



**RKM**  
Research & Communications

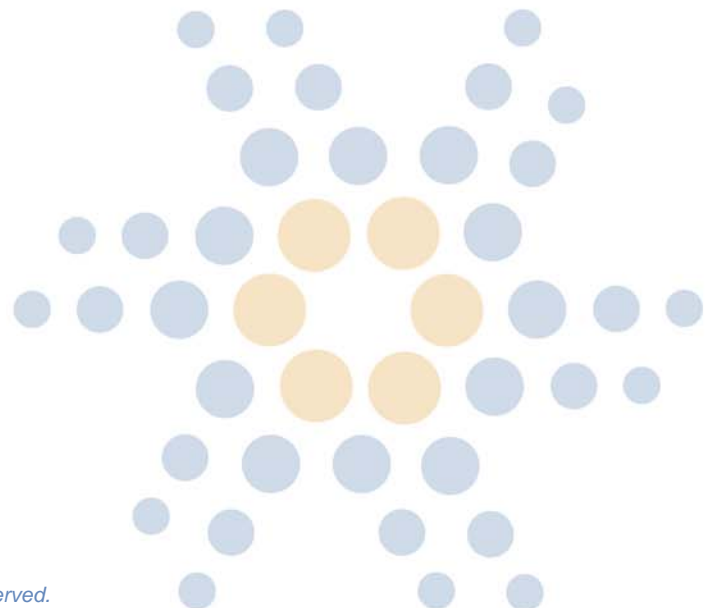
• • • *Dig deeper. Climb higher.*

# WHITE PAPER



## Impact™

How to choose the right campaign for maximum effect





## Executive summary

Advertisers depend on traditional methods of testing in order to make “go / no-go” decisions about their creative executions. These testing methods include copy-testing, recall testing and focus groups. Unfortunately, these methods have a serious draw-back; they do not consistently simulate how consumers typically receive and react to advertising and marketing messages.

At RKM, we have refined ad testing in order to address this concern. Impact™ uses web-enabled, proprietary techniques that allows for the evaluation of print, radio and television creative executions in a more natural setting. It also utilizes time-testing capabilities in order to measure implicit strength of attitudes, a powerful additional metric that gives companies the insight they need to make the right advertising choice.

## Impact: better advertising through innovative testing

Marketing teams are constantly called on to test their creative executions before they launch expensive marketing and advertising campaigns. They utilize numerous testing methods—including focus groups, ad recognition and recall measurement, copy-testing and other methods—in order to evaluate the likely impact of their executions before launching a campaign. This call for accountability is justified, because untested marketing executions will not effectively deliver messages, attract customers and drive additional sales. Therefore, ad testing is one of the most important steps marketers must go through in order to make a “go / no-go” decision, or choose between competing campaigns.

This paper outlines the most widespread methods used to test advertising and other marketing materials. They are often flawed and inadequate to meet the need of marketers to understand the relative appeal of different advertising and marketing executions or campaigns. To fill the need for improved ad testing, RKM Research and Communications has developed a multi-functional, proprietary methodology for testing any type of creative execution, including print, copy, billboard, radio and television advertising, as well as direct marketing materials, collateral and web content. The research is administered in a way that more accurately captures how consumers typically receive and react to advertising and marketing materials. Impact™ not only provides a more realistic and more accurate methodology to gauge consumer reaction to creative executions, it is also more timely and typically less expensive than other commonly used methods.



## Copy-testing

One popular research technique is copy-testing. Copy-testing evaluates the verbal and visual content of an advertisement. Viewers are asked to rank-order ad concepts in terms of purchase probability, quality, price, value and other salient characteristics. Traditional copy-testing methods have been criticized due to their inability to accurately predict purchase intention. In addition, copy-testing methods focus on execution rather than strategy. In other words, copy-testing does not focus on the metrics that will move the market to use a company's products or services over its competitors'. It is too focused on attitudes and not behaviors. Also, there are concerns that traditional copy-testing is not able to effectively measure an ad's emotional impact. "[Critics of copy-testing] have long suspected [that] copy tests are often wrong and favor colorless, unlikable ads" (Sanders & Neff, 2003). Copy-testing that does not measure the ability of an ad to nurture relationships between consumers and brands will not give effective guidance on creative executions. Nevertheless, copy-testing remains a widely used methodology.

## Ad recall

In addition to copy-testing, many research companies use services to measure viewers' recognition and recall of an advertisement. Many have called into question this approach, arguing that simple advertising recall is a somewhat limited predictor of brand strength or purchase intent. In fact, numerous studies conducted over the last thirty years have failed to show a relationship between ad recall and sales increases (Young, 2005; Lodish, et. al., 1995). There is also evidence that advertising recall is not correlated with positive brand impressions (Sanders & Neff, 2003). These studies do not suggest that advertising in general is not effective. Rather, these studies raise questions about the methodology of using ad recall as an indicator of advertising effectiveness.

