Two of the men in my house are classified as follows: one tweeny and one full-blooded teen. Given that my kids have grown up with a mom whose job it is to understand why people do things, how they do them, when they do them and what makes them do them (loosely describes marketing research I think), it isn’t surprising that they’re naturally aware of some of these great questions and that we talk about them a lot. New ad campaigns, products, new categories of things we thought we knew and such are all part of the mix. Now let me introduce ‘the advert game’. It may be some what like being an ‘armchair sports enthusiast’. My boys are armchair advertisement enthusiasts. Gurus actually. The game playing began insidiously, in fact I wasn’t aware of it at all until there was bloodshed one evening and maternal intervention was called for.

The Advert Game

a new research tool?

By Heidi Brauer, Marketing Director – Markinor
This is how it works:

As the ad break begins the mission is to identify the brand name of the advertised product before the brother does. Or the mother, since I've since joined the following.

If the brand name is shown on screen immediately or in the jingle or voice over, then that ad isn't 'in the game' so to speak. You get one guess only. If nobody gets it and you suddenly have an epiphany – sorry, too slow. Scoring is simple – whoever gets it right first gets a point and points are accumulated over the whole TV-viewing evening. Bloodshed occurs as a result of this apparently inadequate self-referee mechanism; however don't let this dissuade you from playing the game in your own home.

The game is simple, but the revelations can be profound. Think of great research questions that these stimulate. It astounds me over and over again how quick my boys are. I'm trying to be the essence of controlled patience and sagely full of considered wisdom, and they've beat me in a heartbeat. It astounds me how they can see an ad once and connect with it right away and recall it so fast on the second viewing. It astounds me how they recall ads for product categories in whose target markets they aren't (or aren't yet). And it astounds me how obviously they respond to things that really don't do it for me. I've seen the guy going berserk in the street over some hotdog sauce many times and the frenetic style really doesn't float my boat. Whilst one of them has speedily secured a point for identifying it (as whatever it is), I'm still wondering about a US-styled hotdog vendor in SA.

Interesting challenges emerge too when we're faced with product brand vs. corporate brand.

Boardroom issues we hear about daily. Is the guy flying without a parachute an ad for VW or Polo? And does it matter? And how many times we get the same wrong answer over and over – that's costing a client a bucket of money. Or how we get confused with co-branded stuff? 'Tis too old for Nokia not Cell C1. And how we notice when the original ad got longer or shorter. And when we're sorry it got shorter the lady dishing out Cokes and singing! or immensely thankful that it did. We wonder why some ads are never refreshed or updated those paving guys doing a whole 1980s boiler suit thing! and why anyone would mess with a great thing. They even discuss the benefits and drawbacks of the irritation factor (a la Maq washing powder) and there's a certain pizza joint (ok, Panarotti's) whose ads really suck in the words of a 14 year old. But those are apparently the ones that stick in your head. Hmm.

Intellectually, we're actually dealing with some traditional ad or brand measurement stuff such as recall, awareness, associations, likeability, call to action, product vs corporate brand, whether or not to kill a campaign because the client is bored with it and more. And we're having fun, well usually until the bloodshed part. I know this is all anecdotal and based on a sample of 3 (plus ad hoc friends), but I have a feeling that this sort of 'research' could be quite valuable. It dispenses with group think and the teen-tween peer pressure to say the cool thing lest being judged by one's cooler peers. In the advert game, when speed is of the essence, there's no time to think of the right answers. Now I'm wondering why I'm leaving adults out of this.

I've also subsequently discovered that their friends play the game too. I'm sure the scoring system will need some looking at, as games with multiple players or sleepovers could be the stuff that wars are made of, in homes in which even the most resilient creative director would quake.

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