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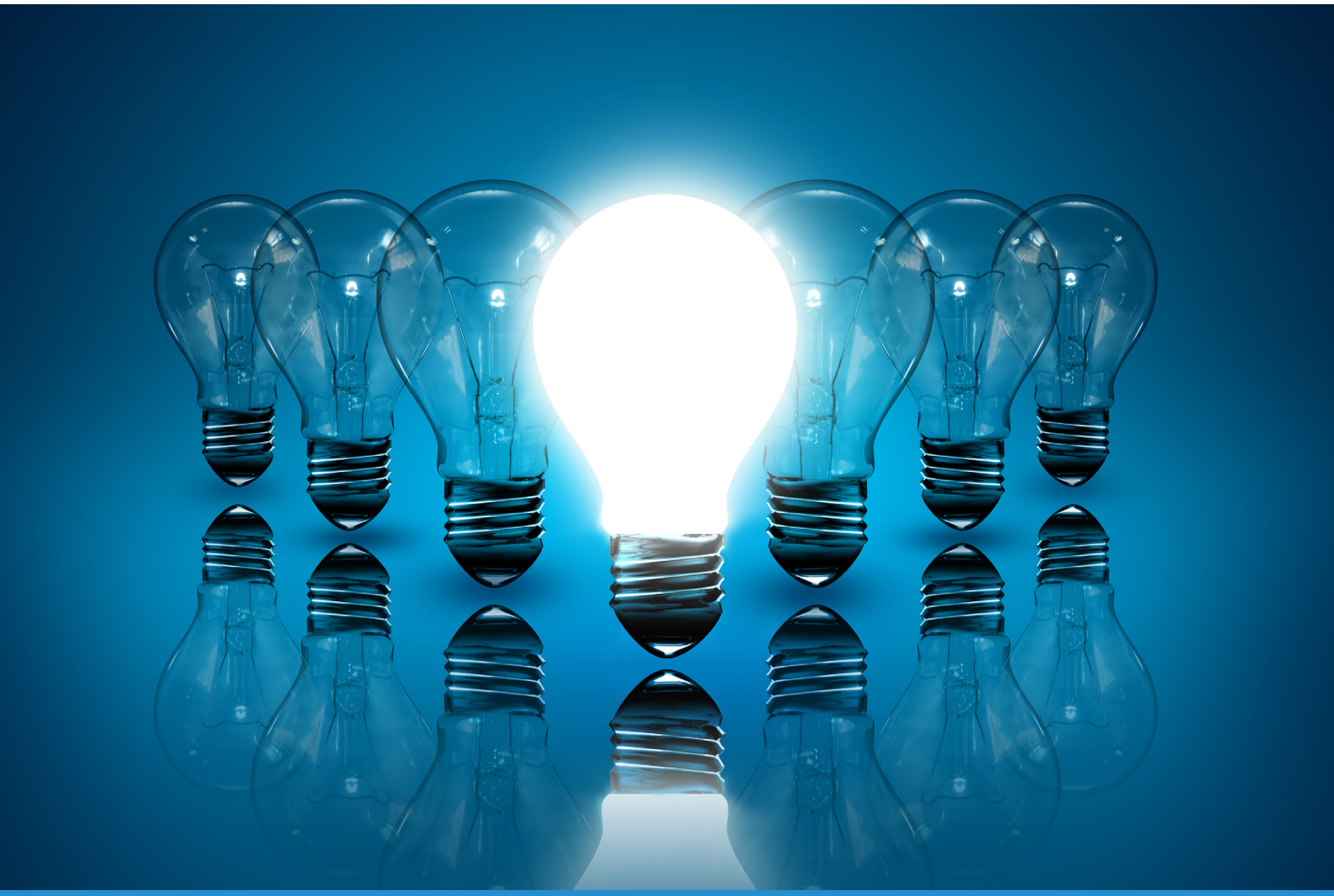

BRAND TRACKING 2.0:

WHY IT'S TIME TO GIVE YOUR BRAND TRACKER A MAKEOVER

SEPTEMBER 2022

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FOREWORD

"Ugh, brand trackers. The dinosaurs of the market research industry".

These are the words of the head of market research and customer voice at a major Australian member organisation, the implication being that brand trackers are large and outmoded constructs, ripe for extinction.

