



London

PLANNING GUIDE

March 1974

	Page	
I	AN APPROACH TO PLANNING ADVERTISING	2
II	ADVERTISING'S CONTRIBUTION TO MARKETING	3
	1. How do brands appeal?	3
	2. To whom do brands appeal?	5
	3. The role of advertising	6
	4. How communications work	7
III	IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING ADVERTISING	9
	A. Setting advertising objectives	9
	B. The nature of planning advertising	13
IV	A FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING ADVERTISING	16
V	THE ADVERTISING PLANNING CYCLE	18
	1. Where are we?	18
	2. Why are we there?	21
	3. Where could we be?	23
	4. How could we get there?	26
	5. Are we getting there?	32

I AN APPROACH TO PLANNING ADVERTISING

Most people would agree that advertising, like any other job, benefits from being tackled systematically. But advertising is different from most jobs, and it requires a rather special approach to planning.

Advertising involves producing a long series of unique solutions. Each piece of work requires innovation. Every script, every layout, every recommendation is in some way different from any that has gone before. Each client operates in a different market, and each brand in a market has different needs.

So any systematic approach to planning advertising has to do more than simply provide controls and disciplines. It must actively stimulate imagination and creativity too.

In fact, the ideal advertising planning methods should be:

1. Realistic. They must be based on what we have found in practice to be 'best' for planning advertising. They must not simply impose an external structure on the normal patterns of work. They must be capable of development and evolution by individuals.
2. Pragmatic. They must actually work. They must actively help people produce advertising that is both creative and relevant. That means in practice that they must be reasonably simple, memorable and easy to follow.
3. Fundamental. Though simple in form, they must be soundly based on coherent theories of how advertising contributes to marketing; how communications work; how people create new ideas; and how people work together most productively.
4. Structured. They must set a framework within which imagination is to work. They must help by breaking down complex processes into stages: by setting disciplines; by providing for regular evaluations of work done.

In line with these requirements, this document aims first, to summarise the theories on which our planning methods are based
secondly, to set out a framework for planning which represents what the best planners are doing anyhow.

II ADVERTISING'S CONTRIBUTION TO MARKETING

1. How do brands appeal?

In any competitive market, people's choice between brands normally depends on the total impression that they have of each brand. They do not usually run through a catalogue of relative virtues and vices as they stop before the shelves or the shop window.

In most markets, people establish buying habits and have a mental short-list of a few acceptable brands from which they would normally choose. The strength and nature of the total impression that they have of any brand governs whether or not it is on the short-list and whether it tends to be first or second or third on the list.

This totality of a brand's appeal has been built up over time by three different sorts of appeal:

- (i) appeals to the senses: how the brand looks, smells, tastes, feels, sounds (either in the pack or as a product in use)
- (ii) appeals to the reason: what the brand does, what it is for, what it contains, how it performs
- (iii) appeals to the emotions: what the brand's individual nature or style is, what its associations are, what mood it evokes or satisfies, what are the psychological rewards of using it.

These different elements combine in various ways and interact with each other, so that for any brand there is a unique blend of appeals.

In this sense brands are like people. People have physical attributes, skills and abilities. They have their own style, their own way of talking, moods, idiosyncrasies, friends, clothes, possessions and so on.

We recognise that our view of one particular person is affected by all these things, in a very complex way, but we have no difficulty in thinking of him as an individual. In just the same way, we normally think of a brand as a single entity, but can recognise that there are many elements that go to make it up.

And as with people, each brand has a unique identity or personality. This is not normally because each of its specific appeals is different from those of competitors. Brand personality more often depends on the particular blend of appeals to the senses, the reason and the emotions.

Motivators and discriminators

There is another sort of distinction we can make between the specific attractions of a brand.

Some appeals are very important in motivating people to buy, but are common to all brands in the product field. Indeed, the more important they are, the more likely they are to be common; as, for instance, the ability to get clothes clean in a washing powder.

Some appeals are much less important in motivating people to buy the product type, but add an extra value that makes all the difference between one brand and another.

Any successful brand has a blend of motivating and discriminating appeals. Without the motivators it would undoubtedly fail. But without the discriminators to add values and make the brand unique, it would not have a distinct enough total appeal to succeed - except on a cut-price low-margin basis.

