

# Cassies 2007 Cases

**Brand/Case: Activia, three years of tasty success!**

**Winner: Packaged Goods Food—Bronze  
Sustained Success—Bronze**

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**Crossover Notes:** All winning cases contain lessons that cross over from one case to another. David Rutherford has been identifying these as Crossover Notes since Cassies 1997. The full set for Cassies 2007 can be downloaded from the Case Library section at [www.cassies.ca](http://www.cassies.ca)

- Crossover Note 1.** What a Brand Stands For.
- Crossover Note 2.** Brand Truths.
- Crossover Note 14.** Refreshing a continuing campaign.

To see creative, go to the Case Library Index and click on the additional links beside the case.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Business Results Period (Continuous Months):** June 2004 – June 2007  
**Start of Advertising/Communication Effort:** June 14, 2004  
**Base Period:** Historical comparisons

This is the story of Activia by Danone, a delicious yogurt with a unique probiotic culture called B.L.<sup>TM</sup>, an ingredient that is proven to promote regularity and the healthy functioning of the digestive system.

Launched in Quebec in June 2004, Activia has become the leading yogurt brand in Canada today, with a market share of 14.9 points<sup>1</sup> and an overall brand awareness of 58.2%.

In just three years, the brand has overtaken prestigious brands such as Source by Yoplait and Silhouette by Danone, knocking them from their leadership positions, while limiting the damage it might have suffered from the introduction of at least 10 new yogurts.

## SITUATION ANALYSIS

### **An attractive business opportunity and a strong USP**

Two-thirds of all Canadians have concerns about their digestive regularity<sup>2</sup>. Activia is the only probiotic yogurt in Canada with scientifically proven benefits. The culture's full beneficial effect can be felt when it is consumed over a period of approximately 14 days.

### **First challenge: Raise awareness of Activia's USP while respecting legal limitations**

The *Food and Drugs Act* and *Regulations* restricts claims regarding the biological role of nutritional elements—to functions generally recognized as associated with the nutritional element. In no case must they refer directly or indirectly to the treatment, mitigation or prevention of any disease, disorder or abnormal physical state, or symptoms of same, nor may they refer directly or indirectly to correcting, restoring or modifying organic functions. In other words, Health Canada would not allow us to communicate the functional benefits of Activia to consumers.

### **Second challenge: Limited consumer knowledge**

In 2003, a qualitative *CROP*<sup>3</sup> survey told us that the words 'probiotic' and 'functional foods' were not a part of our target vocabulary. Four years later, these words are now a part of consumers' vocabulary, although understanding of their benefits remains limited.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: ACNielsen, Key Fact, National (\$ Share), June 2007

<sup>2</sup> Source: Bases study, September 2003

<sup>3</sup> *CROP*, qualitative research, August 2003

## INSIGHT & STRATEGY

In order to be successful, Activia had to attract women aged 30 and over, as they are the principal sufferers of digestive problems.

### Key Consumer Insight

A qualitative survey revealed that when you feel good on the inside, it shows on the outside. Consumers believe and understand that the digestive system is important to our physical and mental well-being. Consumers told us that the principal benefit of a digestive system that functions properly is *vitality*. **Crossover Notes 1 and 2.**

*Vitality* therefore became the basis of all our communications. This is how we would build an emotional link between the brand and the consumer.

### The Building Blocks Strategy

To overcome the two challenges mentioned above, we decided on a “building blocks” strategy whereby each medium contained a specific message designed to attain a precise objective. Depending on the medium, the explanation of Activia’s benefit would be more or less explicit. This would communicate the maximum amount of information, while respecting the legislation. Here is an overview:

Medium	Objective	Message
Block 1: Television	Awareness	Activia with B.L. <sup>TM</sup> = Vitality
Block 2: Internet Magazine and PR	Education	Activia with B.L. <sup>TM</sup> = Vitality and Good for Digestion
Block 3: In-Store display Samples, Coupons	Purchase consideration	Activia with B.L. <sup>TM</sup> = Vitality, Good for Digestion and Tastes Good

All image campaigns for Activia have been designed around this strategic base since the product’s launch.

