

Agency: Bensimon.Byrne.D'Arcy

Author: Not credited

Wonder Bread

INTRODUCTION

The post World War II era in North America saw an explosion of products and brands spawned by the spirit of optimism, technological advancement and economic growth that defined the age. New brands took on icon status fueled by the growth of mass media, and consumers' desire to contemporise their lives. Perhaps no brand captured the exuberance and hope of the 50s and 60s as well as Wonder Bread. Its very name embodied the spirit of the times – the wonder of the new era.

The 70s and 80s were not as kind. Optimism and naïveté gave way to sophistication and cynicism. Consumers traded to new upscale products offering unique benefits, or to less expensive private label and store brands offering parity benefits at a lower price. In short, consumers left behind many of the icons of their youth, and brands like Wonder Bread became anachronisms.

In a commodity category the erosion of a brand name's selling power quickly spells disaster – in supporting a premium price or even in keeping the product on shelf.

This case details the Ontario relaunch of Wonder Bread. It illustrates how advertising played a direct role in returning the lustre to a tarnished star and, more importantly, restoring growth to the brand.

From October 97 through December 98 Wonder Bread sales increased + 22% (vs. YAG), + 20% (vs. YAG) and + 12.5% (vs. YAG) for each consecutive period measured. This was in conjunction with a new Wonder Bread advertising campaign 'Part of a Complete Childhood'.

The results are exceptional, and were accomplished while maintaining the brand's traditional price premium of 15%.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

A brand name is usually paramount in justifying a price premium. With a commodity like sliced bread, finding the justification is akin to the search for the Holy Grail.

Wonder Bread typically retails at an average price premium of about 15% – not an inconsequential amount when one considers annual category sales. In recent years, people have become less loyal to Wonder Bread – a result of private label alternatives at a lower price. But, despite a shrinking loyal consumer base, Wonder still ranked first in the category for awareness (95%) and trial (73%). Disappointingly, claimed regular purchase of the brand was only 11%. People knew Wonder, they even liked it. They just weren't buying it.

When it comes to white bread, consumer attitudes are almost evenly divided. About 50% believe that white bread has little or no nutritional value, and give it no place in their home. About 50% believe the opposite. In other words, there is a distinct white segment in sliced bread, with little crossover between white and brown. We had to lure regular purchasers of sliced white away from private label.

In the white segment, consumers seldom reevaluate their brand decision. When they do, the primary factors are children's preferences and health. A lack of competitive advertising meant there was little to stimulate reevaluation or brand shifting. The segment had become price driven, dominated by private label. In fact, beyond price and taste, purchasers showed surprisingly low interest in other purchase factors, including nutrition or ingredients.

Thicker slices, chewier slices, finer texture, fewer air holes, better taste: were any of these the brand building, price justifying solution? All were considered and most researched. Almost without exception

consumers agreed these were desired attributes or improvements. And, almost without exception, they said that none would motivate them to pay a premium. Adding insult to injury, the Wonder brand, though well known, was outdated.

The findings were clear.

Rational benefits wouldn't sell. Heritage wouldn't sell. We needed to contemporise the brand with an emotional connection.¹

STRATEGY AND EXECUTION

Communication strategy

Research indicated an uncanny parallel when the brand's desired personality was compared to the characteristics of childhood. We discovered that Wonder = Childhood, and expanded this to the thought:

Wonder. Part of a complete childhood.

Two insights were identified to deliver the emotional connection:

1. The universal desire of parents to do what is right for their children.
2. The fact – well understood by parents – that a good childhood comes complete with triumphs, joy and smiles alongside frustrations, tears and mischief.

Media strategy

We selected out-of-home to carry the campaign – for two reasons. First, a modest budget meant that out-of-home gave greater continuity, higher gross impressions, better efficiency/lower CPM, better frequency and higher GRPs versus television. Second, and very important, out-of-home allowed for the executional breadth we believed was needed.²

Creative execution

The objective was simple. Depict the multiple aspects of childhood and dramatise the moments that are 'Part of a Complete Childhood'. Most critically, avoid the pitfall of a 'sweet' or idealised view – keep it real.³

The creative captured quintessential moments, and seemingly small ones, using black & white photography for realism. 'Part of a Complete Childhood' served as headline and theme line, and tied executions together. The only colour: the Wonder Bread package.

In Year One the campaign ran in five formats: billboards, transit shelters, super boards, subway door cards and exterior bus sidings. Seven executions ran in the first flight in fall 97: 'First Haircut', 'A Visit with Santa', 'Concrete Footprints', 'Sheet', 'Blackboard', 'Swing', and 'Hair-Pull'.

In 1988, we added four more executions in two flights: 'Box', 'Garage Door', 'Teeth', and 'Bath Tub'.

RESULTS

'Part of a Complete Childhood' delivered on its three objectives:

1. Maintain Wonder's premium pricing:

Wonder Bread maintained an average price premium of 15% throughout the entire launch and sustaining period of the case.

2. Rebuild the Wonder image:

While image tracking before the start of the campaign is not directly comparable because of a change in rating structure, there were significant improvements in key attributes throughout 1998, see Table 1.