Factors affecting brand personality

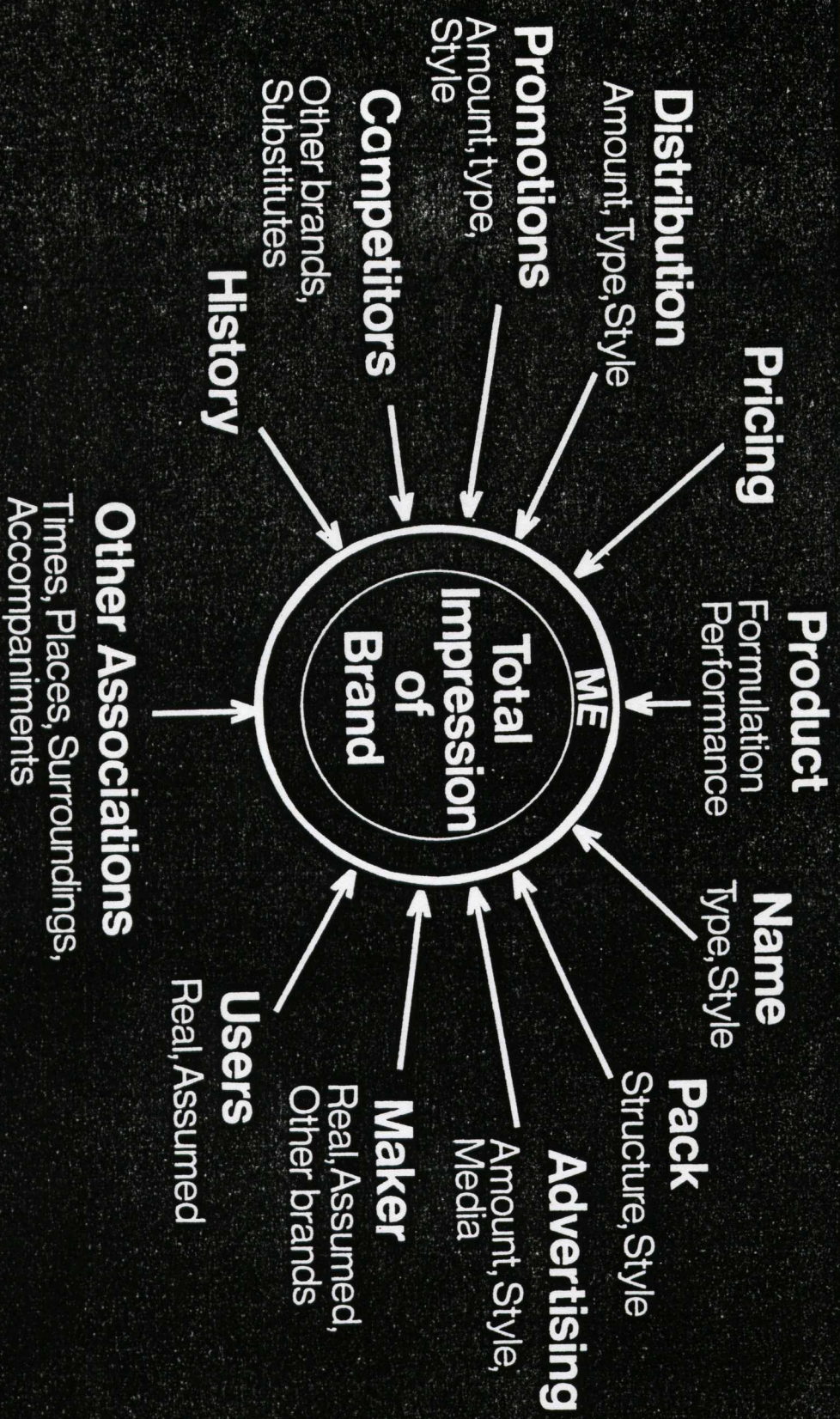
There is a huge number of different factors that affect a brand's personality - its combination of appeals. Some of those shown in the chart opposite are under the manufacturer's control, some not.

He can control the physical product and its packaging; and many forms of communication about the brand - its naming, pack design, advertising and promotions. Pricing, distribution and many associations are only partially controllable. Past history and competitive activity are totally out of his control.

Even the controllable factors do not affect the total impression of a brand directly. They are all filtered through the receiver's mind, are related to existing ideas, attitudes, prejudices and predispositions; and are finally moulded into a totality. My total impression of any brand is made up of my experience of using it and whatever I have received, digested and accepted from the communications about it.

Perhaps most important, my view of a brand's personality depends on my impression of its competitors. Everything is relative.

SOME OF THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT BRAND PERSONALITY



2. To whom do brands appeal?

No brand can appeal to all the people all the time. But it is not normally possible to divide the consumers of a product type into neat segments of Brand A users, Brand B users, and so on. We know that most people in most markets have a short list of brands from which they normally choose and that the short lists themselves can change over time.

The reason that there are not usually clearly defined market segments is that the motivating appeals of a brand usually apply more or less equally to all the brands in a market, while the discriminating appeals are not usually quite important enough to divide consumers permanently into neat exclusive groups or, perhaps, to offset a tempting price cut or special offer.

Where there are clear differences in functional values (what the brand does) and/or motivating appeals, there will be market segmentation. But where the differences are mainly in the discriminators and non-functional values (who the brand is) there will be only a tendency to segmentation, often fairly minor.

For instance, within washing powders as a whole there will be market segmentation between low-lather detergents and standard detergents (owners of fully automatic washing machines v. non-owners). But there will be a relatively minor tendency for users of Persil to be different sorts of people from users of Ariel. (Indeed a great many people use both). There are minor differences between the two groups in age, class, region, attitude to life, psychological characteristics and so on. But the only major difference is that one group is the sort of people to whom Persil and its associations appeal; and the other is the sort of people to whom Ariel and its associations appeal. (And there is of course the third group of those to whom both appeal).

This is why setting target groups for advertising is not quite as straightforward as it looks. We have to recognise that in theory there is an element of circularity about them. Usually, the only comprehensive way of nominating the target group for Persil - the potential buyers of the brand - is "the sort of people to whom Persil-type values or the Persil brand personality appeal."

Since this is unsatisfactory from a practical point of view, we must work out target groups in terms other than simply descriptive. What they should be instead is dealt with later, on page 11.