### Refining the strategy

After 18 months, we came to the conclusion that our target loves Activia, but does not consume it in the optimal manner for enjoying all of its benefits. **Crossover Note 14.**

As mentioned above, the culture’s full beneficial effect can be felt when it is consumed over a period of approximately 14 days. How could we get people into the habit of eating Activia on a daily basis and for at least 14 days?

The answer was the Activia 14-Day Challenge. We invited consumers to eat Activia every day for 14 days and, if they were not satisfied, Danone would refund their money.

## EXECUTION

Since the June 2004 launch, we have run three image campaigns and two 14-Day c Challenge campaigns. In order not to burden the reader, we have selected just a few executions to illustrate our point.

### Reinforce awareness using an integrated and significant “key visual”

All our communications from the beginning have tapped into “Activia green,” a unique brand colour in the yogurt market.

We also developed a key visual to illustrate the benefits of the product—a yellow arrow pointing downward on a woman’s abdomen. This has been used throughout all visuals.



### Block # 1: Suggest, evoke, but never reveal

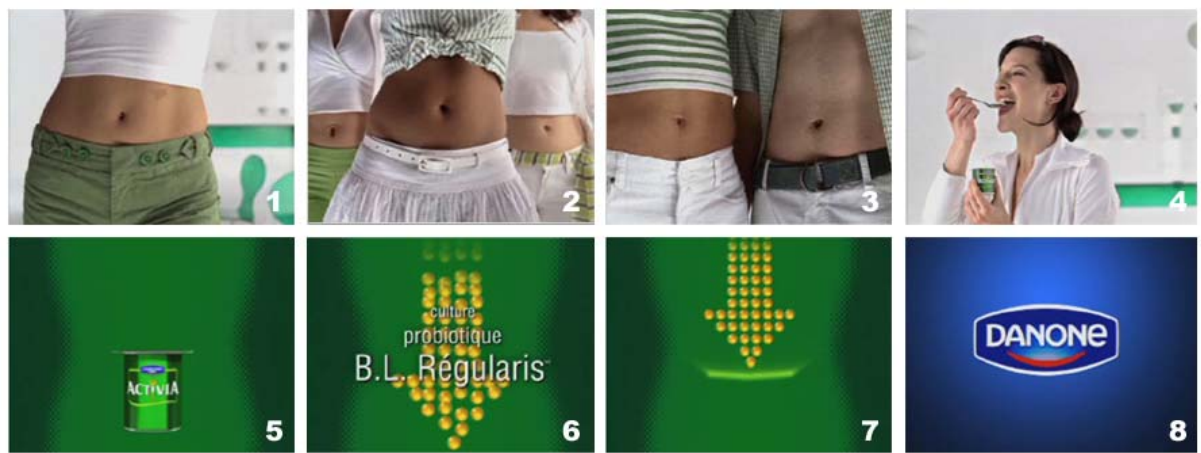
TV is the medium most heavily regulated by law. We found an entertaining metaphor for the benefits in belly dancing.

We knew that this metaphor could create a strong emotional connection with consumers by showing *vitality* throughout the message. All television visuals and promotional messages have been based on this creative platform since the product’s launch. The following are some examples:

First, Activia “image” campaign



Last, Activia “image” campaign



First, Activia challenge campaign



## Block # 2: Familiarizing our target with the benefits of Activia via the Internet, Magazines and PR

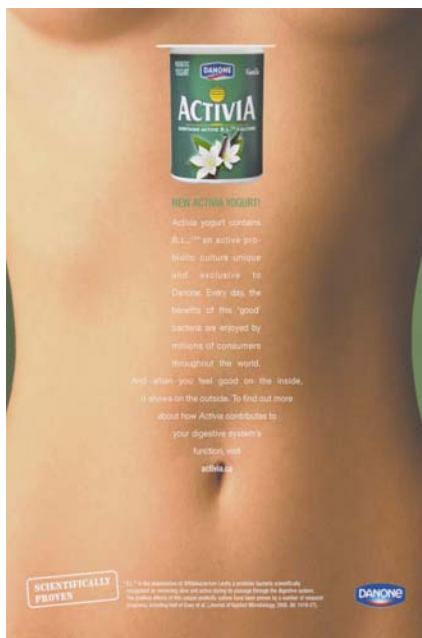
Recognizing that consumers would have questions about the product, we created the Activia.ca Website and magazine ads, as they enable us to provide much more information on Activia's beneficial effects during both the image and promotional campaign periods.

