

# SHELF TEST CAN SAVE THE AD

R&D LAB

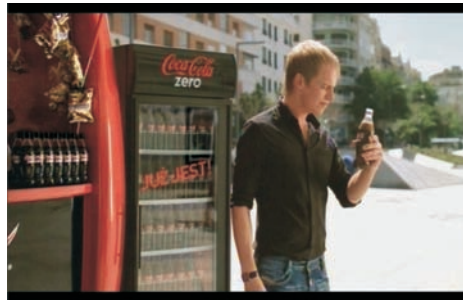
NEUROTRACE

## The giant created an advertising which is apparently ineffective

Let us imagine, that one of the leading brands in its business broadcasts a TV commercial of a new subbrand. Contrary to the expectations, the ad does not make an electrifying impression on recipients. From analyzing neurophysiological reactions we gather that it arouses negative emotions and does not attract any special attention of the audience.

Concerning this information, how would we assess the effectiveness of the ad? Probably quite low. Additionally, if we learnt (from more traditional tests) that the ad does not build the brand image at all, we would become even more firmly convinced that it's not all right. The only question is, whether we were right...

Let's take a closer look at the Coca Cola Zero ad ([http://testdifferent.com/media/cc\\_zero.mpg](http://testdifferent.com/media/cc_zero.mpg)) which turned out to be effective although it fully fits the description above. A young boy in a decisive move takes Coca Cola Zero out of the refrigerator and energetically marches with it through the city. Other people join him quickly. They dream about the world



constructed of the "zero" idea – zero problems, zero weak points, zero returns from holiday. "Perfect taste and no sugar" – everyone accepts it with great enthusiasm.

However, this enthusiasm does not infect respondents in neuro-research. We examined 45 men in the age of 18-34. The majority of scenes in the advertisement was neutral to them, whereas four aroused considerably negative emotions. Moreover, in the entire ad there was a lack of any moment which would peculiarly draw attention of the audience. What's more, we found out from parallel conducted traditional tests that this ad builds neither the brand image nor the product. If not emotions and attention, what else could have guaranteed the success of this ad? Well, as the neuro-analysis results show this ad

strongly energizes the respondents for almost the whole duration time, what is expressed in the high level of the galvanic skin reaction (GSR) (see Graph 1).

## Measure of arousal (GSR) sparks off the light at the end of the tunnel

Already in the seventies opinions appeared, that change of skin-galvanic response (GSR) can be treated as a predictor of sale success. Arousal is produced by the part of our nervous system which takes over in 'fight or flight' circumstances where an immediate and effective response is required. We are getting aroused so quickly that the information about it does not reach our consciousness. Therefore, we feel aroused but we do not know why. In test conducted in LAB a positive correlation between the



level of arousal and the sale potential is often noticed. The more energizing the ad, the greater probability that its audience will reach for the presented product. And indeed, in the case of Coca-Cola Zero we noted a positive effect of the ad on purchase intentions on a declaratory level. In other words, these respondents who saw the ad expressed greater willingness to reach for Coke Zero than the ones who couldn't see it.

## The Shelf Test - analysis of the real purchase behavior

The most important part of the test is still ahead of us. We decided to check how recipients will behave in a real purchase situation, when they will stand in front of a real choice: Coca Cola Zero or the competition's product? For this purpose, we

