

How Philips used emotion to change perception of electric razors

Andreas Moellmann Sarah Carter and Les Binet DDB London, and **Gary Rancher** Philips Consumer Lifestyle, show the rapid effects of emotional advertising

TIMES ARE TOUGH. Short-term volume targets need to be met. Your brand urgently needs to get sales moving or risks support being pulled. What marketing levers do you look to pull? Price cuts? A big sales promotion?

We are all so aware now of the long-term brand building effects of advertising that we can perversely forget about its ability to stimulate powerful short-term sales benefits to businesses. And if advertising is to generate rapid volume increases, we tend to think this inevitably means hammering home rational messages.

This case study is a timely reminder that advertising can work fast - and the best way to achieve this may well be to focus more on generating an emotional response than talking about the product. Here, communication that tapped powerfully into the emotions of young men unlocked the potential of Philips' Moisturising Shaving System razors and delivered amazingly rapid sales effects.

Changing fortunes

In 1939, Philips entered the shaving market with a new electric shaving technology - the rotary system. It was a revolution: a convenient, innovative and trendy way for men to look sharp. It led Philips to become a world leader in electric shavers, selling 500 million units in the coming 50 years.

But during the late 1980s, the blade razor category grew stronger and stronger, fuelled by fierce competition. The category sentiment was to capture and connect to what men universally want; Gillette's 'The Best a Man Can Get', for example, was a celebration of masculinity, friendship and success, showing men doing sports, at work and spending time with women, family and children. Such testosterone-charged emotional communication, supported by big marketing budgets and a constant stream of product innovation, established emotional bonds, recognised by men across the world.

It meant bad business for Philips. A generational change took place: younger men now wanted to shave with blade razors, not electric. Electric shaving was something for middle-aged men. The elec-



tric shaver market stagnated and went into a long, slow decline.

To rescue its electric shaving business, Philips had to respond. As younger men moved away, Philips had to develop an alternative - an innovation that could compete with blade razors.

In 1998, Philips launched an entirely new product that combined an electric shaver with a built-in moisturiser, by Nivea for Men (later called Moisturising Shaving System, or MSS). This shaver shaved dry with a wet feel, moisturising the skin while shaving. It addressed blade razors' weakest points: skin irritation and inconvenience. The launch was a success at first: younger blade users appreciated an alternative way of shaving. Yet it didn't last; after the initial success, the market share slowly deteriorated.

By 2007, things had reached crisis point. With a mere 5% market share, sales declining by 17% a year and the economy plunging into recession, it was only a matter of time before MSS ceased to be viable. So we decided on one more roll of the dice: relaunch MSS and put a stop to the decline. It was a win-or-die situation: the relaunch would decide the future of MSS. Given the situation of MSS (and the business forecast) there was no time to slowly alter perceptions; we needed a rapid turnaround in the fortunes of MSS. We had to demonstrate quickly that MSS could still appeal to our target group and reinstall

The FemBot concept appealed emotionally to young men, reversing a decline in sales of Philips' Moisturising Shaving System

belief in the MSS proposition. Otherwise, investment in the brand would be pulled.

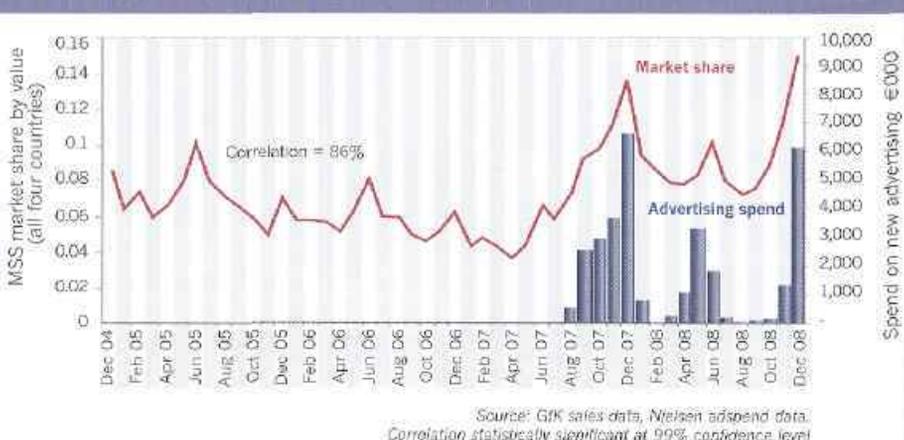
To stop the decline of MSS and increase its market share, we decided to target young blade users. This made sense for two reasons. First, they are such a large group. Converting less than 1% of blade users would double the market share of MSS. Second, focusing on blade users would avoid cannibalisation of Philips' other electric shavers. But, to achieve our business objectives, we needed to bring about a permanent change in the way these young men shaved, and we needed to do it in a very short space of time.

