

BRANDWEEK

Q+A: Testing Firm Keeps Eye On TV Ad Effectiveness



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NEW YORK -- The apparent failure of the Rozerem ad campaign to sell the product ([Brandweek, Jan. 8](#)) didn't surprise researcher Lee Weinblatt. "We could have told them that a long time ago. The beaver was a turnoff." Weinblatt isn't going with his gut. He's got scientific proof. His firm, PreTesting in Tenafly, N.J., has been tracking consumers' eye motions in relation to advertising and packaging for about 30 years for Coca-Cola,

Pepsi and others. This month, the firm is rolling out what he says is a "quantum leap," a system called e-Motion that measures both fixation (where the eye focuses) and saccadic motion (how fast the eye vibrates; the faster the movement, the more excited a consumer is). For the first time, PreTesting can gauge both those factors for TV ads. Weinblatt spoke to *Brandweek* news editor Todd Wasserman about eMotion and why we don't always remember what was being advertised in an ad we liked.

Brandweek: Can you explain to the layman how your technology works?

Lee Weinblatt: Certainly, the more interested someone is in something, the faster your eye vibrates to get more information.

BW: The whole eye vibrates?

LW: Yes, you can't just move your lens, you can't just move your retina, the whole eye vibrates, but it would be imperceptible if you were looking at someone. If you were looking into the eyes of a lady who thought you were great looking and knew she was trying to take in all of your information, you wouldn't be able to see it. The vibration is that minute. It's the same way if you look at an LCD screen and it looks like a stable picture, but it's really a gun moving all around and lighting up different phosphors. The more information, the more it has to move. Same thing with the eye. Your lens is vibrating to give more information to your retina.

BW: Is there a theory as to why this is so?

LW: It's very simple. You can only take in so much information. When you're deep in thought, your sensory organs slow down to a point just past self-preservation, but if you were to suddenly hear a voice, if it's the middle of the night and you hear a noise downstairs—your ears are so sensitive, [yet] you haven't done anything physically—but all of a sudden, your brain has given a wide berth to all audio information. Same thing with your eyes. Normally, you'd be overwhelmed if you took in all information, but when your brain says, "Give me some more information on that," your eye automatically responds by moving faster and faster to give more details to the retina.

BW: How do you use this to measure ads?

LW: We are a very unusual being. There's almost no correlation between remembering and liking. If you try to say that you can like or dislike by a simple measure, that's false. We always think if it's something I remembered, it must be a good commercial. I could have a picture of a car accident, but just because it's something people remembered doesn't mean it's a great commercial or that I'll remember it was for Volkswagen. So what we're trying to do is get all types of information so we can then take a look and say, "This is what worked and this is what didn't."

BW: What didn't work about the Rozerem ads?

LW: First of all, we found out the beaver was a turnoff. Whenever [test group respondents] would focus on it, their interest went down like a rock. And they remembered the beaver and Abe Lincoln, but they couldn't remember the name [of the product]. On top of that, we found the image—in terms of "Is this brand unique?"—was down in the garbage. They had no idea what made this unique.

Now compare that to Lunesta, which showed people sleeping. We found every time they saw the butterfly, [the respondents'] engagement went all the way up. There was another problem with [the Rozerem] commercial: No one knew what made it unique compared to Ambien. But at least that wasn't a turnoff. So at least I could have gotten back to Rozerem and said, "Guys, you may have decided that this would make a cute visual, but I got news for you. It's not turning on people at all. On top of that, they don't even know what you're talking about. Having a dream is not the same thing as having a good night's sleep."