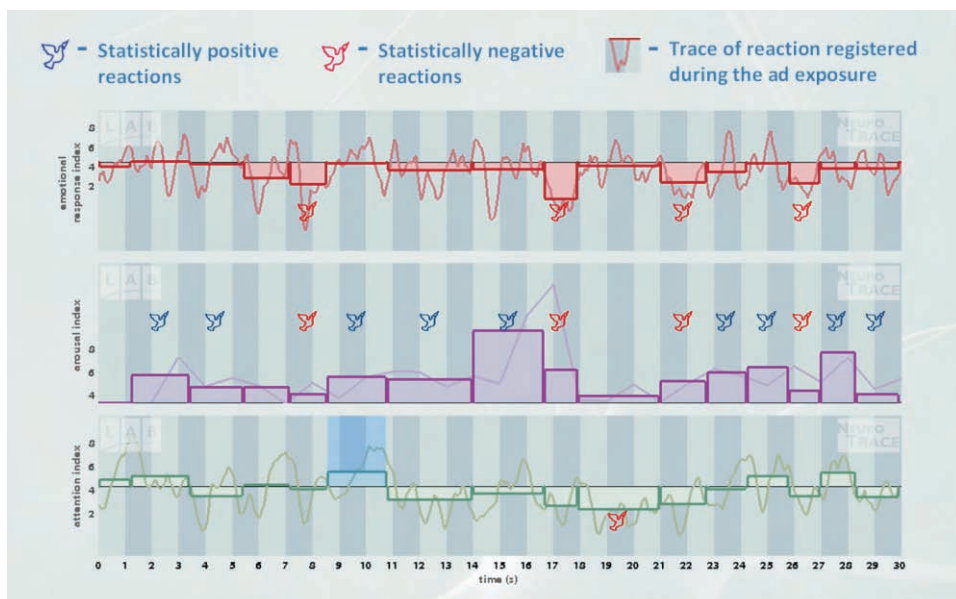


Chart I. The EEG and GSR records of neurophysiological responses to the Coca Cola Zero ad.

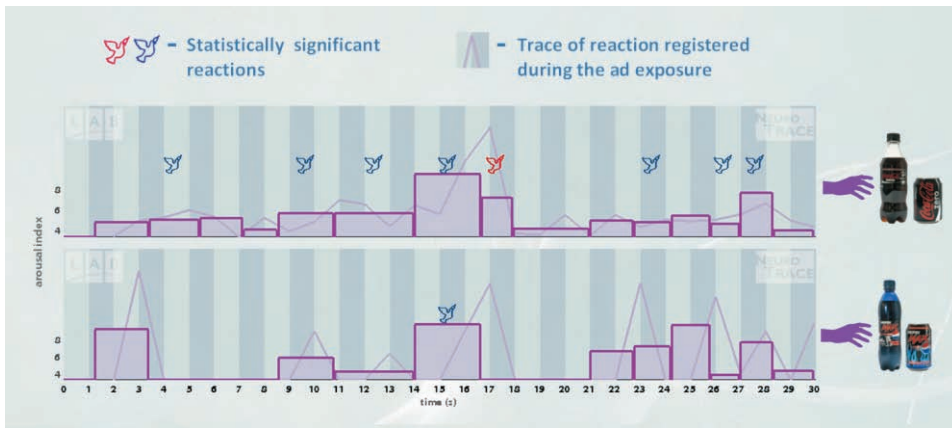


Chart II. The GSR record of response to Coca Cola Zero ad. The comparison of arousal between those who chose Coca Cola Zero and those who chose the competitive brand.

conducted the so-called Shelf Test. We invited respondents into a specially prepared room simulating shop conditions, we gave them a certain amount of money and we asked to make a choice: to buy (at a discount price) Coke or Pepsi, or maybe take the money home? As it turned out, the ad raises an interest in the product by 15% (comparing with choices of the people who didn't see the ad).

Thanks to the Shelf Test we could also establish which people say one thing and do another (i.e. they declare that they will take Coke but in fact they take Pepsi) and which do what they say. And the most important thing, thanks to the Shelf Test, we could make reanalysis of neuro results in the division: he chose Coke, he chose Pepsi. Thanks to this last analysis we confirmed our speculations that the connection between the level of arousal and the sale potential is remarkably strong! The ones who chose Coca Cola were very firmly energized by the ad, while others...hardly at all (see Graph 2).

### Summary

Is it possible to consider the ad of Coca Cola Zero as a success? Certainly, with reference to the sale results. The only question is, how long-lasting is that effect and how will it influence the position of the brand in a longer perspective? The ad raises the sale, but it does not build the image. A risk exists that along with a halt of the stimuli, the driving force to make the purchase will diminish. Thus, breaking off the flow of stimulation will stop the response (the reaction being the actual purchase). The answer is: the evaluation of the effectiveness closely depends on the aim of the campaign. The ad works indeed, however, only when a campaign lasts. We suppose that in the moment in

which the emission of the spot ends, the sale will go back to its initial level.

On a more general level, Coca-Cola Zero case once again shows that the future of the research on the effectiveness of ad is connected with using an entire battery of methods, rather than only one of them. In order to objectively judge the ad we must know what influence it has on consumer's conscious evaluations (traditional methods serve this purpose), how subconscious neurophysiological reactions function (neuro-technologies) and how realistic purchase decisions look like (the Shelf Test).

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