

THE S.H.A.R.P. Conceptual Framework for Young Adults What is Cool?

Carl Sharperson III
Savannah State University

THE S.H.A.R.P. Conceptual Framework for Young Adults What is Cool?

Neural Networks and Consumer tracking studies have gained wide popularity and acceptance in studying young adults' marketing and consumption behavior. In this research paper, the author introduces and proposes a revolutionary method to direct advertising campaigns sources of influences on young adults' psychology and moving dynamic interests. The ideas suggested will advance the thinking of the advertising industry to profit from alternative messages to young adults through mass advertising and welfare of society as a whole. The author discusses what goals and directions are for the next generation of research and advertising; how to use mass advertising to address social issues; and how to profit clients through the use of neural networking by way of implementing the SHARP model. This research proposes a conceptual framework - SHARP (Support, Humor, Acceptance, Relevance, and Peer Pressure) and focuses on the following research questions.

- *How can advertising agencies change what is perceived as cool?*
- *What power does advertisement have on the ideas young adults seek?*
- *What does it mean to promote what is not visible rather than what is visible?*

These are the questions and ideas this paper seeks to address. The SHARP conceptual model strives to challenge and improve the way advertising is created.

Key Words: Neural Networks, Consumer Tracking, Psychology, Advertising, Cool

I. INTRODUCTION

The word "Cool" is a very fluid concept; therefore, there is no clear or absolute definition because it changes so often depending on how, when, where, and why it is used. For the purpose of basic interpretation of this research, 'cool' will be described as a desired state of personal peace and social acceptance satisfaction. Young adults refer to ages seventeen through twenty-four. Young adults thrive on being cool, in countless varying ways, and if advertisers can hone on these concepts, profit margins will be almost limitless.

Neural networks can be viewed as an enabling tool for marketing professionals to work smarter and achieve higher levels of effectiveness. A neural network from a marketing perspective represents a software decision tool which assists the decision makers in the selection of an appropriate response to a particular situation (Lin 2004). Behavioral targeting involves the collection of information about a consumer's online activities in order to deliver advertising targeted to their potential upcoming purchases, usually conducted by advertising agencies

(Dwyer 2009). The clear intent of behavioral targeting is to track consumers over time, to build up digital dossiers of their interests and shopping activities (Dwyer 2009).

The research paper proposes a way for advertisers using neural networks and consumer targeting to track the abstract realm of young adults; understanding their thoughts, ideas, and dreams that are influenced by peer pressure and navigating their lives in multiple directions. Advertising campaigns can be tailored to address the interests of young adults while promoting social change in a positive way. A new and widely accepted approach to reach target audiences is the edge needed by government and private organizations to address negative issues in society. This ground breaking conceptual method is being introduced and proposed as the S.H.A.R.P. conceptual framework in the upcoming sections.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1961, Russell Colley prepared a report for the Association of National Advertisers titled Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results (DAGMAR). In it, Colley developed a model for setting advertising objectives and measuring the results of an ad campaign. The major emphasis of the DAGMAR model (Colley, 1961) is that communications effects are the logical basis for advertising goals and objectives against which success or failure should be measured. The DAGMAR approach (Colley, 1961) to setting objectives has had considerable influence on the advertising planning process. Many promotional planners use this model as a basis for setting objectives and assessing effectiveness of their promotional campaigns. Colley's work has led to improvements in the advertising and promotional planning process by providing a better understanding of the goals and objectives toward which planner's efforts should be directed. This usually results in less subjectivity and leads to better communication and relationship between client and agency (Belch & Belch 2009).

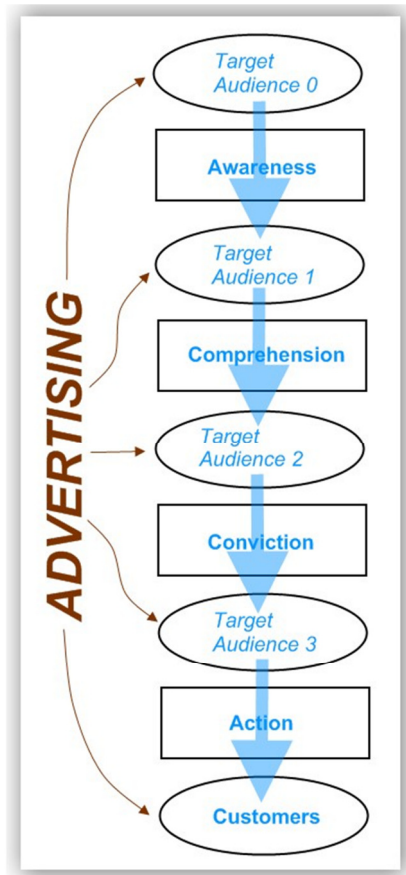


Figure 1: DAGMAR Model (Colley, 1961)