3. The role of advertising

Advertising's contribution to the marketing of any brand will clearly vary according to circumstances and particularly according to the competitive situation; and it may vary over time.

But there are basically two sorts of contribution it can make:

(i) "Direct" contribution

It can directly affect people's intention to buy or their buying or their using a brand.

It can do this by reminding them of the brand's existence and its relevance to a want or need; by maintaining a habit; by giving new information which relates it to a need or want; by offering some incentive to direct action.

(ii) "Indirect" contribution

Advertising can contribute indirectly, over a much longer period, by helping to build the total impression that people have of a brand.

It can do this by emphasising the functional values of the product; by adding non-functional values to the brand - making it more valuable to buyers and potential buyers than the product on its own; by promoting word-of-mouth recommendation (from users, salesmen, service men, retailers, etc.)

If advertising is to be fully effective, it must contribute both directly and indirectly. There is no reason why there should be a conflict between the two. Quite the reverse: they inevitably interact. People's responses to a direct appeal will be governed by what they think of the brand; and their total impression of the brand will in part be affected by the nature and amount of direct appeals.

The precise relationship of direct to indirect contribution will vary from market to market, but there are three reasons why the indirect role has become much more important than it used to be:

(i) Technology. Lead times have been cut down.

Manufacturers cannot now rely on having a "better" product than competitors for very long. To be successful a brand has to have strong non-functional values to make it more desirable than other brands.

(ii) Retail power. Retailers are increasingly squeezing manufacturers' margins, now that there is no resale price maintenance. In many markets, it is a much more important role for advertising to maintain the brand's values in the eyes of consumers than directly affect its volume.

- (iii) Self-service. The retailer's shelves have taken over the direct roles of reminder and incentive. Advertising has to offset competitors' direct incentives or the low price of private label brands by building extra value into our brand.

In other words the primary role for advertising is increasingly the indirect one - adding values to a brand. It has to do this by communication, by affecting people's knowledge or their attitudes or their intentions.

To see how it can work, in rather more precise terms, we have to consider what is known about how any communications work.

4. How communications work

All the evidence is that what people receive from any communication is largely dependent on their existing knowledge and attitudes. Both consciously and subconsciously we want our attitudes on a particular topic or person or brand to be more or less consistent. If new information is presented to us that is inconsistent with what we currently think or feel, or what we want to think or feel, there is a strong likelihood that we will ignore it or distort it until it does fit. This means that our attitudes on most subjects change only rather slowly, unless new information is presented which is so overwhelming and so undeniable that we have no option but to change our views radically.

The reception of any communication depends not only on the receiver's existing pattern of ideas, but also on his relationship with the sender of the communication and the form in which it is sent. What people receive depends on who says it and the tone of voice and language used.

But it goes further than simple reception. The receiver may hear and understand what is said. But this is not to say that he will accept the attitude or the information as his own, or that he will follow any advice implied by it. It all depends on how he responds to the communication.

In fact, communication should not be thought of as the sending and receiving (or not receiving) of a message; it is more the sending of a stimulus - a combination of what is said, how it's said and who said it - and the making of a response. Often the response is very different from the nature or the intentions of the stimulus. What people get out of a communication is by no means always what went into it.

There are some clear implications here for advertising communications:

1. Advertising that aims to reinforce people's existing ideas or modify them slightly is likely to work better than advertising which aim to convert people to radically new ideas. (There is a lot of direct evidence that advertising most affects people already buying a brand).
2. Advertising is particularly easy to ignore, by selective perception. It will only be received at all if it accords with people's interests, motivations or attitudes.
3. The advertiser as a sender of communications has a fairly low credibility - he is expected to be biased. But the degree of credibility will be mainly determined by people's experience of brand performance versus expectations. Over-claiming or an overbearing (doorstep salesman-like) style could be counter-productive.
4. An advertisement as a stimulus is a combination of medium, words, pictures, movements, symbols, associations, tones of voice, etc. The stimulus is received as a totality; the receiver does not separate content and form. The individual elements of an advertisement have no meaning on their own. They can only be judged in combination.
5. The response to an advertisement, as to any other stimulus, may be different from our expectations. And it is the response which matters, not the advertisement.

III IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING ADVERTISING

A SETTING ADVERTISING OBJECTIVES

These theories of advertising's contribution to marketing have some clear implications for setting strategy. They suggest that properly set objectives have to answer these questions:

1. How ought our brand to compare with competitors?

How much our brand will appeal to people will depend on its relationship with competitors, in the future. This means that advertising objectives must always be set in terms of:

the changes desired in our brand;
comparison with other brands.

It means that there will never be a fixed and final strategy for our brand; and that there will have to be regular analyses and reviews of competitors' strategies.

2. What is the direct role for advertising?

Precisely what do we want who to do differently as a direct result of advertising? At which point in the sequence of thinking about/planning to buy/buying/using a brand is advertising intended to have a direct effect? How exactly do we expect the advertising to work? How realistic is it to expect a direct effect at all?

For instance, is the direct objective of advertising primarily to change

- awareness, knowledge of brand
- desire for more information
- decisions to buy
- buying for the first time
- re-buying
- more exclusive buying
- more frequent buying
- using
- using for a new purpose
- serving to others
- etc?