We set ourselves tough objectives. By the end of 2008, we needed to double the market share of MSS from 5% to 10% by establishing MSS as a credible alternative to wet shaving through converting blade users. In just 18 months, MSS had to become a credible alternative to blade razors. How could we have such an impact against the blade razor category, given their media spend was about 10 times our budget?

Our first instinct was to tackle the problem through product innovation. But, after initial discussions, we realised that launching new products would not

FIGURE 1

Market share of MSS doubled in five months



be enough. The existing product was already highly appreciated by those who had tried it; the problem appeared to be more on an emotional, rather than product level.

However good the products were, MSS was trapped by negative perceptions of the category: electric shaving was simply seen as outdated and not cool at all. Young blade users thought electric shavers - and thus MSS - were 'for my dad'. These emotional barriers were holding back any product benefits. We had to crack the emotional aspect first, before we could move to talking about the product. The blade razor category had done a great job in capturing the emotional high ground with its all-encompassing vision of masculinity and linking this to its products. MSS, in contrast, was lacking any emotional bond with men. We needed an alternative way to create an emotional bond with our target group.

We had to identify a relevant alternative to blade razors' view of what makes a man. Qualitative research with young blade users helped us further. The image of masculinity is not set in stone. Defining masculinity as the go-getting, success-focused alpha male already had quite a history, being introduced back in the 1980s. In the years that followed, male culture had evolved. True, many men were still driven by alpha-cultural values. But an alternative view of masculinity

was gaining ground. Men were more concerned about their appearance, their skin, their well-being. They liked to indulge and treat themselves. Their goals were more holistic than just getting there. A new man had evolved - metrosexual (we know, cliched), a sensual character like David Beckham.

We saw an opportunity to use blade razors' position to our advantage. An opposing emotional positioning could establish MSS as an appealing alternative. It was also rooted in the product concept itself: MSS was a combination of Philips, a technological innovations firm, and Nivea for Men, a warm, reliable, motherly brand - someone who takes care of you. Until now, we hadn't stressed this combination.

Macho versus sensuality

Dialling up Nivea for Men's role would also build the skincare credentials of MSS. We wanted to stress this aspect. When blade razors are all about macho, MSS is about sensuality, indulgence and care, providing an entirely new shaving experience for the sophisticated male. It was our emotional 'door opener' that allowed our distinctive product qualities to be considered.

What do you get when you merge Philips and Nivea for Men? Nivea for Men skincare plus Philips technology gave us the concept of 'skin technology'. It sound-

ed futuristic and intriguing; a sci-fi gadget, time-warped into the present. How would a young man imagine (or dream of) such a futuristic tool for shaving? Our answer was a sexy female robot: the first shaving 'FemBot'. This made an intriguing story for a target group who love sci-fi, technology and hints of sexiness. It brought the tech-looking product design of MSS to life and gave it the flair of a gadget. Yet our FemBot was a sensible and sensual robot, providing pleasure and care. This combination of high tech and care made MSS unique in the market.

In the TV commercial, we see a futuristic home setting in which a young man goes into his bathroom in the morning. Here, a female robot approaches and shaves him while he is taking a shower. The atmosphere is tranquil, intimate, out of this world. The campaign line summarised all these thoughts: 'Feel different'.

We now had the right story - the question was how to tell it. Young men are quite selective when it comes to mass media; they choose who and what to listen to. Their critical approach to mass communication could lead them to dismiss MSS, given their pre-conceptions of the category. Also, our budget didn't allow us to fight blade razors head-on: we estimated our launch budget to be about 6% of total category spend. We needed a media strategy that was more refined and targeted.

Rather than push our message into the market, we decided to pull. Pull is - when targeted right - less expensive than push. Pull also entails a more intriguing approach: placing messages where the target group will pick them up. And this approach would allow us to emotionally engage our target group more strongly. After all, we wanted to make them feel how MSS would change their shaving experience.

The campaign became a holistic experience: an email campaign and viral messages, generated by 'friends', intrigued people to visit the MSS website. There, a personalised series of animated episodes showed a young man, whose life (and popularity) is changed through the power

Les Binet is European director at DDB Matrix.
les.binet@ddbblondon.com

Sarah Carter is strategy director at DDB London.
sarah.carter@ddbblondon.com

Andreas Moellmann is strategy director for Philips at DDB London.
andreas.moellmann@ddbblondon.com

Gary Raucher is head of integrated marketing communications at Philips Consumer Lifestyle.
gary.raucher@philips.com

of the FemBot (aka MSS). Teasers of the TVC were launched on video sites in advance. TV, cinema, print and posters showed the FemBot in action. The campaign was created to provide warm, seductive impressions; the product, personified by the FemBot, was mentioned implicitly. All this added 'cool' to MSS. The campaign ran in 16 countries globally - focusing on France, Germany, Netherlands and the UK.