Motion effect theories assume that human beings exhibit an inherent preference for moving objects. That is when people are exposed to moving images, they focus their attention on the source of the motion and process relevant information. This activity is manifested in physiological changes such as decrease in heart rate, increase in skin conductance, and variable brain electrical activity (Sundar & Kalyanaraman 2004).

According to Jerry Kirkpatrick (1986), there in essence are two “social” criticisms of advertising. Overall, both charges attribute to advertising the power of physical force---that is, the power to force consumers against their wills to buy products they don’t need or want. The criticism for this model says that advertising changes the consumer’s tastes by forcing consumers to conform to the desires of producers, rather than the other way around, as free-market advocates have always argued. In short, according to this charge, advertising is immoral (Kirkpatrick 1986). The SHARP model proposes to eliminate all of this.

A neural network can be developed to shed light on the way in which consumers respond to stimuli contained in advertising messages. Considerable research suggests that advertising executional cues can influence communications effectiveness. MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski (Lin 2004) developed a framework that explicitly provides linkage between executional cues to communication effectiveness through their impact on consumers’ motivation, opportunity, and ability, and the levels of processing from advertisements is influenced by consumers’ motivation, ability and opportunity to process brand information during or immediately after exposure to an advertisement. A simple perception-type model would postulate that consumers respond to certain characteristics of the advertising of a product with decision or intentions to purchases (Lin 2004). This is where the proposed SHARP model perfectly fits. Neural networks change the way to use information in marketing. With such a new information technology, a company using a neural network, can have affordable real-time access to all the raw data it desires. The real difference among competitors will be the quality of analysis each performs and the capacity of decisions flowing from it (Lin 2004).

Figure 2 illustrates the concept of neural networks, which is based upon the way we understand the human brain is structured. Neural networks are computer systems linking inputs with outputs

in a network of structure of nodes and arcs. They are inspired by replicating portions of what is known about the way the human brain functions (Lin 2004).