Through an association with a dietician known for her impartiality and professionalism, Activia generated interest from journalists. The Activia 'Grand Tour' involved dietician Marie Breton and a PR team sharing the Activia experience at radio interviews, in magazines and newspapers in all major cities. In this way, Ms Breton was able to educate the public and promote B.L.'s unique benefits.

Homepage during "image" campaign



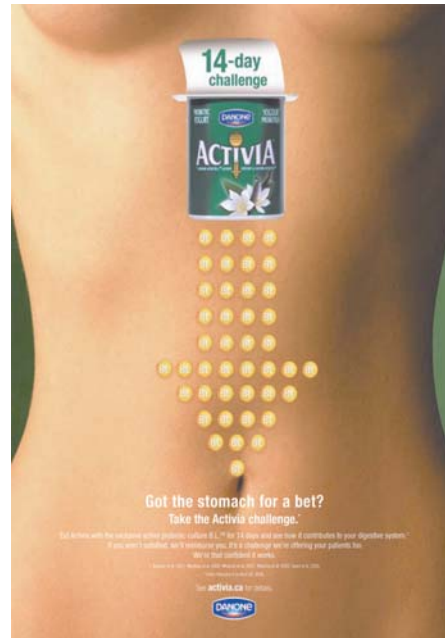
"Image" magazine ad



Homepage during the challenge



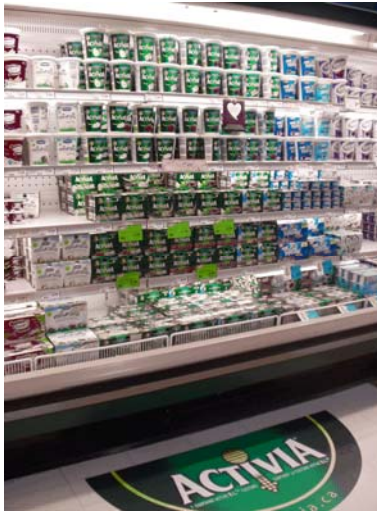
Challenge magazine ad



### Block # 3: One mouthful and you're hooked

In-store display and sampling are a simple way of getting the public to experience Activia while at the same time sharing the health facts related to the product: banners, kiosks, Activia specialists, leaflets and more were all used to create a total and unique environment dedicated to emphasizing the singular benefits of Activia.

In-store display used during an “image” campaign



In-store display used during a challenge campaign



Finally, all disciplines involved worked together to make sure the whole communication was fully integrated.

## BUSINESS RESULTS

In just a few months, Activia moved ahead of the leading competitive brand in “Active Health” yogurts, Astro Biobest, despite the fact that Astro Biobest arrived on the market almost two full years before Activia, that it has also launched two sub-brands since 2005, and that each of those three products sell at 33% less than Activia.



Source: ACNielsen Key Fact, National, 2004 - 2007

In June 2007, Activia set a new record, achieving a market share of 14.9%, which places it above Silhouette by Danone (2.8 points) and Source by Yoplait (3.7 points).

It's important to note that both the image campaigns and the 14-Day Challenges have contributed to Activia's success. Each time the image campaign has been broadcast, the brand has increased its market share by 0.4 to 1.9 points.

