



on: CONSUMER RESEARCH

In advertising, we're actually in the people business. Most believe that agencies with a "niche" must serve those types of accounts better than those with less experience. Learning the details about a particular industry can be mastered by spending a few months up to your ears in existing research, competitive materials, and by camping out under the big boss' desk. But once you know what the product is all about, you need to know what in particular is going to make the consumer pine longingly for it.

What makes a consumer tick? Why do they buy, what do they buy, and when do they buy? The classic definition of consumer behavior talks about the way a consumer behaves when searching for, purchasing and choosing a product or service they expect will satisfy their needs. Needs. Hmm ... I truly believe in today's society, people buy more of what they want versus what they truly need.

We find these "wants" via research. There are existing demographics of where people purchase and what they buy, but it's tough to find out why they buy. If asked, because of the daily brainwashing that goes on in every aspect of our lives, most people don't truly know. Brand names are burned into our subconscious, human nature

tells us to "keep up with the Jones'" and certain levels of hormones cause the competitors in us to shoot for bigger and better. These are all elements of behavior that we aren't consciously aware of possessing.

Lifestyle research. This is where the fun begins – where we get to sort of play Freud. We have become a world of exhibitors. We live in a place where we try to show what we are or hope to be, by our appearance, who we hang out with, the opinions we hold, etc. It's these particular lifestyles that are used to stereotype and segment target audiences. By researching activities, interests, and opinions, we can paint a picture of an audience that may be perfect for a specific brand. It's like we've got them in our crosshairs and all we need to do is pull that creative trigger to make them drool.

Understanding the consumer. What they want or don't want; what motivates them and influences them is a crucial part of any advertising campaign. All good ad folk should be able to do this. Not all can. I personally know 17 highly intelligent individuals who can. So, the next time you're looking for a great agency, look for one with a niche in "people."

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