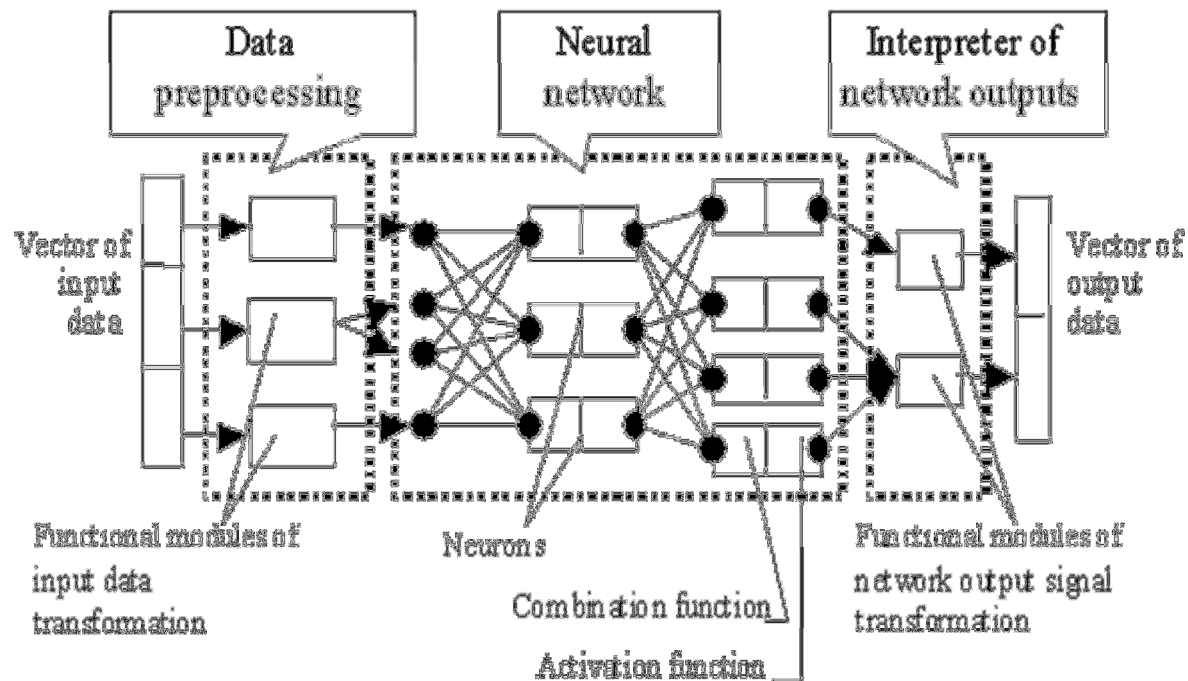


Figure 2: Neural Networks and their impact on Marketing discipline (Lin 2004)

Friestad, Wright, and Boush (2005) note an elaborated and detailed model of content, structure, and usage of everyday persuasion knowledge that focused on the context of advertising and marketing messages. They discussed in depth the different types of persuasion-related knowledge and skills that children, adolescents, and young adults gradually develop to cope effectively with marketers' and others' strategic attempts to influence them. A girl's or boys' marketplace persuasion knowledge develops from nothing into an increasingly interrelated and valid structure of casual---explanatory beliefs about several topics (Wright, Friestad, Boush 2005).

Two objective challenges of adolescence, forming a personal identity and fitting in socially with peers, likely contribute to adolescents' heightened self-consciousness (Pechmann, Levine, Loughlin, Leslie 2005). Furthermore, adolescents often turn to peers to help them forge identities that are independent of their parents, which may make them even more self-conscious. Adolescents' self-consciousness and social anxiety should tend to make them more receptive to image advertising and high-status, heavily advertised brands. It appears that adolescents with low self-esteem are especially attracted to image advertisements and status brands and that they manifest other signs of materialism (Pechmann, Levine, Loughlin, Leslie 2005).

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

An ongoing concern of advertising practitioners is the persuasive impact of their marketing communications. One of the most widely employed measures of persuasive impact is change in brand attitude. Consequently, research attention continues to focus on describing the specific types of cognitive and affective responses to advertising that both lead to and result from brand attitude formation (Coulter & Punj 2004).

I propose the SHARP conceptual framework in this section. Figure 3 illustrates the SHARP model in theory. The five outside bubbles represent the five aspects advertising campaigns must meet in order to reach the "millenials". The innermost center circle represents the consumers; the outside represents the elements and conditions of society. The middle circle ring represents the use of neural networks, in how they merge the consumer with the outside elements by identifying needs and interests using the means typed in the circle.