TV spot	Broadcast	Market Share \$ increase by period
Belly Dance 1	Wave 1: June to October 2004	From June to September: + 1.9 points
	Wave 2: Feb to March 2005	From January to March: + 1.6 points
Belly Dance 2	Wave 1: August to Sept 2005	From July to September: + 0.4 points
	Wave 2: May to July 2006	From April to June: + 0.6 points
Belly Dance 3	May to June 2007	From April to June: + 0.8 points

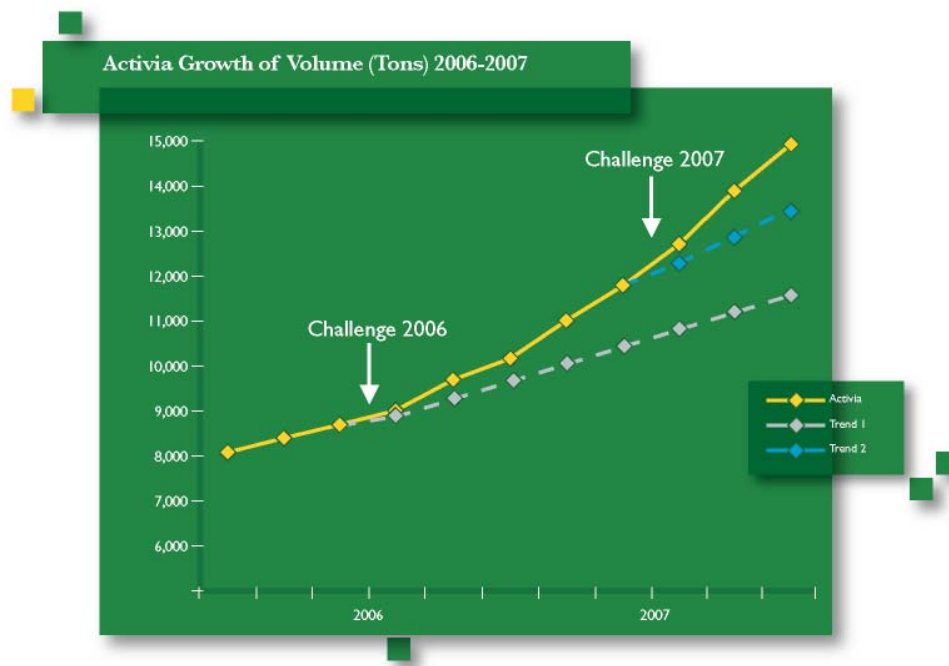
Source: ACNielsen Market Share from June 2004 to June 2007

The Activia 14-Day Challenges are the primary factors behind Activia's incredible sales growth in dollars since 2006. With each new challenge, the brand grows at a rate of at least 2.2 points.



Source: ACNielsen Key Fact, National, 2006-2007

In the table below, Activia sales volumes are simulated assuming no challenge campaign took place. It clearly demonstrates how Activia would have been less successful.



Source: ACNielsen, National grocery banners, Rolling 13p, period ending April 14, 2007

## CAUSE AND EFFECT BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND RESULTS

**A constantly increasing awareness rate:** According to the Danone Dairy Product Brand Tracking conducted by CROP every two years in March, Activia had a total awareness rate of 58.2% in 2006, 12.6 points more than Source and 38.2 points more than Astro Biobest.

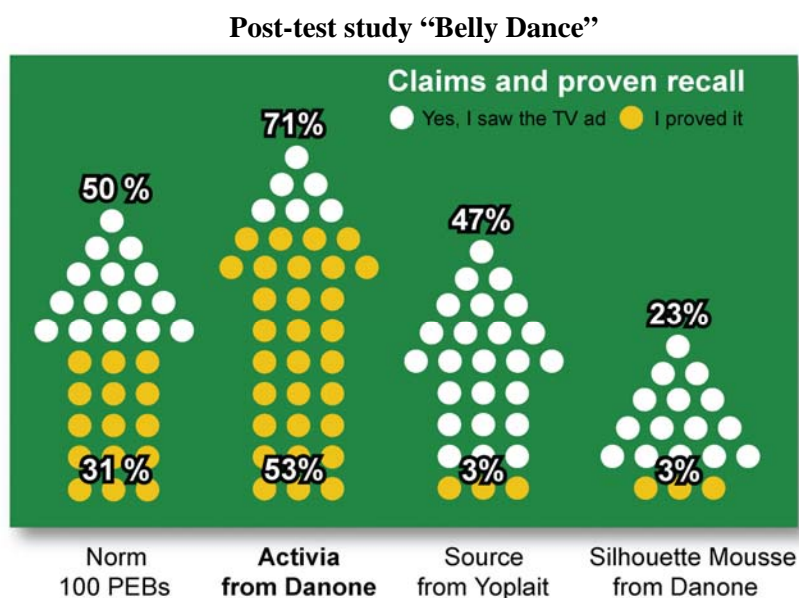
Change in total awareness rate by brand, Canadian market

