



An A-Z of insights

Peter Field examines insights that have driven business success

THERE ARE CLEARLY many factors that contribute to success for a brand, from innovative products to aggressive budgets. But much attention has been paid in recent years to the value of 'insights' - leaps of understanding that unlock sales. Such is the clamour for 'insights', that the term has become somewhat devalued - more often than not, what are termed 'insights' are in fact just common sense.

That is not to deny the potential contribution of such 'lite insights' to marketing rigour, but the case studies of success residing in the WARC archive illustrate that real value comes from deeper and more profound leaps of understanding - from true insights. Their value lies in prompting consumers to change the basis on which they choose brands and so open up the category to exceptional behavioural shifts. They are more than just re-spun selling messages; and they may have effects that go beyond the brand protagonist.

But finding true insights and recognising them when they appear is not straightforward. If there were a magic formula then they would not be so elusive. And the case studies suggest that market research alone seldom delivers the insights that drove success: it was often the imaginative use of knowledge that created the leap. So this article reviews a wide range of insight-based case studies to explore the nature and source of their inspiration. Perhaps they will stimulate new insights for your brand.



AutoTrader's insight that one person's old banger was another's dream car led to the idea of expressing the brand as a match-making service



Honda: the 'Hate is good' campaign provided a powerful rallying cry to get petrol-heads to reconsider diesel, cleaned up by Honda



Consumer insights

Insights can be crudely divided into consumer, category and brand insights. The evidence of the WARC archive is that consumer insights form the most common source of brand success, so first up are a selection of consumer insights to whet your appetite.

Autoloader (1) was not the first brand by a long way to draw an analogy between cars and the opposite sex, but its insight that one person's old banger was another's dream car led to the idea of expressing the brand as a matchmaking service. This proved an attractive alternative to hard-sell services, and business boomed.

Animal lovers should be grateful to Bakers Complete (2) and Felix (3) for exploiting the selling power of the emotional bond between owners and their pets and thereby eventually saving humans from a diet of white-coated vets.

Cashmere (4) toilet tissue identified a belief by women that only women understood softness as a physical and emotional benefit, and expressed this powerfully in the language of fabrics. Both Diet Pepsi (5) and Pot Noodle (6) recognised that although people in their twenties were in many ways happy to put their student days behind them, they still secretly hankered after some of the freedoms of those days. Diet Pepsi exploited this insight with its 'moments of youthful liberation', while Pot Noodle positively revelled in it by assuming the role of illicit (sleazy) pleasure. The Dove (7) insight is rightly revered: that given a more attainable and realistic definition of beauty, women were ready to reject the tyranny of the size 10 model figure.

Eurostar (8) bravely chose to ridicule humorously the status associated with flying on business in order to persuade the self-important to open their minds to (faster) train travel. Herbal Essences (9) discovered that many consumers enjoyed shampooing their hair, opening up a new territory for the brand, distinct from the plethora of results-focused competitors. Honda (10) debuted its diesel range by sharing its hatred of ordinary diesel engines with like-minded car-owners. 'Hate is good' provided a powerful rallying cry to get petrol heads to reconsider diesel, cleaned up by Honda.

Kodak (11) sharply spotted that many potential digital camera purchasers were being put off by sales people's insistence that they would need to be PC-literate. The computer-less Kodak Printer Dock was relaunched as part of a brand mission to 'demystify digital' and sales surged. McDonald's (12) in New Zealand needed an insight to enable it to target the 'young and hungry' segment (a fine euphemism if ever there was one), without falling foul of healthy-eating mandates. A burger worth working for' hit the mark for its new filling burger, appropriately named 'The Boss'.