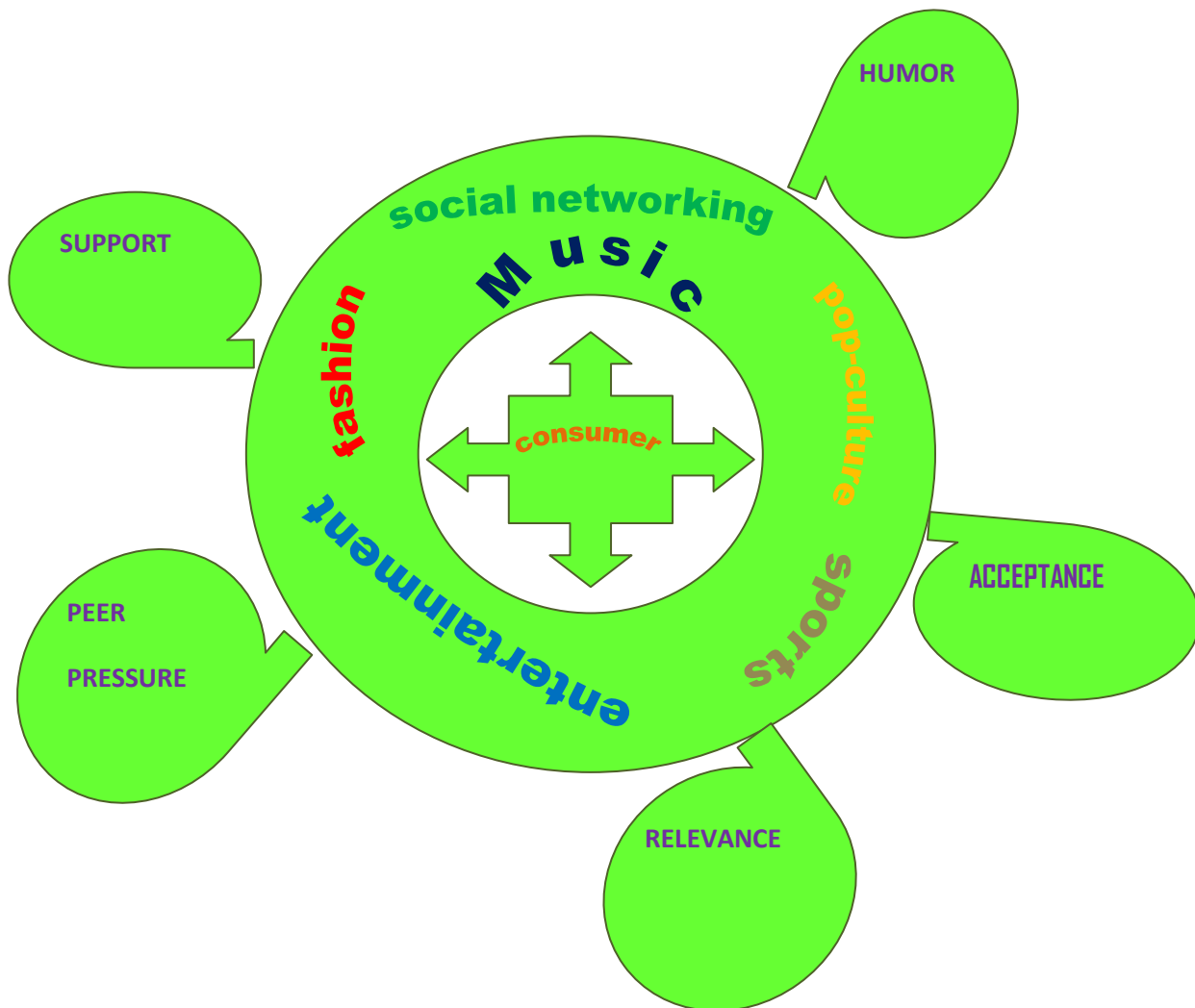


Figure 3: Conceptual SHARP Model targeting young adults

The SHARP model (Figure 3) analyzes five focus points of emphasis to make a successful advertisement campaign for young adults. The information needed to make the model be effective is imperative, and can only be gathered by using neural network systems and behavioral tracking of trending thoughts for the target audience. The SHARP model can be applied to any product or service the firm is promoting or selling. The SHARP model affirms that all

advertisements addressed towards young adults should involve: Support, Humor, Acceptance, Relevance, Peer pressure.

The common denominator and equalizer among all young adults is curiosity. With curiosity as the foundation, tracking ideas and thoughts involves so much more than data interfacing social network platforms of Facebook and Twitter, although they are both excellent places to get general ideas of the target audience. Tracking ideas include following the music industry to see what young adults are listening and responding to, and identifying motives for actions. This means if sex, money, fashion, or partying, for example, are important to young adults, then these topics can be used by advertisers in a positive way to accomplish their objective. Neural networks present a radical attempt to break the logjam of information by building computers that mimic the way in which humans think. In the long run, results from applications of neural networks to the marketing domain will not only lead to a deeper understanding of fundamental marketing decision processes but also enable study of the normative aspects of marketing systems (Lin 2004).