Making the link between the direct objectives of advertising and other marketing objectives is largely a matter of stage-management. If, for instance, the advertising objective is to get people to send in a coupon for a catalogue, then the catalogue must be printed and available; and distributing catalogues must have been part of the marketing plan. If the direct advertising objective is to give information about a new formula, then the new-formula brand must be in adequate distribution. And so on.

3. What is the indirect role for advertising?

Making the indirect objectives of advertising link with other marketing activities is rather less straightforward. Advertising is just one of many activities which affect people's total impression of a brand, and the activities are very different in kind. The specific elements that go into advertising are different from those in a price change, a promotion, a display piece or a pack design. How then can they all be linked?

What in fact they have in common is that all are stimuli which are aiming to get a response to the brand. The stimuli are different in kind; but the responses they are each aiming to get should be overlapping and complementary.

In other words, objectives for each marketing activity should be expressed in terms of desired responses from the target group to the brand. No single activity will get all the desired responses. But only if marketing objectives are set in this way will it be possible to see how the role of the advertising differs from and complements the role of the pack, the product, the promotions, the pricing and so on. Only if the language of responses is used can we see whether the direct objectives of, say, a promotion conflict with the indirect objectives of advertising or packaging.

The desired responses can be made more specific by listing them according to the ways in which brands do appeal to people. That is, in terms of:

responses from the senses - what we want people
to notice about the brand

responses from the reason - what we want people
to believe about the brand

responses from the emotions - what we want people
to feel towards the brand.

Again, there must be a hypothesis of how the advertising is intended to work. How precisely is getting these new or intensified responses going to help the brand? Is it going to work by getting users to buy it more often or exclusively? By making people more willing to pay the full price? By inducing retailers to recommend it more enthusiastically? By tempting non-buyers to try it? Or how?

5. Who should be the target group?

The target group(s) for advertising can quite clearly not be worked out independently. Who the target group is depends on how the advertising is intended to work (and vice versa). If the direct object of advertising, for instance, is to get people to apply for new information about the brand then that particular target group is "people who do not have the information, would appreciate it and would tend to use it to the manufacturer's benefit."

In the same way, the target group for the indirect objectives of the advertising should be set in terms of an explanation of how the advertising is intended to work and why therefore these people are in the target group. (For instance, "occasional users of Brand A" implies the explanation that advertising is intended to make such people rather more favourable to Brand A, in relation to other brands, thus increasing their frequency of purchase. "C2 housewives under 45" does not in itself imply any explanation at all).

Communication theory and analysis of buying patterns suggest very strongly that the indirect effect of advertising will be by reinforcement of attitudes, not by conversion; so target groups will normally be people already to some extent favourable to the brand. That is, the target group itself can be best described in terms of people's existing responses to our brand, in relation to other brands, and to the product field in general.

It may be necessary to use intermediate terms (such as demographics) to describe target groups, simply to link people with media usage data. But the real objects of setting target groups are not only to help select media. They are

- (a) to explain further how the advertising is intended to work
- (b) to describe the sort of people on whom the advertising is intended to work and what is in their minds already, in order to help work out the best way of getting the desired responses
- (c) to link advertising strategy with marketing strategy.

6. What priority in responses?

No advertising could hope to get all the desired responses to the brand all the time. So the objectives must aim to set priorities, for both short and long-term.

This will involve judgements of the relative importance of:

- direct v. indirect responses
- motivating responses v. discriminating responses
- sensual v. rational v. emotional responses

There are many factors that will affect these judgements. Perhaps the most important are:

- (i) Pattern of buying. Where does this product type lie on the scale running from "bought rarely and/or with great consideration" to "bought frequently and/or routinely and/or impulsively"? Is previous experience going to be the main factor determining responses? Or is it a product type easy to forget about?
- (ii) Nature of market. Is it a market in which consumers are knowledgeable and self-confident or one in which they are short of information and uncertain? Is it a product type that gives personal pleasure; or does it satisfy a giver/receiver relationship; or does it meet social needs and desires? Is it one verging on necessity or one verging on luxury? Do the brands on the market mainly satisfy people's functional needs or their psychological needs?
- (iii) Nature of competition. Is our brand relatively large or relatively small? Are all brands functionally different or are they very similar? Do they offer similar or different services? What degree of price competition?

7. How to answer all these questions?

It becomes clear that all these questions are complex and inter-related. There is a lot of information and research that will help us answer them; but in the end it will be a matter of judgement. They are about the future, and they depend on competitors' strategies, so answers must be hypothetical. The ultimate objective is to give our brand a unique position in people's minds; so there is a strong element of innovation. The correctness of the strategy can only be determined ultimately by experiment, by trying it out.

What this means is that setting strategy is not a matter simply of straightforward and logical deduction; it is also a matter of interpretation, judgement, imagination and innovation. Working out the strategy is just as much a creative act as making the advertisements.

The whole process of planning advertising is governed by the fact that it is one of innovation. The next section looks at the implications of this.

B THE NATURE OF PLANNING ADVERTISING

1. What is the creative process?

How people create new things and new ideas is, and may always remain, a rather mysterious process. It is rather uncomfortable to think that the central operation of an advertising agency is mysterious; it gives us a nasty feeling that we cannot either cause it or control it. So we always tend, when presenting the results of creativity, to neaten what actually happened and to suggest that it has been a sensible, logical, step-by-step process - because that seems a more responsible and professional way of working.