TABLE 1

	Feb 98	July 98	Point Change
Children/Childhood	32%	50%	+ 18
Nutrition	16%	20%	+ 4
Wonder makes the best bread	–	9%	+ 9
You should buy Wonder	–	17%	+ 17

Source: Wonder Ad Tracking Report Feb 98/July 1998

3. Rebuild Wonder's sales

Wonder Bread sales improved vs. year ago for each of the three consecutive periods measured. Throughout 1998 pricing and distribution remained constant, as did other levels of marketing activity vs. the prior year.

Fall 1997
(Vs. YAG)
+22% *

Spring 1998
(Vs. YAG)
+20%

Fall 1998
(Vs. YAG)
+12.5%

* Business factors make it impossible to isolate advertising as the sole driver of sales improvement for this period.

ISOLATING ADVERTISING AS THE VARIABLE

In addition to increasing sales volume while maintaining a premium price (directly attributable to advertising for 1998), the campaign delivered a triple accomplishment via ad tracking – key improvements in awareness, purchase intent and breakthrough.

1. Wonder dominated the competition in terms of both unaided and aided advertising awareness, despite being significantly outspent,⁴ see [Figure 1](#).
2. Top box (definitely would buy) purchase intent increased significantly versus pre-campaign research, see [Figure 2](#).
3. Recall of the Wonder ads exceeded that of any other billboard advertising, see [Figure 3](#).

In addition, in the spring of 1999, the Wonder 'Part of a Complete Childhood' campaign received the 1998 Ad & Design Club of Canada Gold single and campaign outdoor award.

Proof positive that advertising works, but great advertising works better.

CROSSOVER NOTES

1. Importance of Product. Compare to [Sunlight](#) and [becel](#). For Sunlight, it was essential to fix the product. For becel and Wonder Bread the existing product was fine. The answer for these two lay in finding an emotional benefit
2. Media Innovation. As media become more fragmented, we will perhaps see more consideration of media such as outdoor, radio, print, and interactive to deliver the primary message.
3. Showing the Target Audience – Yes or No. Note that the key was not to show an idealised version of childhood, but to capture reality.
4. Media Innovation. It's worth noting that these results were obtained entirely with outdoor, while Dempster's was spending more than twice as much, primarily on TV.

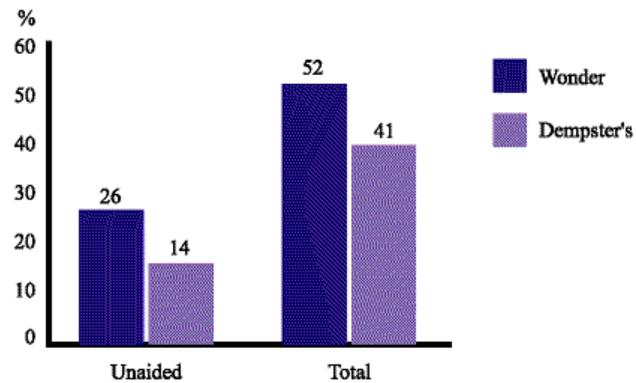
NOTES & EXHIBITS

FIGURE 1

Advertising Awareness

- Wonder dominated Dempster's in terms of both unaided and total advertising awareness—despite being significantly outspent.

– Dempster's - \$1,969.0M
– Wonder - \$492.2M



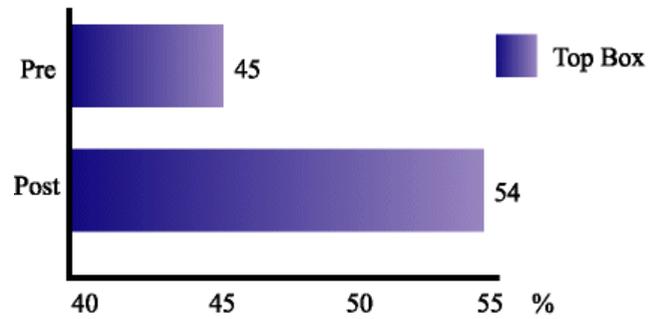
Source: Wonder Ad Tracking, February 1998 (Ontario)

Source: Wonder Ad Tracking, February 1998 (Ontario)

FIGURE 2

Purchase Intent

- Top box (definitely will buy) purchase intent increased significantly versus pre-campaign research

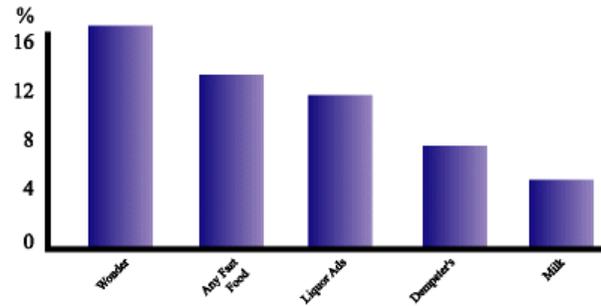


Source: Wonder Ad Tracking, December 1996, February 1998 (Ontario)

FIGURE 3

Dominant in the Medium

- Recall of the Wonder ads exceeded that of any other billboard advertising indicating creative broke through the clutter.



Source: Wonder Ad Tracking, February 1998 (Ontario)

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