## Focus groups

Marketers often use focus groups as well to test their creative executions. They get a group of 10 to 15 people into a room, show them various versions of a new ad, then have everyone discuss their reactions to the ad in a free-discussion format. Additionally, some researchers may even use moment-by-moment measures. These sorts of measures have entered into the popular consciousness because of political pollster Frank Luntz's "Instant Response" technique, which he uses to evaluate political messages. In Luntz's method, focus group participants twist a dial in response to a video clip or other message content. If they turn it one way, it registers a positive reaction, an electronic "thumbs up." The other way means "thumbs down" (Luntz, 1994). "Instant Response" is also



used to test ads in a focus group setting, even though it has several key limitations. Specifically, it is problematic to analyze the results because it is difficult to know if participants' reactions are immediate, delayed or cumulative. The analysis often leaves unanswered the cause of a dip or spike in response. In addition, there has been little evidence linking the results of moment-by-moment measurement to persuasion, recall or increased sales.

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Traditional focus groups also have some well-recognized limitations. While they can be useful for testing preliminary ideas or brainstorming concepts for quantitative testing, misapplying their results can be misleading. As Gerald Zaltman warns: “[Focus groups are not] based on well-founded insights from the biological and social sciences and the humanities” (Zaltman, 2003). Focus group results are also not quantifiable or representative, making them less valuable (Zaltman, 2003). Moreover, since people do not naturally think in groups, interviewing them in a group setting makes it next to impossible to measure how creative executions influence individual participants outside of a group setting. A focus group participant with a strong personality can drive the direction of conversation, suppressing other participants and creating a false impression of consensus when, in fact, it may not exist. This dynamic makes focus groups particularly poor corollaries of how people actually experience marketing and advertising.

***The power of Impact™ is rooted in more accurate measurement and more realistic testing environments. It provides a definitive method to test different advertisements, creative executions and collateral materials in a more natural setting.***

### The Impact™ Method

The primary benefit of the Impact™ methodology is that it more accurately simulates how consumers typically receive and react to advertising messages. Consumers do not watch ads in groups, they do not react to ads in groups and they do not necessarily modify their purchasing pattern after discussing ads among a group of people that they do not know. Instead, they react as individuals, forming attitudes in their own minds. In order to quantifiably measure respondent reactions to various creative executions while still allowing consumers to qualitatively interact with the marketing materials under investigation,



Impact™ better simulates the conditions through which consumers typically receive and respond to advertising and marketing. This improved simulation results in improved accuracy. Using a web-based survey administration, Impact™ quantifiably measures the attitudes of individuals. Respondents are exposed to print, copy, collateral, billboard, Internet, outdoor, direct mail, radio or television ads—or any other type of print or digital creative executions and then tasked with rating the cognitive and emotional appeal of each one. Each execution is systematically rated in terms of its cognitive and emotional appeal. Subjects are also tasked with ranking the materials under investigation to ensure precise differentiation. Impact™ is audio and video-enabled, allowing marketers to test radio and television advertising as well. By eliminating the group influence—and more accurately presenting creative executions in a more natural setting—marketers are able to test any type of creative execution in a real-world context.

#### More accurate measurement

The power of Impact™ is rooted in more accurate measurement and more realistic testing environments. Impact™ uses highly precise, and highly predictive, quantitative measurement techniques to evaluate the relative appeal of different creative materials. It provides a definitive method to test different advertisements, creative executions and collateral materials in a more natural setting. The research is uniquely suited to test any type of creative materials in any type of format, and can be scaled to a broad consumer audience or to a more narrowly focused target audience.

The Impact™ methodology is based on a superior system for testing creative materials. The method is preferable to traditional ad recall research, copy testing and focus groups because participants evaluate different materials in a one-on-one setting which more accurately reflects how they typically receive this type of information. A popular approach is to use our proprietary audio and visually enabled online measurement system that includes task-timing capabilities for testing explicit (controlled) and implicit (automatic) associations measured quantitatively in milliseconds.



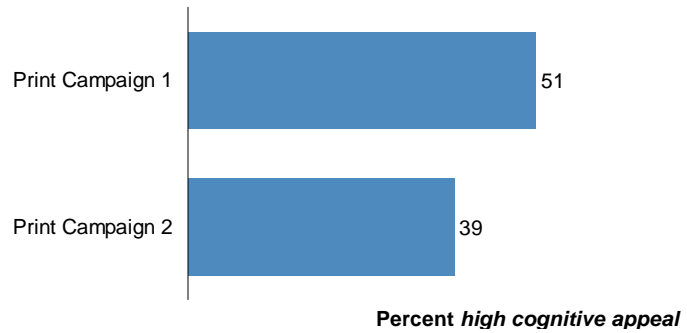
Impact™ delivers a more definitive understanding of the relative appeal of different creative executions, including print, billboard, radio, television (streaming video), online and collateral materials. Each execution is rated in several areas to test for cognitive and emotional appeal and then ranked against the other executions under investigation. Because the research results are rooted in a method that more naturally simulates how consumers actually receive and react to creative materials, it precisely identifies the executions that generate a more powerful connection with consumers, based on explicit benefits and implicit brand attributes.