	2002	2004	2006
<b>Activia</b>	-	Launch June 2004	58.2%
Astro Biobest	N/A	16%	20%
Source	N/A	32.1%	45.6%
Silhouette	59.3%	57.5%	64.5%

Source: CROP, Danone Dairy Product Brand Tracking, March 2002, 2004, and 2006

**Claims and Proven Recall:** Since Activia's launch, two advertising post-test studies have been conducted. The first, in November 2004, assessed the first image campaign: "Belly Dance," while the second, in March 2006, assessed the first challenge message.

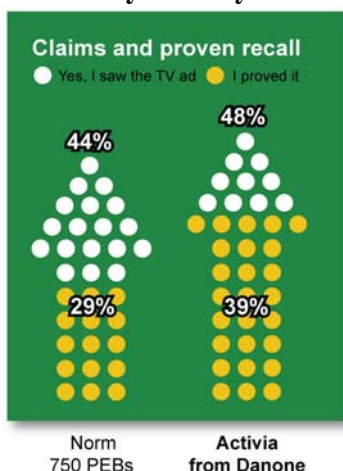
The graph below demonstrates that "Belly Dance" outclassed the Ipsos norm and all other spots tested. More than 71% of respondents said that they had seen the Activia spot, and 53% of those were able to describe it.



Source: Ad Graph by IPSOS-ASI, November 2004

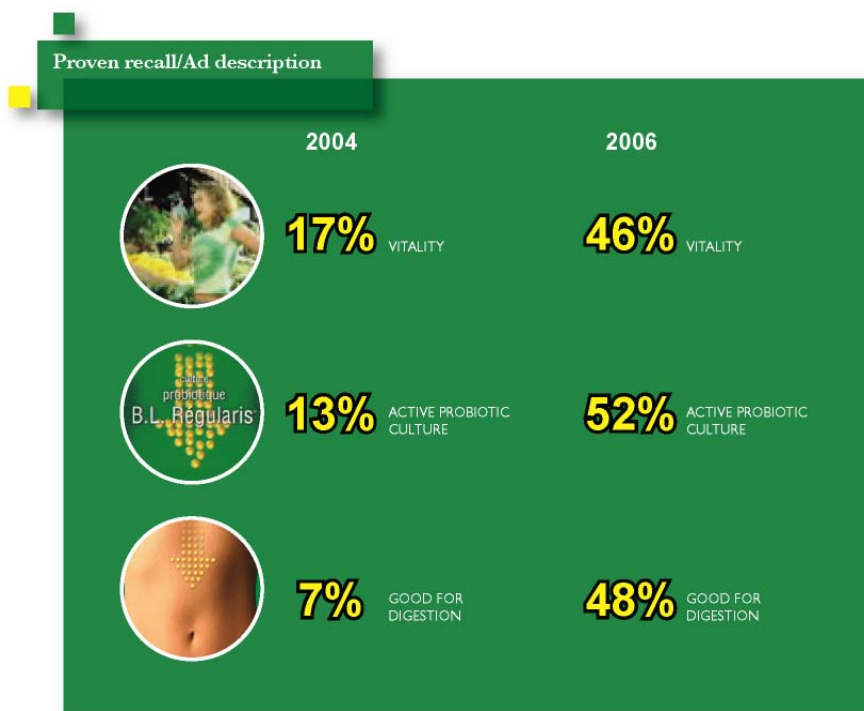
The results for the first 14-Day challenge message, while not as strong as for the "Belly Dance" visual, were nevertheless equal to the Ipsos norm in terms of claims, and significantly higher than the norm in terms of proven recall.