The brand tracker has long been a standard tool in the marketer's kitbag. Most companies with an annual marketing budget of at least $500,000 are using them to assess brand health at regular intervals. Why? At their best, brand trackers enable organisations to make strategic decisions about their brand and marketing, informed by objective and quantitative market insights. However, this lofty outcome is not achieved as often as one might expect. Brand trackers are often cumbersome and barely fit for purpose; creatures that cling to the past, rather than concentrating on the future. Or they are so focused on the minutia that the company using the tracker fails to recognise that their market is changing, and that they risk being left behind.

So why are some brand trackers in such bad shape? In many cases they have been running for several years and have had abundant time and money thrown at them, so the endowment effect kicks in. The people responsible for them place higher value on retaining the measures and approach that they already have than they would if they were setting up a new tracker from scratch. Then there is the effort required to disentangle existing measures from the organisational reports in which they appear. Often, the individuals overseeing the trackers have KPIs attached to the outcomes, or the results form part of regular executive or board reporting. Having to explain to stakeholders two steps removed from the research – and with little understanding of the methodological workings of the brand tracker – why a metric they have been monitoring for the last two years needs to change can readily be placed in the too-hard basket.

Ultimately it can be difficult for marketers to make the time to objectively review and reassess a tool that appears to be functioning satisfactorily – especially when they have psychological and practical restraints that discourage them from doing so.

Yet brand trackers are typically large, expensive endeavours. It is good business practice to review such an investment from time to time. The real danger, though, in having a brontosaurus for a brand tracker is not that an organisation is wasting its money. It's that the tracking data the organisation is using, or the way in which they are using it, may be encouraging suboptimal decision-making.

In an environment where decisions move at pace and consumer needs are consistently evolving, it's vital for organisations to ask themselves: is my brand tracker on the right track? In this whitepaper, we have canvassed the views of some of Australia's leading marketers on best practice in brand tracking. We've covered what you should be doing, what to avoid, and the essential elements a marketer should consider when establishing or reviewing a tracking study for their brand.

We interviewed six industry stakeholders and opinion-leaders and identified four fundamental components of a brand tracking study that all play a role in creating its utility – the brand strategy, the structure, the measures, and what we've dubbed the insights environment. That is, the people and processes that surround a tracker's development and use within an organisation.

What is brand tracking?

The answer depends on who you ask. At its core, brand tracking is a way of assessing changes in awareness and perceptions of your brand over time. It's done through quantitative research with an appropriate sample of the audiences whose opinions about your brand can influence your success.

Brand tracking is "a longitudinal study to examine the attitudes toward and awareness of a brand over a set period"[1]. Ultimately, it must stand up to scrutiny, which may come from the executive, the board or any other stakeholders using the tracker to inform evidence-based decision-making.

"In an ideal format, brand trackers should be 'anti fragile' - a balance of consistent, bedrock measures and evolving, flexing measures that can adapt to a changing ecosystem and add strategic muscle" says Elle Pound, former head of insight at The Brand Agency.

If your tracker only goes as far as measuring what's happening, you're not doing it right. Sure, it's important to make an objective assessment of the status quo and flag any fluctuations that require the end user of the research to respond by setting brand KPIs and measuring performance against them. But a brand tracker of any value should also diagnose the reason for the changes and recommend what actions should be taken on the back of the findings. Borton's model of reflection[2] involves three simple questions:

1. 'What?' is the description of the situation or problem
2. 'So what?' is the analysis, where the situation is scrutinised for insight
3. 'Now what?' is the synthesis, where you determine how to resolve the situation and what to do differently next time.

The problem is that often the tracker doesn't go further than the 'what?'.

[1] Purcell, Molly. (2020) What is Brand Tracking. Greenbook https://www.greenbook.org/mr/insights/what-happened-to-brand-tracking-in-market-research/
[2] Borton, T. (1970). Reach, touch and teach. Hutchinson

THE BRAND STRATEGY

1

THE BRAND STRATEGY

A brand tracker is one of many strategic tools that can be used to determine where your business is now, where you want it to be in the future, and which metrics should be pursued to achieve your target or goal. One of the biggest mistakes companies make is to develop their tracker in isolation from their marketing strategy – or indeed, their overall business strategy.

Mark Ritson, brand consultant and former marketing professor, says the big issue with most brand trackers is that they don't reflect the company's strategy. *"The most common situation is a company has a distinctive strategy of targeting and positioning and objectives, but their tracker is a generic measurement tool that doesn't reflect that,"* he says.