Support is to promote the interest or cause of; to uphold or defend as valid or right. Once a trending thought, idea, or dream is identified, it must be supported by and supporting of young adults as a whole. Humor is to adapt oneself to. Humor is the glue in advertising to young adults. Humorous appeals are used extensively in television, radio, and print advertising. This research examines the effectiveness of humor in accomplishing specific communications and sales objectives. It is argued that previous unsuccessful applications of light-hearted messages are attributable, in part, to our incomplete knowledge of how consumers' process humorously conveyed information. The discussion focuses on the importance of recognizing and managing variables which mediate the impact of humor on audience response and on the need for further

development and testing of behavioral theory as keys to the effective utilization of humor in advertising. The central issue therefore is not whether entertaining commercials can be effective. Rather, advertisers must direct their attention to questions concerning (1) when humorous appeals should be applied, and (2) how amusing messages should be presented. Answers to these questions require an understanding of the factors and mechanisms which underlie consumer response to humorous stimuli (Duncan 1979).

Acceptance is an agreeing either expressly or by conduct to the act or offer of another so that a contract is concluded and the parties become legally bound. Young adults must accept any successful advertising attempt; however, this includes more than being socially acceptable. In 1973, Wright suggested that consumer acceptance of advertising was mediated by the cognitive responses generated by message recipients' rather than by content of the advertisement itself. By combining attribute students with music, humor, affectionate vignettes, story elements, role portrayal, and the like, ad-execution cues evoke moods and feelings that go beyond the evaluative reactions toward a commercial (Batra 1986).

Relevance is a practical and especially social applicability; the ability (as of an information retrieval system) to retrieve material that satisfies the needs of the user. Relevance is timing and ever changing. Young adults rush to stay current and possibly ahead of what may be the next new attention grabber in any setting. The importance of relevance is not just time correlation with young adults, but also how well does it relate to what young adults face or feel in their daily lives. By targeting niche markets directly, one need not track the behavior of a user to deliver relevant ads. This has many benefits, not the least of which is that it completely placates the privacy advocates. For example, OneRiot is the advertising network for the real-time social web. OneRiot partners with leading brands and media companies to reach millions of social

influencers across an exclusive network of top Twitter apps, mobile apps, social networks and content discovery sites. Real-time campaigns with OneRiot build brand awareness, community engagement and drive viral social sharing. OneRiot employs many innovative techniques to deliver realtime social targeting for its partners. One technology cornerstone is the company's proprietary Trending Topics Engine. This analyzes streaming conversational data from leading social destinations – including Facebook, Twitter and MySpace – to surface the topics that are driving most engagement across social web networks right now. OneRiot then algorithmically matches relevant advertising campaign content to those topics in real-time, and delivers advertising messages that are targeted to users during key opportunities for social engagement (Kansascity.com, 2010).

Peer pressure occurs when an individual experiences implied or expressed persuasion to adopt similar values, beliefs, and goals, or to participate in the same activities as those in the peer group. Successful young adult advertising campaigns must survive this crucial test. David Ogilvy of Ogilvy and Mather said, "If you try to persuade people to do something or buy something, it seems to me you should use their language, the language in which they think." Everywhere people go, there are marketers that want to sell something, not in the language in which consumers think, but also in the language based in the way they think consumers best friends think, the way that the object of desire thinks, even in the way the million strangers who seen or interact with each day think. This goes way beyond things a person would normally do, but sometimes people do anything just to be considered cool.

IV. DEVELOPMENT OF A SCALE FOR 'SHARP FRAMEWORK'

In this research paper, a 25-item scale for 'SHARP' framework is developed for measuring advertising effectiveness. The scale developed is given below as Table 1.