Moore's (13) realised that many men actively avoided making clothing fashion statements in their desire to fit in, but this raised many problems for them in choosing clothes. Repositioning the brand as a problem-solver to fix these problems played strongly to this mentality. The UK Police Recruitment (14) campaign was built on an insight into the challenges of policing. In common with many other

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successful recruitment campaigns, it sought to challenge potential recruits with an 'Are you good enough?' strategy. The leap came with the recognition that the motivating challenge lay not in the glamorous aspects of policing, but in the self-control and restraint needed to handle the unglamorous aspects. One commercial featured boxer Lennox Lewis confessing that he wouldn't be able to control himself in front of a wife-beater.

Tidy Cats (i 5) cat litter benefited from a data insight. The brand had already spotted that its variant for multiple-cat owners was selling rather well, when ownership data revealed that 50% of owners had two or more cats. Using the multiple cat formula as brand focus ('multiple strength for multiple cats'), Tidy Cats created a halo of effectiveness across the entire range that cleaned up in sales terms. And finally to **United Airlines'** (16) consumer insight: that business travel for most people is not glamorous - it is just part of doing a tough job. So instead of the familiar idealism of competitors, the brand presented its service as an aid to customers to get through their hard work.

Category insights

Sometimes an insight is found in opportunities to reframe how a category is represented or seen. These are less common, but can be equally rewarding.

Brita (17) water niters used the potent observation that the water you drink is the same as that filling your toilet cistern. Like many good insights, this is in retrospect self-evident, but all the more repellent for it. **Capital G** (18) bank exploited an insight, familiar elsewhere, that big banks in its Bermudan home had an intimidating aloofness and always talked in 'bank-speak'. The bank had the courage to exploit this insight in the language of its refreshingly unconventional campaign.

DHL (19) realised that the only way to gain share from respected dominant competitors UPS and FedEx was to suggest that the category lacked adequate competition. 'Giving America the competition it deserves' created a positive role for the brand. **Mello Yello** (20)

strengthened its appeal to older teens by deliberately contrasting with the frenetic youth imagery of other carbonated soft drinks. The brand's more laid-back and savvy approach struck a chord with older teens who prided themselves on knowing how to work the system with minimum effort.

Sony (21) trod a shrewd middle line between brands offering technology-led results (which trivialised the user) and those offering simplistic user-focused results (which trivialised the products). The resulting insight - Sony and the consumer need each other to achieve their potential - led to the successful 'You make it a Sony' campaign. And lastly **Vodafone** (22) identified a common frustration amongst prepay users in New Zealand when they ran out of credit. The solution >

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of offering them a \$2 IOU facility to tide them over until they could next top-up, proved popular - but more importantly served its true purpose of reinvigorating the customer relationship.

Brand insights

Many of the deeper and more intriguing insights came from consideration of the unique circumstances of the brand itself. These tend to lead to highly ownable ideas, but are even less common than category insights.

Gaz Metro (23) knew that safety fears about gas created a formidable

disadvantage versus rival energy suppliers in Quebec. The breakthrough came in understanding how to handle this fear. An ambience of safety was created through a friendly animated dancing blue flame that was more reassuring than any amount of rational messages. **Listerine** (24) drew inspiration from the shortcomings of a previous campaign that had left the brand associated with dental problems. Restoring growth required reaching out to new users who did not identify with problems. A world was visualised in which tooth problems did not exist, leaving dentists standing idle.

Magners (25) realised that within its heritage and provenance DNA lay the answer to the moribund state of the UK cider category. The **UK Dairy Council Milk** (26) campaign started from the insight that declining consumption was not simply a health issue. A deeper cause was the tawdry image of milk - to be consumed in private. Creating a heroic public image for the brand around the 'White Stuff' idea arrested the decline.

And finally to the fantastic insight behind the revival and rejuvenation of UK chocolate brand **Yorkie** (27). Since its launch, the brand had targeted men with cliched trucker associations. Consumer research suggested there was more leverage to be found in the political incorrectness of 'not for women', but the leap came in adding a more provocative twist with the line 'not for girls' and associated tongue-in-cheek male chauvinism. Sales leapt by 42% - and not exclusively to men.

I hope that all these examples have illustrated the value and nature of true insights: don't settle for common sense. ■



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