

1915

Psychology Applied to the Measurement of Merit of Advertisements

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Recommended Citation

Gould, Harry H. (1915) "Psychology Applied to the Measurement of Merit of Advertisements," *Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science*, 22(1), 339-340.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pias/vol22/iss1/49>

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PSYCHOLOGY APPLIED TO THE MEASUREMENT OF MERIT OF ADVERTISEMENTS.

HARRY H. GOULD.

The problem to be presented in this paper is that of measuring the relative merits of a series of advertisements. The advertisements are arranged in their order of merit with the best at one extreme, the poorest at the other, and the intervening ones in their ranking order as determined by the method of procedure used in the experiment.

The distinctive feature of this attempt is that it rests upon a fundamental analysis of scoring factors which serve as a basis upon which the judgments are made. The advertisements are compared and ranked upon the basis of each of these specific factors separately. To make the final results show the relative values of the advertisements as a whole, it is essential that this list of scoring factors shall be all-inclusive of those factors which go to make up a perfect advertisement.

The analysis of scoring factors was made in the following manner. First an analysis was made of the mental processes which must be induced in the reader by an advertisement in order to be effective. Thus it is necessary that the advertisement attract the attention of the reader; it must have attention value. Its meaning must be readily intelligible to the reader; it must have meaning value. It must create a favorable feeling tone in the reader; it must have feeling value of the right sort. It must be remembered; it must have memory value. And finally it must convince the reader and impel him to act; it must have persuasive value.

The next step was to carry this analysis still further and determine the specific factors which contribute towards each of these ends. The results of this analysis are as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Attention value | 6. Specificness |
| 1. Intensity | 7. Vividness |
| 2. Strikingness | 8. Emotional congruity |
| 3. Clearness | 3. Feeling value |
| 4. Feeling tone | 1. Æsthetic appeal |
| 2. Meaning value | 2. Familiarity |
| 1. Distinctness | 3. Emotional congruity |
| 2. Relevance | 4. Sincerity |
| 3. Familiarity | 5. Appeal to instincts |
| 4. Aptness | 6. Appeal to interests |
| 5. Simplicity | 7. Appeal to emotions |

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| 4. Memory value | 2. Suggestion |
| 1. Intensity | 3. Appeal to instincts |
| 2. Vividness | 4. Appeal to interests |
| 3. Feeling tone | 5. Appeal to emotions |
| 4. Familiarity | 6. Specific direction |
| 5. Persuasion value | 7. Personal appeal |
| 1. Vigor | 8. Authoritativeness |

These scoring factors having been determined upon, the method of procedure is that technically known as the "order of merit method", the reliability of which has been demonstrated beyond question many times in psychological laboratories. According to this method, the advertisements are taken and arranged in a regular ascending order for one of these concrete factors at a time.

This arrangement is made for each of the scoring factors included in the complete analysis, and the place held in the series by each advertisement for each of these factors is recorded. Then the sum of the numbers indicating the ranking held by each advertisement in all of the twenty-four arrangements is found, and these numbers taken as a measure of the relative merits of the different advertisements as a whole; the smaller the number representing such sum, the greater the merit of the advertisement.

This method of measurement has been applied in our experimental work to series of mail order copy, and its reliability tested by checking up the laboratory results with the actual keyed results, so that we feel we can claim a reasonable degree of accuracy, both for the analysis of scoring factors and for the method.

If this method proves as workable in the hands of the average business man as in the case of the skilled observers used in these tests, the immense practical significance to the business world is apparent, when we consider that nearly a billion dollars are expended annually in advertising, and a large percentage of this amount is conceded by advertisers to be spent ineffectively.

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