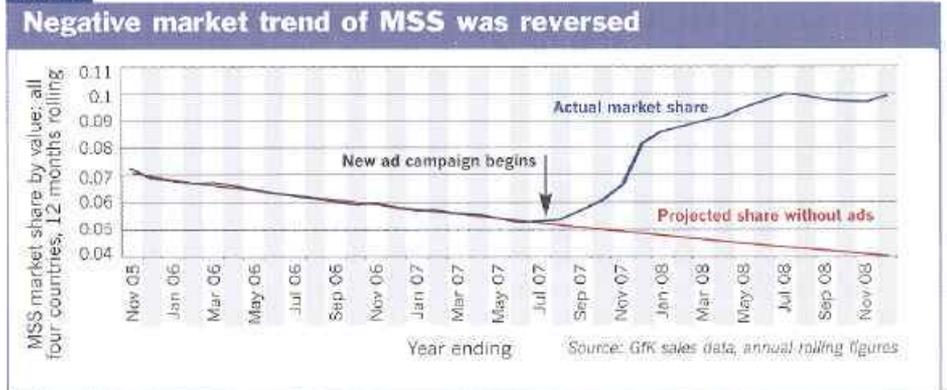
Immediate success

The campaign was an instant success. As soon as the campaign broke, market share began to climb in each of the advertised countries (Figure 1). Within a mere five months, market share had more than doubled in each of the four key markets. We had met our market share target one year ahead of schedule. This performance was repeated in 2008. By December that year, market share hit 15% - triple the pre-campaign level.

The strategy was working well and also delivered on other KPIs: tracking showed that the futuristic 'FemBot' of MSS succeeded in combining Philips' technology credentials with Nivea for Men's skincare expertise. As a result, people started seeing MSS as a credible alternative to other ways of shaving (43% agreed) and purchase intent of MSS more than doubled. Because of this, we succeeded in switching young men from blades to MSS. In fact, by the end of the campaign, 51% of CoolSkin buyers were ex-blade users. We also succeeded in turning our new recruits into advocates for the brand - 50% were 'extremely likely'⁵ to recommend a Philips shaver like MSS. We had found a way to establish an emotional bond with blade users.

The 'Feel Different' campaign did build immediate business results for MSS. More importantly, though, it confirmed that MSS - with the right mix of product and marketing - still has a role to play in the razor market and thus restored belief (and investment) into the proposition. MSS' market share trend was reversed over the campaign period (Figure 2). Pre-campaign, the market share of MSS was deteriorating by about 17% annually; post-campaign, MSS' market share grew by about 21% annually.

FIGURE 2



The 'Feel Different' campaign was driving this turnaround. All attitudinal and behavioural metrics changed exactly as intended. We can establish a strong correlation between market share and advertising, and we can rule out other factors, such as price and distribution, as they didn't change significantly.

Results

The 'Feel Different' campaign worked just as intended:

- We identified an alternative emotional territory that could challenge the blade razor category high ground.
- By connecting skincare with technology, we exploited blades' weakness - skin, irritation - and won over blade users who expected outstanding shaving results.
- We turned these new converts into advocates for MSS, amplifying the effects of our campaign even further.
- As a result, we hit all our marketing objectives a year ahead of schedule, doubling market share in just five months.
- The following year, we did even better, exceeding all our original targets. By the end of 2008, we had tripled market share.
- We did all this with a tiny budget, compared to the category.

What can we learn from this case?

In these recessionary times, when budgets are hard fought-for and marketing investment needs to deliver fast sales effects, advertising may not be seen as the first contender. This case study illustrates (in case we had forgotten) how advertising can generate immediate

and significant sales effects that were maintained over the longer term as well.

Too often, we can fall into a kind of false dichotomy of thinking - between advertising working either over the short-term, or the long-term - as if these were mutually exclusive. Here we remind ourselves that short and long are one and the same. Long-term sales effects are the combined result of many short-term effects.

Lastly, we show here how advertising that works via strengthening an emotional bond with its audience can deliver very fast results. This is useful learning. It clearly isn't the case that rapid sales response necessitates product-based, hard hitting 'new news', whereas emotionally based communication can only deliver fuzzier brand benefits over the longer term.

Getting the emotional response right, unlocked, in this case, the product's potential. This was reflected in sales uplifts in a dazzlingly short time, and on a fraction of the dominant competitor's budget. And all this in a sector (razors) and with a target (young men) where a more rational approach could have been expected to be a necessity.

We have argued more generally for the power of emotionally driven communication elsewhere (Binet & Field, 2007). This case provides a dramatic and contemporary example.

Sources: TGI Europe, Nielsen, GfK, IPSOS, Philips Customer satisfaction survey