuasion and brand reinforcement scores, which pointed to the need to improve the "calls to action." The Latin American TV ads also scored well against norms, and one ad also stood above the rest. This ad needed only minor adjustments on the issue of clarity.

Overall, the advertising research gave the client specific suggestions for improvement. Without these improvements, and particularly the ones related to persuasion and branding, the client would have spent thousands of dollars on messaging that would almost certainly have fallen flat among its core targets. The suggested improvements made the advertising more persuasive, emphasized the brand names more strongly, and connected the consumer more to the brand.