### Post-test study “14 Days Challenge”



Source: Ad Graph by IPSOS-ASI, April 2006

**Impact of key visuals:** In 2004, when we asked consumers to describe the Activia message, 17% of respondents mentioned vitality, 13% referred to the B.L. probiotic culture, and 7% told us that Activia is good for digestion. Two years later, the same three items have made dazzling progress, with a minimum increase of at least 29% for each one.



Source: Ad Graph by IPSOS-ASI, November 2004 and April 2006

**The Website:** The Website is a tool that has clearly contributed to the understanding of Activia’s benefits. The site received 28,000 visits per month on average during “image” campaigns, and more than 62,000 unique visits per month during challenge periods.

## INTRODUCTION TO CROSSOVER NOTES — CASSIES 2007

[For Activia]

Each year I update these Crossover Notes. If you've read this cover note before, you can skip it. If not, it's worth a quick read.

My career started with a seven year sentence in brand management at Procter & Gamble. Then I clambered up the ladder at O&M, becoming President and later Vice Chairman, all of this in Toronto. Then I set up as a consultant.

P&G and O&M were passionate about "lessons learned" from advertising effort, and so was I. All the Cassies cases have great lessons in them, though at the pace we work today these lessons are not necessarily easy to find.

I was thinking about this as I was editing Cassies 1997, and I had the idea for Crossover Notes. They started as bite-sized footnotes pointing out lessons that "cross over" from one case to another. Then, as time had gone by, they've evolved to what we have today.

You can use Crossover Notes in two ways. Although they weren't designed as a crash course in advertising, they are worth reading as a whole. You can also dip into them selectively. The headings on the next page will help you choose.

I've tried to be even-handed on controversial issues, but here and there you will sense my point of view. For this I thank the Cassies for not editing their Editor.

We now have close to 200 published cases. And I hope I've helped pass some of the learning on.

*David Rutherford*

Toronto: January 2008.

For more on brand-building see *Excellence in Brand Communication*—by leading Canadians from across the marketing and advertising spectrum. See also *Vulcans. Earthlings and Marketing ROI*, commissioned by the ICA, and published by Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

See [www.ica.adbeast.com](http://www.ica.adbeast.com).

## INDEX OF CROSSOVER NOTES FOR CASSIES 2007

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The Notes for this case are marked ✓ and come next.

Note: Cassies uses “advertising” in its broad sense. It not only stands for advertising through the main media of broadcast, print, out of home etc. Where appropriate, it also stands for Direct Marketing, PR, Interactive Marketing, Buzz Marketing, Event Marketing, Product Placement etc.

## ACITVIA CROSSOVER NOTES FOR CASSIES 2007

1. **What a Brand Stands For.** People in real life hardly give the deeper meaning of brands a second thought. They know that some appeal more than others. They may have a sense that brands jostle for their attention. But that's about it. They certainly don't agonize over the *essence* of this, or the *brand truth* of that.

That said, branding goes deeper than we in marketing may realize. Before marketing was even thought of, branding was part of life. Everything from national flags, to coinage, to the uniforms of soldiers, boy scouts and Supreme Court judges, to the plumage on peacocks (human and otherwise), is a form of branding. Business had an early example in the 1800s when Harley Procter of P&G heard a pastor quote a biblical text about ivory palaces. Goodbye Procter & Gamble White Soap. Hello Ivory. More recently, Tom Peters published *A Brand Called You*. And Tony Blair tried to re-brand the UK as "Cool Britannia."

A brand, in the fullest sense, is hard to define. Dictionary definitions tend to focus on the trademark aspect, and yes, branding does involve some sort of identifying mark. But this misses the point. What makes a brand valuable?