So why is this? When a tracker is established, it's normally done with strategy in mind. A good research agency will incorporate consultation with a variety of stakeholders, including the CMO, brand managers and media/creative agencies into their process to understand the company's overall strategic direction and any KPIs relevant to brand, and use this knowledge to inform the research design. But then the strategy changes. The new five-year plan is vastly different from the old five-year plan, yet the company finds themselves with a legacy tracker that is still measuring performance against old metrics that are no longer relevant. It's simply not future-focussed.

Barry Walker, Head of Strategy, Perth, at Wunderman Thompson, says part of the problem is in the name itself.

"Tracking is a metaphor derived from hunting. By definition, it means looking for signs from something that has already happened, a mode of seeing where someone has been, and to follow them. It is retrospective. It is a rear-vision mirror tool," he says.

This creates perverse outcomes, where marketing strategy is developed based on where the company has been, not where it's going.

"What if it was less focused on the past, and more proactive about the future?" he asks.

According to Walker, companies are often beholden to years of tracking certain things in a specific way. While society changes and business models evolve, they get caught up worrying about what will be lost by evolving their tracking, rather than what might be gained.

"The conundrum for the marketing team is, 'we've spent a lot of money and time, and there's a lot of history behind the results we've amassed by which we validate our own existence. And so, the last thing we can ever do is change those,'" he says.

Elle Pound, former head of insight at The Brand Agency concurs. *"There's this view that trackers are by nature inflexible, longitudinal and about trend lines. I dispute that, because brand strategy and audience needs change. A tracker needs to be a current-state picture of a brand's performance, and whether people see it as relevant."*

Ben Hammond, consulting principal at Curiouser, argues that longitudinal data is relevant up to a point, but that it also needs to reflect the trends and drivers that shape consumer sentiment within a sector. The tracker provides a benchmark, or baseline, of where you are today. *"How do you start a conversation about a brand if you don't have a baseline measure?"* he says.

THE STRUCTURE: TACTICAL VS. STRATEGIC

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THE STRUCTURE: TACTICAL VS. STRATEGIC

If a brand tracker is a strategic tool, relevant only in relation to the brand and marketing strategy, then what about the notion of it being something that continues over time and seeks to measure longer-term changes? This is a contentious point. The consensus about the power of a brand tracker is that it lies in the time series, using data that has been collected over many years of asking the same questions.

An obsession with longitudinal data can have negative implications for survey design. When stakeholders are reluctant to change the time-series, even if that might be the obvious best step, their solution is often to add more questions, cobbling together the old and the new into a beast of a survey with historically redundant measures. It also adds cost for no real benefit.

A brand tracker is not, nor should it be, a tactical, campaign-based tool – although many companies do try to make it do both, and not very well. Campaign measurement performs an entirely different function for an organisation. It allows you to assess how your campaign performed against the campaign objectives. It's measurement, not tracking – a subtle but important nuance. When you try to combine both in one survey instrument, you run into logistical and methodological challenges.

First, the tracker becomes clunky and bloated, and the questionnaire length balloons. Our conversations with marketers and in-house researchers revealed that brand trackers with a survey length of 20-30 minutes are not uncommon. An unwieldy length of a survey instrument leads to a poor experience for the respondents, which impacts data quality. At best, respondents skim through the survey with minimal attention and engagement. At worst, they drop out, reducing your chance of obtaining a high-quality sample.

Second, combining measurement and tracking poses the challenge of what to tackle when. If you measure the campaign first, the respondents are primed for the brand-related questions. If you do it in reverse order, the respondents are primed for the campaign evaluation, also known as the Rosser-Reeves fallacy[3]. This can have a damaging effect on measures like ad recall and brand attribution.

However, not everyone agrees that a brand tracker should be purely a longer-term vehicle.

"In FMCG, everything is always on price promotion, and that calendar continues to ramp up," says Mikayla Ellis, Group Business Director at Zenith. *"So, you can't just look at sales results alone, as this does not provide the full picture. You need a holistic measurement framework that looks at all levers and impacts, both short and longer term, to demonstrate the full effect of the activity undertaken".* This scenario requires a brand tracker to be more frequent, and to be analysed alongside sales and campaign activity. This allows you to find indicators of future success that can be used to counter-balance sub-optimal sales performance.

Perhaps the challenge lies in when the two objectives – long and short term – naturally overlap. This can occur when a campaign is intended to do two jobs: have a tactical outcome, but also drive a brand message. Or when a marketer wishes to understand the brand impact of the creatives, accepting that every touchpoint a brand has with the public has a potential to shape public opinion. It could also play a role when an advertiser is investing in longer-term brand-building over short-term sales results. A brand tracker that measures key brand attributes and positioning can show that despite a dip in short-term sales results, the payoff is still on track, just somewhere down the line.