Exactly the same has happened in the world of scientific discovery. Traditionally scientific papers present their results as if they had followed deductively from a comprehensive analysis of all relevant data. In practice, we know it doesn't happen like that. There are many stories about the influences of "irrelevant" events (like Archimedes' bath and Newton's apple) and the values of intuition (like Watson's discovery of the structure of DNA); and it is hard to believe that most scientific discoveries would take so long to happen, if it were simply a matter of step-by-step logic.

The gap between myth and reality is mainly the result of our confusing two distinct stages in the development of an idea - discovery (or believed discovery) and justification. The first is a non-logical process and the second is a logical one. The best single word description of the creative process is Popper's "hypothetico-deductive". It is the process of an intuition leading to a hypothesis or theory; which leads to an experiment or test; whose results are analysed (deductively) and feed back to support, destroy or modify the theory; which leads to a new theory and a new experiment; and so on.

Put rather more fully, the stages in creating anything new seem to be:

- (i) A problem is defined, and there is some motivation or stimulus to solve it.
- (ii) All available information that is relevant to the problem is collected and assimilated. It is relegated to the subconscious and allowed to incubate and mature, while the mind remains pre-occupied by the problem.
- (iii) A series of ideas emerges, very often as a result of an apparently random stimulus, some external collision of minds or some unexpected interaction of thoughts.
- (iv) The ideas are formed into more coherent hypotheses or theories, with some acceptably rational justification.
- (v) The hypotheses are then subjected to a disciplined attempt to disprove them.
- (vi) Where the attempt fails, the hypothesis can be accepted rather more confidently. It is taken to an experimental stage, with further attempts to disprove it; modified as a result, if necessary; finally put forward with much greater confidence. (We can never prove that it will always work, though we can prove that it won't, simply by one failure).

2. Implications for planning and creating advertising

There are several clear implications here:

- (i) Continuous process. If the advertising creative process is one of theory-experiment-feedback, then we must view setting objectives and creating advertisements as one continuous operation. There can be no absolutes and no final solutions. We cannot have a situation in which one lot of people is setting the strategy, handing it over to another lot as holy writ and going away. There should be a continuous process of learning, modifying and improving - both for the strategy and the creative work.
- (ii) Project group. The account group must work together in a close and overlapping way. This is not only to help the continuity of the process. It is also because the project group can provide much of the random stimulus, the interaction of ideas and the collision of minds that prompts the emergence of ideas. If everyone sticks to his rigidly demarcated area of skill, this interaction simply won't happen.

(iii) Use of research There are three quite distinct and different roles for research in the creative process. First, as a provider of the relevant information as background. Secondly, as a direct stimulus of ideas. Thirdly, as a means of disproving hypotheses and testing experiments against objectives. The research methods used must be very carefully related to these roles. (Where they are not, we get much sterile argument about methods - e. g. quantitative v. qualitative).

(iv) Nature of systems. Any system for planning advertising must relate to the nature of the creative process. That is, it should ideally

- ensure that the problem is clearly defined
- help lay out the available information to make it easily understood and absorbed
- motivate people to solve the problem and stimulate their ideas
- provide a set of criteria against which results can be judged and researched

And the nature of the creative process suggests three further specific rules:

- (a) Planning disciplines must be built round questions that have to be answered, not procedures that have to be followed. This is the best way to avoid trying to force into a deductive mould a process which is only partly deductive.
- (b) In the same way, setting objectives as desired responses (both direct and indirect) is the best way to allow freedom for the non-logical process while keeping a disciplined way of measuring results.
- (c) Where advertising objectives are intended to motivate and stimulate, they must be expressed in rich and evocative language. (Using short, neat forms only when a summary or shorthand is needed).

The framework for planning advertising that follows tries to take all these factors into account.

IV A FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING ADVERTISING

One way to provide disciplines and controls for our advertising planning is to establish a regular sequence of work and thought.