Table 1 – SHARP Framework Measurement Scale for Ad Effectiveness

Scale	Code in SPSS
1. This advertisement agrees with my life goals	Sharp_S1
2. This advertisement gives me motivation	Sharp_S2
3. This advertisement supports my background	Sharp_S3
4. I have similar experiences with the ad's intent or message	Sharp_S4
5. I would want this for my family	Sharp_S5
6. I find this advertisement "corny" or "lame"	Sharp_H1
7. How funny is this advertisement?	Sharp_H2
8. I have thought about this before	Sharp_H3
9. I have to think about the advertisement before I laugh	Sharp_H4
10. I would use this as a joke	Sharp_H5
11. There is a clear positive stereotype in this advertisement	Sharp_A1
12. There is a clear negative stereotype in this advertisement	Sharp_A2
13. This advertisement changes my initial impressions of the topic portrayed	Sharp_A3
14. I grew up around situations/messages like this	Sharp_A4
15. I agree with this advertisement	Sharp_A5
16. I can relate how much to this advertisement	Sharp_R1
17. This advertisement is current with today's interests	Sharp_R2
18. I would have understood this advertisement 3 years ago	Sharp_R3
19. This advertisement is old and has no "flavor"	Sharp_R4
20. I agree with the thought process behind this advertisement	Sharp_R5
21. I am one of the more popular persons in my daily surroundings	Sharp_P1
22. I like the advertisement but would not show it publicly	Sharp_P2
23. I can crack jokes at people this advertisement portrays or affects	Sharp_P3
24. I can see my friends in this advertisement	Sharp_P4
25. This advertisement could be so much better	Sharp_P5

The research was conducted on a sample size of 75 undergraduate students at a Historically Black College University (HBCU), selected for the purpose of the research study, out of which 41 were women. The study was confined to ads with African American stereotypes, given in Appendix I. The SHARP framework was presented to 75 students, who were exposed to 5 different ads with African-American stereotypes, and the likert type agreement scale was used where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. SPSS was used for Exploratory Factor Analyses for 'Sharp' scale.

V. RESEARCH FINDINGS

A Web based survey was conducted from students enrolled in business school at a historic black college and university at Georgia. Elimination of incomplete responses left 75 eligible responses for analysis. Among responders, 46.1% are male students, and 53.9% are female. 47.4% are Marketing majors, 31.6% are Management majors, 11.8% are Accounting majors, 2.6% are Computer Information System major and 6.6% are from some other majors. Most responders are either Senior (50%) or Junior (47.4%).

After conducting the factor analyses for 5 ads using African-American stereotypes, the following results are obtained as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Exploratory Factor Analyses - Rotated Component Matrix

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Sharp_H1	.910	.091	-.055	-.051	.127
Sharp_H2	.900	.290	-.009	-.006	.032
Sharp_H5	.879	.253	-.040	.161	.067
Sharp_P2	.118	.222	.026	.878	.029
Sharp_H4	.827	.276	.053	-.142	-.309
Sharp_P3	.313	.237	.045	.813	.019
Sharp_R4	.795	.074	.123	.186	.363
Sharp_A3	.687	.306	.106	.438	.067
Sharp_P5	.050	.259	.435	.647	.018
Sharp_S4	.198	.896	.215	.118	.080
Sharp_S3	.292	.863	.190	.096	.067
Sharp_S2	.130	.817	.399	.120	.233
Sharp_S5	.261	.810	.286	.056	-.020
Sharp_S1	.258	.749	.354	-.056	.245
Sharp_R1	.371	.241	.701	.284	-.074
Sharp_A4	.182	.218	.562	.162	.649

Sharp_H3	.635	.542	.237	.088	-.150
Sharp_P1	.437	.584	.147	.205	.098
Sharp_R3	.007	.170	.892	-.012	-.006
Sharp_R2	-.100	.223	.887	.000	.089
Sharp_R5	.083	.410	.756	.151	-.007
Sharp_A5	.101	.538	.562	.162	.704
Sharp_A1	.112	.274	.237	.088	.666
Sharp_P4	.311	.356	.348	.720	.069
Sharp_A2	.609	.296	.162	.059	.617
Eigen values	7.49	6.42	4.36	1.33	1.00
% of variance	25.96	29.67	12.56	10.32	10
Cronbach alpha	.94	.95	.84	.85	.81

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.863
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	2135.306
	df
	300
	Sig.
	.000

VI. DISCUSSIONS

The SHARP scale developed in this paper has good reliability as shown in the Table 2. The 25-item scale of SHARP framework that loaded as per the Table 2 above can be easily dissected into 5 factors - Support (S) with 6 factors; Humor (H) with 7 factors; Acceptance (A) with 4 factors; Relevance (R) with 4 factors and Peer Pressure (P) with four factors as well.