[3] Binet, Les and Carter, Sarah. (2014). Mythbuster: The Rosser-Reeves fallacy https://www.warc.com/newsandopinion/opinion/mythbuster-the-rosser-reeves-fallacy/en-gb/1805

Measurement vs. Tracking

When you're measuring something, you're assessing performance against key metrics. In the campaign evaluation context, this can tell you:

- Do people recall seeing your campaign?
- What channels did they see it through?
- Did it resonate in the way that you intended?
- Did it prompt them to take any action?

It can give you a clear read on whether your campaign hit the mark, by assessing performance against pre-agreed targets at campaign outset.

While measurement plays a role in a tracker, in the sense that you may also be assessing performance against pre-agreed brand metrics like an increase in brand awareness, tracking is much broader. It's about monitoring a brand's health over time.

There's no right or wrong approach. Every compromise should be made with purpose and with an acknowledgement of the implications on the ability to garner actionable insights, and on the application of those insights.

If we accept that a traditional brand tracker is strategic, not tactical, then the question of how often a brand tracking study should be carried out becomes easier to answer.

Les Binet and Peter Field[4] argue that you should *build* brand and *activate* sales. These objectives are best achieved using a different budget and tactical mix, and with different audiences. Long-term brand growth comes from reaching as many people as possible – not just a target segment – and persuading them to purchase your brand at least once. Short term campaigns and measurement need to be based on a narrower target audience. But here's the rub – short-term and long-term may not be what you think they are. Binet and Field found that the cross-over between short- and long-term effects is six months, *"so that puts everything up to, and including, quarterly reporting firmly in the short-term domain"*[5].

This is important to note because companies are increasingly using short-term metrics as primary measures of performance; yet short- and long-term marketing strategies perform entirely different roles.

Since brand measures move more slowly, it can be deceptive to monitor movements over shorter time periods (monthly, for instance). Brand metrics measured over short time periods can start to look like guitar strings or raw spaghetti – straight, parallel lines that show little variation. Worse still, focusing on shorter time periods roots a marketer's view in short-term blips, rather than the longer-term implications.

An annual rhythm provides companies a strong combination of cost and planning benefit. If it's done late in the year, decision makers gain a view of what they've achieved and can use the insights to inform the subsequent year's planning.

Tactical activities and campaigns can be measured more frequently, with a narrower target group, and different objectives. If a big chunk of your marketing budget is going to be spent tactically – Binet and Field suggest 40% should be spent on driving short-term outcomes – then it certainly makes sense to monitor more regularly. The question becomes: should you be tracking brand metrics this frequently? Or should you be measuring the outcomes that your short-term tactical activations are trying to achieve, such as sales, communication of specific offers or promotions, or attendance at events?

[4] Binet, Les and Field, Peter. (2013). The Long and the Short of It: Balancing Short and Long-Term Marketing Strategies
[5] Binet, Les and Field, Peter. (2019). Marketing Effectiveness in the Digital Era https://ipa.co.uk/knowledge/publications-reports/media-in-focus-marketing-effectiveness-in-the-digital-era/

THE MEASURES

3

THE MEASURES

What you measure depends on your objectives, but there are a few key things that make their way into most brand trackers. According to Ritson, *"brand trackers need to combine two things, essentially – brand perceptions and brand funnels. And if the client has segmentation, [it should include] the qualifying questions so you can slice and dice."* It doesn't have to be complex, but, as Ritson says, looking at the correlations between brand perceptions and funnels is *"where the magic lies".*

Brand funnels

Brand funnels give an indication of where a brand sits in the market relative to their competitors. They are loosely intended to reflect a purchasing scenario and are used to enable brands to identify exactly where their challenges and opportunities lie. They can follow several models, based on the objectives of the brand – a purchase, for a commercial organisation, or behaviour change, for a social organisation – and their components can be calibrated to suit these objectives. The brand funnel components can also be tailored to the specific needs of a brand, in a certain category, in a particular industry.

Whilst straightforward in their design, each stage of brand funnel measurement is nuanced. Organisations need to make decisions about which stages are relevant to strategy, and how these measures are captured and reported.