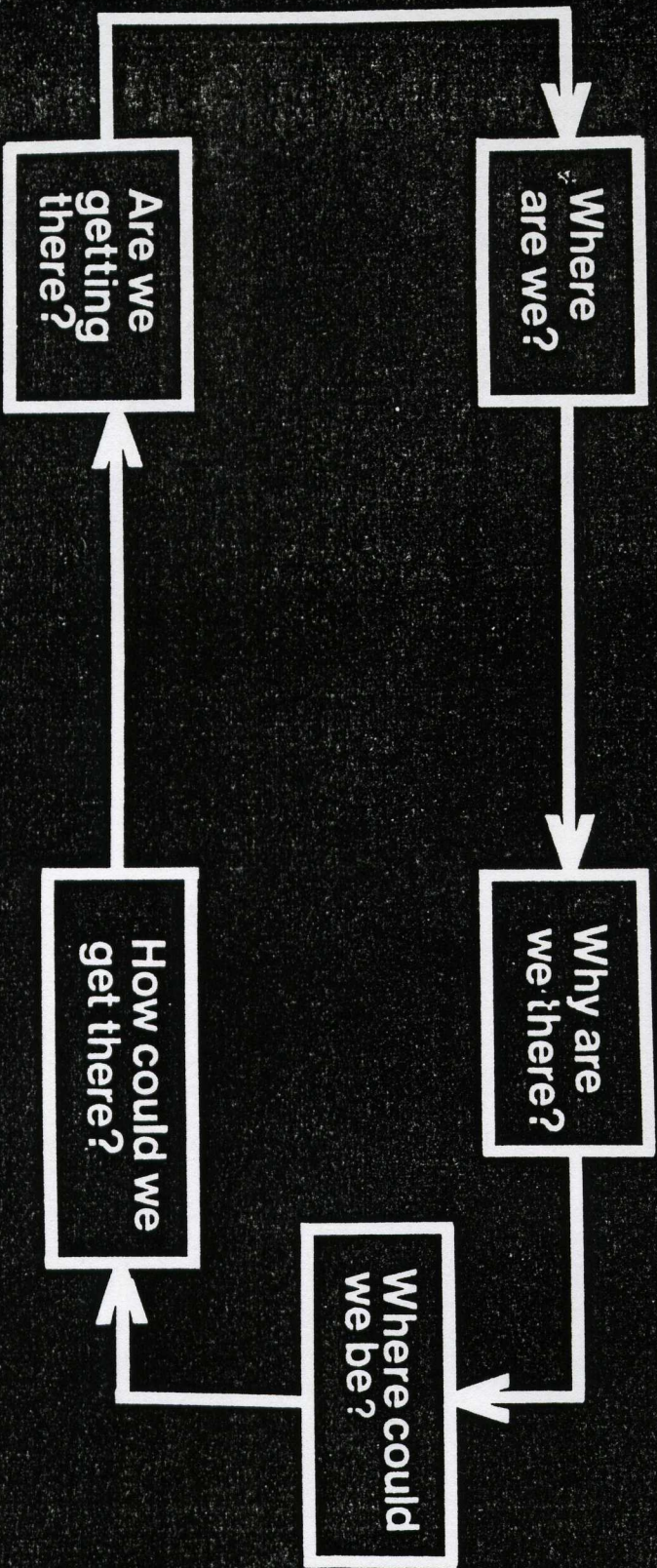
The one we have found most helpful is based on answering these five questions:

1. WHERE ARE WE? Where does our brand stand now (compared with competitors) in the market and in people's minds? If a new brand, where do the competitors or substitutes stand? Where have we come from? In what direction do we seem to be going?
2. WHY ARE WE THERE? What factors have contributed to our brand's strengths and weaknesses?
3. WHERE COULD WE BE? What, realistically, could be the position of our brand in the future? Is it a new position or maintaining our present position?
4. HOW COULD WE GET THERE? What changes to what elements in the marketing mix could achieve it? What role and objectives for advertising? What campaigns could achieve the advertising objectives?
5. ARE WE GETTING THERE? Is the advertising achieving its objectives and is the total effect working? If an area test, which area did it better?

This framework for planning advertising has several advantages:

- (1) Continuous cycle. It recognises, as the chart opposite suggests, that there must be a continuous process of learning and modification and responding to changing competitive circumstances. As soon as we have answered "Are we getting there?" we are in effect asking "So now where are we?"
- (2) Feedback. In fact, it calls for a much more complex system of feedback than could be shown here. Answering each question, and trying out each experiment, prompts re-examination of the question before. For instance, until we have tried out ways of getting there, we cannot be sure whether our answer to "where could we be?" is too unrealistic or too unadventurous or just right.

THE PLANNING CYCLE



- (3) Comprehensive. If we try conscientiously to answer all the questions, we will not be guilty of rushing into producing advertisements based on unspoken, unproved and unquestioned assumptions.
- (4) Creatively free. Because the process is based on questions, not procedures or imperatives, it gives people great freedom to look for imaginative solutions. It is a stimulus, not a straight-jacket.
- (5) But disciplined. Answering questions is itself a valuable discipline. But the real controls are on the results, not on the methods of achieving them. All the emphasis of both judgement and research is put on asking "Are we getting the responses we set out to get?"
- (6) Clear roles for research. This framework helps to clarify the different roles that research plays (chart opposite). And its very form helps us to integrate research into the advertising planning process.
- (7) A true marketing mix. These questions are all about the brand, not about the advertisements. By use of the same questions and the same language - the language of responses - about all marketing activities, we can help to ensure that it is a genuine marketing mix, not a lot of unrelated activities.

It also makes it clear that the only way to plan advertising effectively is to have the closest possible co-operation between client and agency throughout the process. The agency cannot answer the questions fully on its own; and should not try to.

Needless to say, the value of "Where are we?" and "Why are we there?" depends on their being answered with complete honesty and realism.

V THE ADVERTISING PLANNING CYCLE

1. WHERE ARE WE?

(1) Background

We need, first, background information as a context in which to look at our brand's competitive situation.

The sort of questions to be answered are:

- (a) Market size and nature
How big? Growing how fast? Containing how many manufacturers and brands? What sort of manufacturers? How profitable? Rate of technological change? External issues (e.g. legal, consumerist)?
- (b) Buying patterns
Who buys the product type? How often? What sort of buying decision (considered v. impulsive v. routine)? Who influences buying? How and where bought?
- (c) Using patterns
Who uses the product type? How? For what purposes? How often? Relationship between buyer and user (e.g. giver/receiver, server/eater)?
- (d) Motivations
What are buyers'/users' needs, wants, desires in product type? What motivates them to buy/use? What makes them discriminate between brands? What sort of language do they use about the product type? What are substitutes for the product type? What system of behaviour does the product type fit into (e.g. washing powders into a clothes cleaning system)?