*The answer is The Advantage of Belief.*<sup>1</sup> Charles Revson of Revlon famously said, "In the factory we make cosmetics. In the store we sell hope." In other words, a brand is not a product; it's what people *believe* about a product. These beliefs can be immensely powerful. The most astonishing is the placebo effect. In clinical trials, many patients respond to the "sugar pill," even when they have serious diseases. We see the same thing with blind and identified product tests. With a strong brand, the preference jumps. (See *What's in a Name* by John Philip Jones.) And when the Advantage of Belief takes hold, it leads to a long list of benefits:

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| a) Customer loyalty               | e) Facilitating brand extensions              |
| b) Higher price                   | f) Withstanding competitive attack            |
| c) Higher cash flows              | g) Motivating staff and attracting new talent |
| d) Higher long-term profitability | h) Potentially augmenting the stock price     |

This doesn't, of course, answer the question, "how do you build these beliefs?" There are widely varying notions, but most people agree on the basic principles: (1) stake out what the brand can and should stand for (2) stick with this over time (3) evolve to account for lessons learned and market changes.<sup>2</sup>

This can't be done by empty promises. We have to assess what consumers want against what the product delivers—and tell the story better than competitors do. We have a melting pot of perceptions and reality to work with. All the "brand" ideas are there to help—Brand Image, Equity, Personality, Character, Essence, Relationship, Footprint, Truth, Soul, Identity, and so on—along with old faithfuls like Positioning, Focus of Sale, USP, Features, Attributes, Benefits and Values. Whatever the terminology, though, the brand has to stand for something relevant and different in the consumer's mind. See also *Crossover Note 26*.

<sup>1</sup> This is a phrase of mine, though the idea that a brand is "more" has been described by many authors.

<sup>2</sup> How do you do this? See *Excellence in Brand Communication*: [www.ica.adbeast.com](http://www.ica.adbeast.com)

- 2. Brand Truths.** Successful advertising (in fact all successful communication) resonates with its audience. As a marketer, you may want people to believe that you have the best-tasting coffee, but simply saying, “I have the best-tasting coffee” will not usually get the resonance you need. One school of thought believes in saying the obvious as loudly and even as crassly as you can. We could call it the Bad Boy syndrome. Another has led to the idea of Brand Truths. These operate on a deeper level than simple claims. One of the top UK agencies described the process as “we interrogate the product until it confesses its strength.”

I was once the Brand Manager on Tide, and when we were asked, “What does Tide stand for” we said, “Superior cleaning. Not whitening. Not Brightening. Not Fabric Care. Superior *cleaning*.”<sup>3</sup>

Superior cleaning was the religion on Tide, and Tide delivered, despite the cliché that all detergents are alike. But this was only a glimmer of the Brand Truth. If you “interrogated” Tide the most startling truth was the *intense belief* of Tide users. This came to life in the immensely successful “Two for One Swap” campaign. Hidden cameras watched as women who had just bought Tide were offered two boxes of another good detergent in exchange. They adamantly refused, delivering off-the-cuff endorsements that no copywriter could ever have written. The campaign ran for years, and only came to an end because of its success—women knew it so well that the “candid camera” interview became impossible. Many Brand Truths are also insights, and for a list see [11. The Eureka Insight](#) and [12. Changing the Goalposts](#).

- 14. Refreshing a continuing campaign.** When I was at P&G and O&M, all the big advertisers and their agencies thought in terms of campaigns. If you presented new advertising, and got the comment “that’s just a one-off,” it was the kiss of death.

In those days, a campaign was usually defined by television. There would be one commercial, or a pool, refreshed over time. Nowadays, a campaign is more complicated. But it’s fair to say that we (clients and agencies) still believe that campaigns are the right/best way to build a brand.<sup>4</sup>

Recently, the idea of “the brand relationship” has taken hold. This is the notion that we treat brands like friends.

Relationships can be very different, but for most people, the good ones are based on things like trust and consistency. This has led to the idea that brands should present a consistent – though not dull and predictable -- face over time (assuming, of course, that they are standing for the right thing.)

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<sup>3</sup> P&G defined “what the brand stands for” by a document they called the Creative Strategy. In those days, if anyone dreamt that the Tide Creative Strategy should include whitening, brightening etc. it was seen as an offence against all that was holy. Since then, P&G has changed its views, and now takes a broader view—as recent Tide advertising for fabric care and Tide-with-Febreze attest.