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The following is a highly simplified overview of an Impact™ study, focusing on a company that considered two print campaigns. Respondents were exposed to print materials for both campaigns. Random assignment of subjects controlled for primacy and recency effects. After viewing the two campaigns, subjects rated the cognitive and emotional appeal of each one, and their responses were time-tested. The following graphics highlight the results.



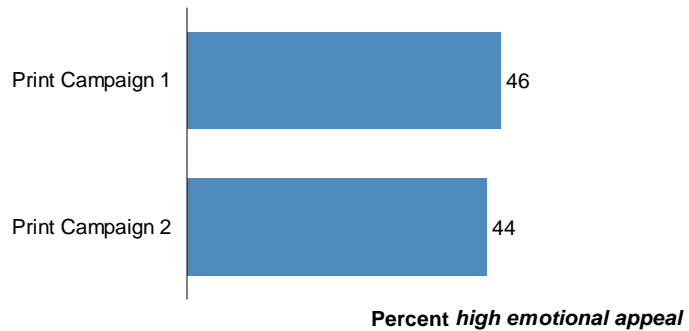
**Table 1: Cognitive appeal**



As shown, the first print campaign is more cognitively appealing, with 51 percent of respondents rating the first campaign highly cognitively appealing and 39 percent rating the second campaign highly cognitively appealing

In the same study, respondents were asked to rate the emotional appeal of each campaign. According to respondents, both campaigns were equally emotionally appealing, with 46 percent rating the first campaign highly emotionally appealing and 44 percent rating the second campaign highly emotionally appealing.

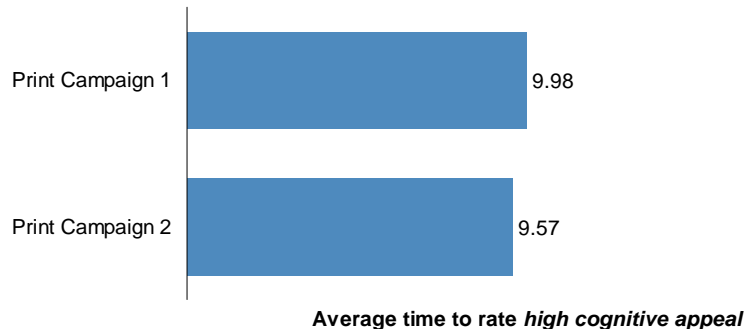
**Table 2: Emotional Appeal**



The timing data provided an additional level of explanation. It reveals no distinction between the two campaigns in terms of cognitive appeal. It took 9.98 seconds (on average) to rate the first campaign if a respondent rated it highly cognitively appealing and 9.57 seconds (on average) to rate the second campaign if a respondent rated it highly cognitively appealing.



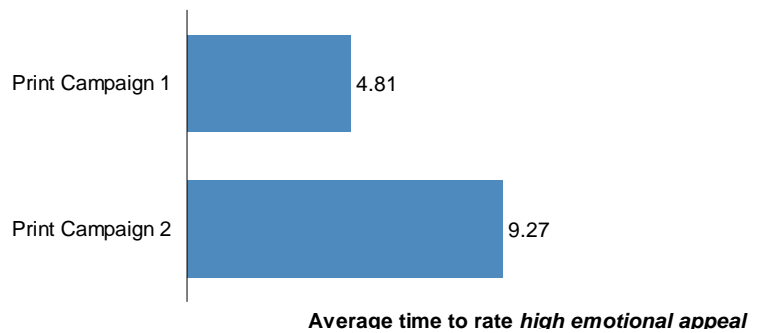
**Table 3: Cognitive appeal—timing data**



These results suggest that the strength of attitude toward the campaign—among respondents who consider it cognitively appealing—is similar. Therefore, the first campaign has the strongest cognitive appeal, because its cognitive appeal is broader.

But the timing data revealed an important distinction in terms of emotional appeal. It took 9.27 seconds (on average) to rate the second campaign as highly emotionally appealing, but only 4.81 seconds (on average) for the first campaign. These results suggest that the first campaign is actually more emotionally appealing, because respondents were able to rate the first campaign highly emotionally appealing more quickly.

**Table 4: Emotional appeal—timing data**



This extra explanatory power gave the client the insight they needed to make the right choice. They knew to use the first campaign in order to properly persuade prospective customers by using a message that consumers react to on a quick, positive and visceral level.

This is a highly simplified example of the insight that Impact™ is capable of delivering. It shows how better methodology, and better measurement, lead to more timely and less expensive results with improved accuracy and greater explanatory power. RKM prides itself on adopting the most sophisticated techniques out of academia and applying them to the market research industry in a practical way.



## References

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