(2) Comparative map

Then, against this background, we must answer questions about how our brand stands; all asked in relation to selected competitors and substitutes:

- (a) The Competition
Who really is the competition? Has it changed? Is it major brands, private label, substitutes, social change, apathy? Who are the key competitors for the purpose of this analysis?
- (b) Company position
What are the company strengths in production, finance, R & D, marketing? Weaknesses? Policies, hopes, fears, aspirations? Constrictions (e.g. for individual brands in multi-brand company)? Company style, personality? How do all these compare with key competitors?
- (c) Brand's market position
Sales? Share? Distribution, type and level? Prices, pricing policy? Number of range variants, line extensions? Regional variations?
- (d) Marketing activities
Breakdown of marketing expenditure? Sales force, size, character, methods? Advertising expenditure, media mix, creative content? Packaging structure, style? Naming policy and practice? Direct v. indirect contribution of advertising? Promotions, expenditure and type? How do our activities differ from key competitors'?
- (e) Product
What does the product do? What is it made of? Laboratory analyses v. competitors?
- (f) Buyers/users
Who buys, uses, knows about our brand? How do they differ from buyers/users of other brands? How often, how, where, under whose influence do they buy our brand differently from other brands?
- (g) Buyers'/users' responses
How do people respond to our brand? Senually - what do they notice about our brand, when buying, using, serving? Rationally - what do they believe about our brand, its purpose, performance, contents? Emotionally - what do they feel towards our brand, its style and personality? How do all these responses differ from responses to competitive brands?

(3) Answering the questionsResearch

The nature and contribution of research is dictated by the questions themselves. For instance:

Market size and nature: shop audit, consumer panel, published statistics, company reports.

Buying patterns: consumer panel, ad hoc surveys, observation research

Using patterns: ad hoc surveys, consumer diaries

Motivations: large-scale attitude research, plus small-scale qualitative research

Buyers'/users' responses

sensual:	product tests (blind and named)
rational:	structured attitude research
emotional:	large- and small-scale attitude and motivation research, brand personality research

Since the role of research at this stage is to provide an accurate picture of what is happening in the market and how our brand stands in relation to competitors, it must be statistically valid. This means, in effect, that it must be relatively large-scale and based on representative samples. The value of small-scale qualitative research here is not as a substitute for, but as an illuminator of large-scale findings.

There is much of this background data that research cannot provide; research budgets are never as big as we would like; and all research results depend on interpretation, anyhow. So there is a great deal of analysis to be done by judgement, particularly the analysis of competitors' strategies, marketing activities, advertising objectives, creative strategies, brand positioning, future intentions.

All these questions have to be considered in relation to key competitors, whether we have hard information or not.

2. WHY ARE WE THERE?

Which of the factors - either under the manufacturer's control or not - have led to our brand's and competitors' positions? Which are the most important factors? How have they inter-related? How has the balance between them changed over time?

Possible causes would be:

- products: formulation or performance
- packaging: structure, sizes, style
- naming: type, style
- advertising: amount, media mix, content
- distribution and display: amount, type, style
- pricing
- promotions: amount, type, style
- word of mouth: retailers or consumers
- maker's policies or reputation: real, assumed, influence of other brands
- history: past reputation (e. g. origination as me-too brand)
- competitors: activity or inactivity
- attitudes: gap between reputation and reality
- other associations: times, places, surroundings, accompaniments

or any combination of these.

(1) Answering the questions

Basically, there are two ways of tackling these questions.

First, there is examination of trend data. What factors appear to have moved parallel with success and failure? Did our increase in market share coincide with the change in our brand's formulation or pack or price? Is there a relationship between share of advertising and share of market? Does the belief in one particular attribute of the brand seem to go up and down in line with brand share? What seem to have been the results over time of specific marketing experiments?

Secondly, internal analyses of current data can hint at which are the most important factors affecting the brand's current position. What specific beliefs about our brand do the most committed users or the most generally favourable people have which the other do not? Do people who buy it at full price buy less frequently than those who buy it at cut price? Are our current sales related to distribution levels? What do people think are the most important factors that affect their buying?

(2) Implications for research

The raw data that will help answer these questions are of the same sort as those used to answer Where are we? It is the method of analysis which differs. To tackle the questions the first way what we need is continuous data (such a consumer panel data, retail audits, API) or at least comparable surveys at two points in time. For the second way we need samples that are large enough to be broken down into sub-groups and, possibly, more sophisticated methods of analysis or new tailor-made strategic research.

There are two very important reservations about the research at this stage. First, correlation is not causation. Just because two trends move in the same direction it does not mean that the first has caused the second. (The second could have caused the first; or a third could have caused both; or they might be entirely independent). Secondly, what people say is the most important factor affecting them is by no means necessarily what has actually done so. There is a natural tendency to give considered, rational, respectable answers. Even if we gave the most honest answers that we could, and even if we really knew what influences affect us most (usually we have only a rather vague idea), we would still find it very hard to express them in simple terms and in order of priority.