The factors are given in Table 3 below:

TABLE 3: ‘SHARP’ SCALE FACTORS OBTAINED FROM PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS

SUPPORT	SPSS Code
1. This advertisement agrees with my life goals	Sharp_S1
2. This advertisement gives me motivation	Sharp_S2
3. This advertisement supports my background	Sharp_S3
4. I have similar experiences with the ad’s intent or message	Sharp_S4
5. I would want this for my family	Sharp_S5
6. I am one of the more popular persons in my daily surroundings	Sharp_P1
HUMOR	
7. I find this advertisement “corny” or “lame”	Sharp_H1
8. How funny is this advertisement?	Sharp_H2
9. I have thought about this before	Sharp_H3
10. I have to think about the advertisement before I laugh	Sharp_H4
11. I would use this as a joke	Sharp_H5
12. This advertisement changes my initial impressions of the topic portrayed	Sharp_A3
13. This advertisement is old and has no “flavor”	Sharp_R4
ACCEPTANCE	
14. There is a clear positive stereotype in this advertisement	Sharp_A1
15. There is a clear negative stereotype in this advertisement	Sharp_A2
16. I grew up around situations/messages like this	Sharp_A4
17. I agree with this advertisement	Sharp_A5
RELEVANCE	
18. I can relate how much to this advertisement	Sharp_R1
19. This advertisement is current with today’s interests	Sharp_R2
20. I would have understood this advertisement 3 years ago	Sharp_R3
21. I agree with the thought process behind this advertisement	Sharp_R5
PEER PRESSURE	
22. I like the advertisement but would not show it publicly	Sharp_P2
23. I can crack jokes at people this advertisement portrays or affects	Sharp_P3
24. I can see my friends in this advertisement	Sharp_P4
25. This advertisement could be so much better	Sharp_P5

The reliability of the scale is high with Cronbach alpha for ‘Support’ as 0.94; ‘Humor’ as 0.95; ‘Acceptance’ as 0.84; ‘Relevance’ as 0.85; and ‘Peer Pressure’ as 0.81.

VII. CONCLUSION

The research paper presents the SHARP conceptual model as the futuristic mainframe foundation of how advertising campaigns are developed, directed, and created for many years to come. It identifies the definition of “cool”, how neural networks can be used to its potential, and addresses the social criticisms of advertising by way of the SHARP model.

The SHARP model developed in this research paper is tested empirically for exploratory factor analysis with 5 factors of SHARP – SUPPORT, HUMOR, ACCEPTANCE, RELEVANCE and PEER PRESSURE. The model needs to be further tested in the future research with regard to ad and brand attitudes and brand equity concepts.

REFERENCES

- Advertise On Social Web OneRiot*. (n.d.). Retrieved October 14, 2010, from Kansas City.com: <http://www.kansascity.com/2010/10/12/2304604/advertise-on-twitter-apps-and.html>
- Duncan, C. (1979). Humor In Advertising: A Behavioral Perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* .
- Dwyer, C. (2009). Behavioral Targeting: A Case Study of Consumer Tracking on Levis.com. *Proceedings of the Fifteenth Americas Conference on Information Systems* .
- Kirkpatrick, J. (1986). A Philosophic Defense of Advertising. *Journal of Advertising* , 42-48 & 64.
- Lin, B. (n.d.). Applications of Neural Network in Marketing Decision Making. *Louisiana State University in Shreveport* .
- (2009). In G. B. Michael Belch, *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective, 8th edition*. McGraw-Hill.
- Pechmann, C., Levine, L., Loughlin, S., & Leslie, F. (2005). Impulsive and Self-Conscious: Adolescents' Vulnerability to Advertising and Promotion. *American Marketing Association* , 202-221.

Punj, G. N., & Coulter, K. S. (2004). The Effects of Cognitive Resource Requirements, Availability, and Argument Quality on Brand Attitudes. *Journal of Advertising* , 53-64.

Rajeev Batra, M. R. (1986). Affective Responses in Mediating: Acceptance of Advertising. *The Journal of Consumer Research* , 234-249.

Sundar, S. S., & Kalyanaraman, S. (2004). Arousal, Memory and Impression-Formation Effects of Animation Speed in Web-Advertising. *Journal of Advertising* , 7-17.

Wright, P., Friestad, M., & Boush, D. M. (2005). The Development of Marketplace Persuasion Knowledge in Children, Adolescents, and Young Adults. *American Marketing Association* , 222-233.

.....