

Nestle backs Neuro ad testing

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Nestle Australia will endorse growing marketer interest in neuroscience at a "virtual" market research conference being staged over 12 hours indifferent time zones around the world tomorrow.

Using its award winning Allen's lollies TV campaign, developed in Australia with JWT and featuring the giant "marionette" doll, Nestle will show how it used brain wave tracking to sharpen the emotional impact of the Allen's campaign in its development and how optimising brain "memory encoding" for the brand contributed to a 25% lift in sales within six months.

An Australian firm, Neuro Insight, is one of the world leaders in applying Steady State Topography (SST) to track neurological responses to advertising, packaging and design, a methodology considered in many instances to be more robust than relying on verbal responses from traditional consumer research.



Allen's campaign created by JWT Sydney.

By tracking electrical activity in the part of the brain which links emotional engagement with long-term memory encoding, market researchers are able to determine which visual cues in a TV ad or a packaging option will work better for the associated brand.

Nielsen and WPP's Millward Brown have both launched competing neurological research capabilities to Neuro Insight although independent Australian market researcher, Inside Story, which conducted Nestle's Allen's lollies project, said the Neuro Insight technology was the only one so far to be peer reviewed and endorsed by the influential Advertising Research Foundation.

Inside Story's managing director, Liane Ringham, said there was "a lot of momentum building" among corporates for using neuro research – Australian companies she would not name in food, finance, banking and insurance were now using the science.

"There is quite a lot of momentum building and it really started late last year," she said.

"The barriers until now have been the speed of turning around the analysis. Often there is little time. It used to be two or three weeks but we're able now to get top line findings in two or three days."

In Allen's case, an animatic was used to pre-test the campaign in a setting where consumers watched a 30 min TV show which carried typical ad breaks and ads that were running on TV at the time. After analysing the brain responses to the ad, Inside Story was able to identify three "key moments" which allowed the ad to move from straight entertainment to one in which the Allen's brand was strongly embedded in long-term memory.

"It's very important that the brand is associated with those memory encoding points," Ringham said. "I do believe it will be the way research will be done in the future."

Nestle insights and planning manager Kasia Witon Wanstall said the challenge Allens faced was ensuring that the highly creative execution would convert to results for the Allen's brand.

"Obviously neuroscience has been a round for a long time but it's been very academic," she said. "There are a lot of methodologies around but when you are working on a brand with a lot of emotional context you need tools to get into emotional responses. This approach was very interesting for us. We felt like we had a lot of depth."

Nestle will detail its findings at the "virtual" Festival of NewMR, which starts in Asia-Pacific and Europe before moving onto the US tomorrow.