Awareness

Unprompted and prompted awareness are standard brand health measures. But is awareness always a relevant metric? For some categories it is, but it is worth considering the role unprompted awareness plays in a purchase journey. Take superannuation, for example. If someone wants to switch superannuation funds, does it really matter whether your brand is top of mind for them? Or would their behaviour more likely involve googling something like "best superannuation funds"? In this case, investing in SEM (search engine marketing) and improving your brand's SEO (search engine optimisation) might create a larger return than investing in growing awareness. Understanding the customer's journey or path-to-purchase is as vital to developing your marketing strategy as it is to determining what a brand tracker should measure in evaluating that strategy.

The size and growth trajectory of a brand matters as well, when it comes to deciding the role brand awareness plays in your tracker. Ellis believes that metrics like brand awareness hit a point of diminishing return. *"I've had clients with large, established multi-national brands who have a prompted awareness of 90%, and they have it on briefs that they want to increase it by three or four basis points, and it's just not feasible. But if you've got a new brand with no awareness and you spend significant money on a launch campaign, you're going to see the awareness dial shift pretty quickly."* In the latter example, measuring awareness provides critical insight into how the new brand is performing. In the former, there is merit in questioning why an extra three or four percentage point improvement in awareness is important.

It's not just awareness – perhaps more important is what is remembered. Byron Sharp, in *How brands grow*[6], refers to the idea of mental availability, defined as an emotionally primed recall of a brand's distinctive and memorable assets.

This idea doesn't change the brand funnels, per se. It influences what gets put at the top of the funnel. Awareness? Mental availability? A measure of the emotional response to brand assets? The latter can include mnemonic devices, such as music, logos or even characters or mascots. What you measure should be shaped by the distinctive attributes of the brand, and the strategy being used to build, drive, or reinforce the positioning of the brand.

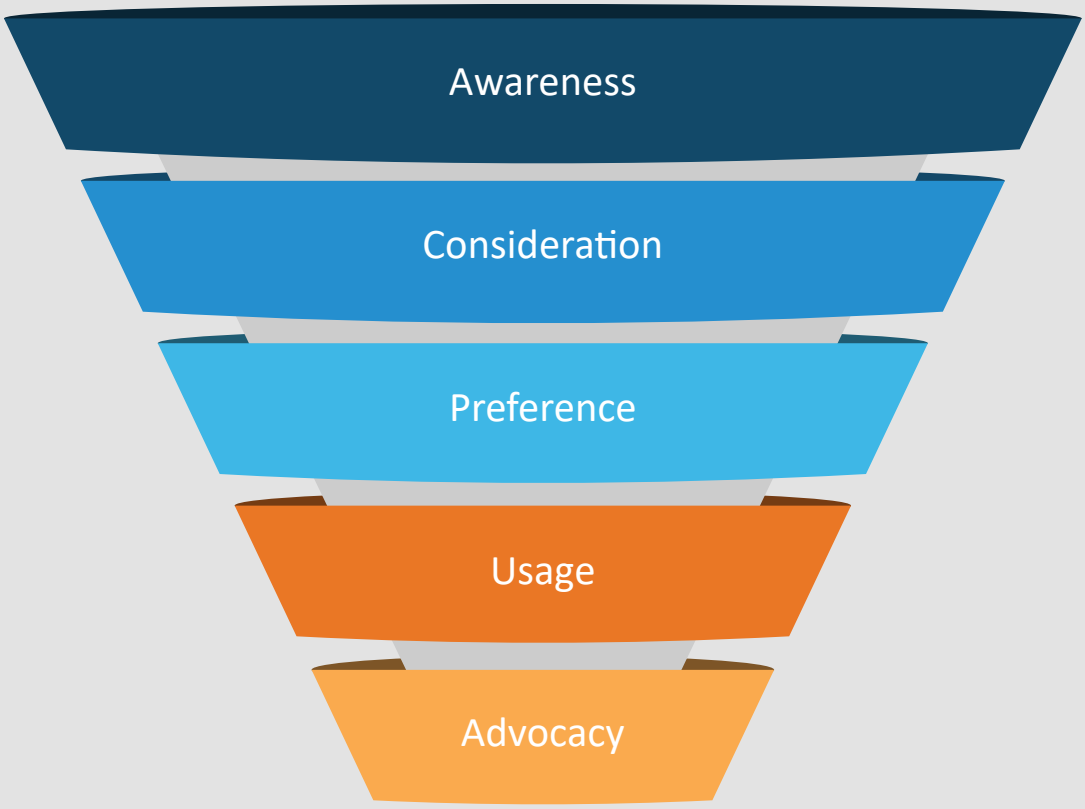
Some marketers also include brand purpose in this bucket – that brand purpose can provide the emotionally primed response. *"If you're a new brand, and you're driving awareness, well that's great up to a point, but I would argue that getting the brand's purpose out there can be just as important,"* Ellis says.