<sup>4</sup> A young creative friend once said to me, “where does the belief in campaigns come from? Young people want constant change. What’s wrong with a stream of one-off ideas?” This would have been heresy at one time, and perhaps still is. But it’s food for thought.

There is still the question, though, of what is a campaign? At one time, packaged goods advertisers (and some agencies) believed in strict pool-outs. But campaigns don't have to be so formatted. The following list doesn't pretend to be exhaustive (some types of campaigns are hard to categorize) but it starts at rigid end of the spectrum, and extends to the holistic. All versions have their successes and failures, and I hope this listing will help free up some of the rigid thinking:

- **Strict Pool-Out.** Campaigns like "Who wants Gum? I do. I do." They have a repeated format, often with a USP demo or slogan. Some people think this type of advertising is passé. Others remember it fondly.
- **Hall of Fame Pool-Out.** Some think pool outs are dull, predictable and clichéd. Not necessarily. The 20-odd year campaign for Hamlet cigars in the UK is rigidly formatted, but spectacularly creative and effective. Familiprix is the same.
- **Situational Pool-Out.** These don't have the format of the strict pool out but still have a clear connection between executions. Diet Pepsi's "Forever Young" and Pro•Line's "Anyone can Win" are examples. Huggies "Happy Baby" is one of the longest-running. Clearnet/Telus is in this camp too.

This category also includes campaigns based on spectacular executions like "Manhattan Landing" and "Face" for British Airways, though it can be hard to keep coming up with ideas this big. Kit Kat is a different type of example, where the "break" continues, and the challenge is to keep it up to date.

- **Icons.** These can anchor a campaign (Maytag Man, Marlboro Cowboy) or be a property (Tony the Tiger, Pillsbury Doughboy). Some see icons as yesterday's idea, but I think that's a mis-call. Absolut Vodka uses its bottle as an icon, and it's brilliant. The Familiprix pharmacist is hilariously effective.
- **Spokes-people, and Spokes-animals.** Dave Thomas and Colonel Sanders, god rest their souls, are examples, as is Morty the Bison for Manitoba Telecom.
- **Storytelling with continuing character(s).** The Oxo family in the UK is a long-running example. Bartles and Jaymes was a wonderful success story in the US. Personalities have been very successful in Quebec e.g. the Pepsi and Listerine Grand Prix winners in Cassies I and II.
- **Music-Based.** Music sometimes goes beyond a supporting role, and becomes part of the brand character. Soft Drinks, Cars, Fast Food, and Beer have all built campaigns this way. In packaged goods, becel's "young at heart" campaign would be an example.
- **Consistent "Voice and Attitude."** These campaigns are held together by something more subtle. Perhaps the most impressive was Volkswagen in the 60s. Individual executions were different (serious, comical, ironic, dramatic) but they all had the Volkswagen voice and attitude. Brands like Nike are in this category. Benneton is an extreme example.
- **Same core message. Customized execution.** To people with a strict "pool-out" mindset, this hardly qualifies as a campaign at all. But the overall effect can be powerful. The best Cassies example is the 4-year Dove Case from Cassies III.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Another example is Budweiser in Quebec. Its 10-year campaign has always been centred on rock 'n roll, but it has always evolved.

The campaign started in late 91 with "Litmus," a strikingly simple demonstration, with no people or voice over—just haunting music, and some supers. Then came a raucous candid-camera commercial of focus group women doing the litmus test. Then a talking-head commercial with the scientist who invented Dove. Then another demonstration, similar to "Litmus," with the haunting music again.

The first three executions are so different that some people would not have approved them. Given the subsequent results, that would have been a pity. What holds it all together? The continuing promise of mildness. A scrupulously honest and consistent brand character. And an element of surprise in each execution. Note that there are no continuing slogans or visual icons.

More generally, It's an open question whether today's obsessively short-term attitude is causing us to lose the drive we once had for great campaigns. I hope not.