[6] Sharp, Byron. (2010). How Brands Grow: What Marketers Don't Know, Oxford University Press ANZ

What metrics should be included in a brand funnel?

Brand funnels can differ, and there isn't necessarily one way to measure a funnel. The key consideration when deciding what sits in your funnel, is the objective you're trying to achieve. This will dictate what aspects of the funnel are appropriate to include in your survey, and what you measure at each stage.

They typically start with a broad measure at the top, such as *Awareness* (of a brand). In a brand tracker, awareness would represent the proportion of a population who has heard of the brand. The next step of the funnel reflects the action a brand is intending to influence and is usually a next step on the journey of their target audience. For a commercial organisation, this next funnel step is typically *Consideration* (of those who are aware of the brand, what proportion of them would consider the brand). Other measures at this funnel stage can include things like *Preference* (the degree to which the brand is preferred over competitors) or *Interest* (for behaviour change funnels). The brand then funnels down, potentially over other stages, until the pointy end: the action, or purchase – also known as usage. This is the smallest cohort, because not everyone who is aware of a brand, or would consider it, prefer it, or be interested in what they have to say, will end up becoming a customer or taking the desired action. Some funnels go beyond the action into future behaviours – loyalty, for example, or advocacy. Identifying how your brand performs at each stage of the funnel and the conversion between stages, compared to your competitors, is an important step in developing and measuring your brand strategy.



Consideration and usage

Beyond awareness or responses to brands, measures such as consideration and usage are typical inclusions in brand trackers. Whilst important steps to measure in the brand funnel, in some brand contexts, these measures can be valuable in their own right.

Consideration, for example, can be more important than awareness. Take a category such as deodorant, which is heavily price-promoted. Awareness alone may not be strong enough to successfully navigate a field of 50% discounts. Being high in consideration gives a greater chance of purchase when you're on special, and the hope that it will fend off less preferred brands when they're on special.

A measure of usage is also critical, especially when viewed from the perspective of Binet and Field. Brand growth comes from an increase in penetration; the brand tracker forms a principal way of measuring it. Even in industries such as FMCG, which is spoilt with a richness of sales data of varying sorts, the brand tracker can provide a total population monitoring of penetration, elevated beyond one retailer or another. How you measure usage, though, depends on the category and your brand's role in it. For example,

- **Trial** might be appropriate for a launch brand
- **Purchase** might be appropriate for a brand seeking growth by increasing penetration of a broader market
- **Used in the last 12 months** might be appropriate for a premium brand that is used sparingly by consumers
- **Used in the last 7 days or used regularly** might be appropriate for a fast moving, frequent usage category
- **Used most often** may be appropriate for products which are highly interchangeable within a category.

How you measure usage depends on what makes sense for the brand, the category in which it competes, and whether a brand is new and emerging, or mature and well established.

This is another reason why a one-size fits all approach to brand tracking is never a good idea and why a brand tracker shouldn't necessarily be static and unchanging.

Brand positioning

Another key measure within a brand tracker is positioning. Hammond argues that this is critical, because for any organisation, your brand may be an impediment to your growth. "*What if your brand doesn't stand for the things that are important to the market right now?"* he says. *"Or the associations of your brand that you are low on now, are important to a future cohort of customers?"*

Positioning is typically measured via brand attribute statements, or brand associations, which are designed to ascertain whether people see your brand in the same way your company intends it to be seen. These attributes should be specific to your brand but should be measured against your key competitors to see whether your brand owns the positioning, or whether you are differentiated from your competitors.

If one of the pillars of your brand is to be friendly, then it makes sense for this to be an attribute that you measure for yourself against your competitors. However, that attribute would be meaningless to a brand that isn't focused on growing perceptions of their friendliness in market.

The caveat here is to ensure that the measures are always brought back to the strategy. What does your brand want to stand for? Where is the white space? The answers to these questions inform the brand perception measures you include in your tracker. If you require more clarity or want to understand how well your brand positioning aligns with consumer needs and purchase drivers, engaging in qualitative research prior to implementing a brand tracker can be beneficial.

Then there is how you measure certain elements. Brand perceptions, for example, are best measured using a System 1 approach – tapping into consumers' automatic, intuitive, emotional, and reactive responses. In practice, they're often measured using System 2 thinking, which assumes our decision making is rational and logical, something which we know not to be the case.

Today there are numerous ways of tackling this, including timed responses, exposure to brand assets, and text analysis of free-form responses. The important thing to consider is what is it you're trying to measure, and why is it important to your strategy. Only then can the most appropriate way to measure it be determined.

Competitor set

When it comes to brand funnels or associations, it is typical to measure a brand against its category competitors, both key and emerging. Some companies broaden this to an aspirational target set – larger competitors, more premium competitors, or a wider definition of a category, based on consumer needs and behaviours.

When choosing what competitors to benchmark, you need to put yourself in your customers' shoes. A brand isn't just communicating to their category; they're communicating to the world.

As Walker observes: *"a utility doesn't only exist in a customer's mind against other utilities, but against all the other brand experiences they've had".*

THE INSIGHTS ENVIRONMENT

4

THE INSIGHTS ENVIRONMENT

James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits*[7], refers to the power that the environment we create for ourselves has in enabling the change we wish to make.

"Walk into any living room in America. Where do all the couches and chairs face? They all look at the TV. What is that room designed to get you to do? And we wonder why we sit and watch so much TV."[8]

If you want to practice your guitar more frequently, Clear says, then put it in the middle of your living room.

To maximise the effectiveness of your tracker, it's critical to have your brand stakeholders involved in the process. Ask yourself: have you and your stakeholders designed an environment conducive to developing and using your brand tracker? Consider the number of stakeholders who may have views on what's measured, as well as those who make use of the findings.

It's hard to think of a situation where collaboration between key stakeholders, including the marketing agency and market research agency, doesn't result in a better outcome for the client. When the research agency is brought into the tent, in terms of what the marketing or brand strategy is trying to achieve and why, it almost always means the outcomes of the tracker are more actionable.

You could extend this to having the ad and media agencies, and even internal departments such as sales and trade marketing, join in a strategy session designed to surface the appropriate metrics to cover in a new brand tracker. This includes reviewing an existing tracker with a view to ensuring it's forward-focused and fit-for-purpose.

While this is the ideal scenario, it doesn't always happen. Brand trackers are often used by marketing teams as *"a firebell for danger,"* Walker says.

"It seems like a strategist only gets exposed to them (brand trackers) when something goes wrong, like a spider chart changes shape radically, in reference to a pre-set or pre-ordained competitor set. Then we get dragged in, and the conversation is 'why is it so' and 'what do we need to do to pull it back into shape,'" he says.

There is a big difference between ticking a box, i.e., we did a good job, give us our budget for next year, versus examining the findings, the implications of what you've measured, and how this relates to the decisions a brand makes and the actions it takes.

Everyone we spoke to agreed that a brand tracker needs to be visible to the most senior company executives. For Walker, a brand tracker should be owned by the boardroom, because the decisions made there cascade down, to the executive team and senior leadership, who need to act on the findings, rather than by a marketing or ad department.

Pound agrees. *"If a brand tracker is going to be reinvented, then it has to be lifted out of marketing, as it has the potential to be a strategic business tool."*

[7] Clear, James. (2018). Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones
[8] Clear, James. (2017). 1% Better Every Day- James Clear at ConvertKit Craft + Commerce 2017- YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNeXuCYiE0U

Another aspect of a brand tracker insights environment is how and when these stakeholders collaborate. In a typical scenario, an email is sent to invite a group of stakeholders to a debrief presentation. The breadth of stakeholders included varies greatly amongst organisations. It is difficult to inspire engagement when this is the only contact the stakeholders have with the project. What other opportunities exist to take stakeholders on the brand tracking journey?

The context in which the data is analysed directly relates to the level of insight the brand tracker can provide. Context comes through engagement with multiple people both internally and externally who can benefit from the insights, but it also comes from other contextual data sources. When viewed as part of an overarching business strategy, a brand tracker needn't be used in isolation. While it can reveal important insights, its power increases when secondary data sources are presented alongside it or incorporated into the analysis. Ellis believes media data sources can add immense value when overlaid with brand tracker results. *"We provide the research agency with all relevant and accessible data files, to allow for a more holistic analysis of marketing effectiveness".* If your brand measures are strong, for example, but sales are down, then media data can tell you that your competitor outshouted you. Their share of voice was higher so your campaign was drowned out by competitor activity.

Sales data, when available, can also add a different lens to tracking insights by helping to explain why your campaign hasn't generated the results you'd hoped. Perhaps your flagship product was on sale a few weeks before, which can drive future customers to purchase sooner or lead to pantry stocking. Or perhaps a competitor's leading product was on sale during the week of your launch.

Secondary data sources can add further levels of meaning to brand tracking results. Bringing it all together in a cohesive narrative with simple, actionable insights, is a different story. If your brand tracker is a tedious, door stopper-sized compilation of charts, then you're wasting your time and money. For Hammond, because brand tracker findings are critical for the highest levels of the organisation to understand, the narrative must be simple. *"The more complex, or tactically focussed a brand tracker is, the harder it is to make a decision, or to make the right decision,"* he says.

Primary data is original data collected first-hand for the purposes of your study.

Secondary data can be defined as data collected for another purpose and subsequently used in research. It includes data sources that have been collected by a third-party and can be internal data or from external sources like syndicated and big data.

Examples of secondary data sources include sales data, media performance data, advertising share-of-voice data, economic data, corporate intelligence, and population and demographic data.

CONCLUSION

If you don't have a brand tracker, keep in mind that your competitors probably do. Hammond says, *"It's like a magic key to the market. Those who have it know what's going on; those who don't are just guessing."*

If you do have one, it's worthwhile taking stock of what you're measuring and why. Is your organisation stuck looking in the rear-view mirror, as Walker says, or do you set time aside each year to consider how the world has changed, and what that means for your brand, and your customers?

Change is hard, and the effort it takes to abandon an approach that's long established and accepted within an organisation shouldn't be underestimated. But adopting a "re-track" mentality might be just what's needed to elevate your tracker to the next level.

10 things to keep in mind when reviewing your brand tracker, or setting one up

Strategy

1. What is the brand strategy, and how well does the tracker measure it?
2. Tease apart your long-term vs short-term goals, and how you are going to measure them. Hint: you can't use the same tracker for both.

Structure

3. What timeframe makes sense for your strategy evaluation and planning? When do you need the results? If you're tracking monthly, what decisions are being made on a monthly basis that require you to track your brand this frequently?
4. Who do you need to hear from to make an objective assessment of brand health? Hint: A broader sample for brand building and a tighter, high-value audience for short-term tactical activation.

Measures

5. Are you measuring because you've always done it, or are you measuring because you can articulate exactly why it is relevant to your brand strategy?
6. On what brand-relevant customer behaviour are your measures based?
7. Is how you're asking the questions appropriate for giving you the answer to why you're asking them?
8. What secondary data can you use to add another layer of insight to your brand tracking results?

Stakeholders

9. Who else inside and outside my organisation can influence our brand image, and how and when are they involved on the brand tracking journey?
10. Who else in my organisation would benefit from the brand tracking data, and how should it be packaged and presented for them?

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- Elle Pound, former head of insight at The Brand Agency and founder of Artlas consulting
- Mark Ritson, brand consultant and former marketing professor
- Barry Walker, head of strategy, Perth, Wunderman Thompson

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CORE|DATA

About Us

CoreData is a global specialist research and strategy consultancy, founded in 2002 and headquartered in Australia, with operations in Sydney, Perth, London, Boston and Manila. We help organisations transform their service propositions by better understanding their customers and their markets. Using our tried and tested research methods, we help you make evidence-based decisions that serve as a platform for future growth and continuous improvement. CoreData's team is a complementary blend of experienced research, marketing and media professionals. Together, our combined industry and primary research experience brings unique perspective to consumer needs, attitudes and behaviours. CoreData strictly adheres to the Research Society Code of Professional Behaviour in relation to research confidentiality and security. We maintain the highest standards of data security requiring careful management and storage.

Headquarters

PERTH
CoreData WA
Fern, 79 St Georges Tce
Perth, WA 6000
T: +61 8 6500 3216
E: perth@coredataresearch.com

US
CoreData Research LLC
265 Franklin Street, Suite 1702,
Boston, MA 02110
T: (617) 702-3392
E: boston@coredataresearch.com

PHILIPPINES
CoreData Research Services Inc.
Unit E-1608 Tektite Towers,
Exchange Road, Ortigas,
Pasig City, 1605
T: +63 998 581 9950/
+63 917 562 5667
E: manila@coredataresearch.com

SYDNEY
CoreData Pty Limited
Suite 7, Level 9, 66 Hunter St
Sydney, NSW, 2000
T: +61 2 9376 9600
E: sydney@coredataresearch.com

UK
CoreData Research Ltd
Office One, 1 Coldbath Square,
Farringdon, London, EC1R 5HL
T: +44 779 336 7190
E: london@coredataresearch.com