So what we need here is interpretation of the research and a lot of judgement. We need to look at it in a green-fingered way, picking up a hint here and making a connection there.

We are not dealing in certainties. The results of this stage are a sensible reasoned working hypothesis.

3. WHERE COULD WE BE?

This stage requires the first important act of imagination. It starts with all the facts and the analysis of causes. It ends with a first statement of a proposed strategy for the brand and a new or modified brand positioning. But it is not a deductive process. The strategy does not spring logically and inevitably from the data. No analysis will directly reveal opportunities.

It is at this stage particularly that the account group needs to be working as a project group, trying out ideas and hypotheses on each other.

(1) The questions to be answered

The basic question is: where could the brand be in relation to its key competitors in the future? - in exactly those terms that were analysed at the Where are we? stage. The word "could" implies not only Where would it be desirable and profitable to be? but also Where is it realistic to expect to be? And when?

There are three main terms in which the answer must be found:

1. Position in market. Where could our brand be in the market? Market leader? Second brand? What share? In a different sector? Opening up a new sector? More profitable? Less reliant on price cuts and promotions?
2. Buyers/users Could it get existing users to use more? How much more? New users into the product field? How many? Hold onto existing users? Draw people away from specific brands? Regain former users? Get people to use for a new purpose? Could people be attracted who are currently unaware of or indifferent to the brand? Which people?
3. Responses Where could the brand be repositioned in relation to competitors? What differences in responses to the brand could we get? What might people notice in the brand different from now? What new beliefs might they hold about it? What new feelings might they have towards it?

All these desired changes are clearly inter-related. (The change in market position will only come through certain people responding differently from before). This means that the strategy is best expressed as an explanation of the relationships. We are, in effect, saying that if this

group of people who currently think this about the brand were instead to think that about it (or were to think this more intensely), they would use it more often and that would increase market share; and we believe it to be realistic to think that their views could change in that way.

This is where the T-Plan language can be a particularly helpful guide. The desired brand position can be most comprehensively expressed by answering the T-Plan questions:

- Which are the groups of people who can most influence the brand's success?
- What do we want them to notice about the brand? believe about it? feel towards it?
- How do these differ from current responses?
- How are they related to responses to key competitors?

At this stage, since it is an explanation or a theory, the strategy should be in full and evocative terms - even though it may be put into a shorthand later. It may well be that it can only be expressed clearly or will only come to life if rough packs or advertisements are used to illustrate it. There should be no hard and fast dividing line between strategy and the means of expressing it.

(2) Role of research

Research is used in two entirely different ways at this stage.

First, as a stimulus. Any reasonably rich and detailed consumer research (such as the quantitative research used up to this point) can be a means of setting up a train of thought. It is mainly a matter of the frame of mind with which one approaches it - ideally with openness, curiosity and optimism.

It is here that small-scale qualitative research is at its most useful. Since the object is stimulus rather than measurement, it does not matter too much that a couple of groups cannot accurately represent the whole population. If the members of the discussion group are carefully chosen in relation to the product field, their views will not be utterly irrelevant and misleading. The main object is to produce richness of ideas and language, not accurately representative views.

The second use of research is in the deductive part of the hypothetico-deductive process. That is, when the hypothesis of the brand strategy is put forward, it is evaluated against the research already done. Is there anything in the previous research - buying patterns, brand loyalties, product experience, for instance - which invalidates the hypothesis? If, say, all the previous research shows that no brand in the market has ever had more than 10% of its users as solus users, then a brand strategy based on getting 60% of our brand's users to use no other is very unlikely

to be valid. A strategy based on increasing usage by increasing brand awareness is not likely to work if 90% of the population has tried our brand in the last year. And so on.

If the brand strategy comes through this evaluation satisfactorily, then it can be accepted with greater confidence. But it is still a first draft. Until we have looked at the means of achieving it, we will not be able to judge whether it can really work. It must not at this stage be carved in stone, a monument for all time.

4. HOW COULD WE GET THERE?

This stage involves the main part of the creative work in an agency and most of the detailed planning. It is a continuous process of development, learning and adjustment; it gradually takes rough ideas to finished form.

There are four main elements in it:

1. Assessment of the means of achieving the objectives
2. Deciding the role of advertising and the creative strategy
3. Developing campaigns (that is, creative treatments plus basic media selection)
4. Feedback, to modify and improve.

(1) New marketing mix

The basic question at this stage asks what changes are needed in the various stimuli under the manufacturer's control in order to get the proposed new responses from the proposed target group?

There could be changes in:

product - formulation, size, added features or services
 pack - structure, size or style
 price
 distribution and display - methods, type, style, amount
 advertising - expenditure, media, creative treatment
 promotions - expenditure, type, style

The client has to decide - again as a working hypothesis - which of these changes is desirable, which is feasible, which can be afforded, which would have unattractive side-effects, how they can all be related. He has to work out his new marketing mix for the brand; to allocate resources for each element; and to define the particular role for each in aiming at the total objective.

As far as advertising is concerned, it would involve discussing and agreeing with the agency the appropriation, the specific roles of the advertising and the time-scale over which it is expected to work.

(2) Deciding the role of advertising and the creative strategy

Direct role. Any changes in the direct role for advertising are likely to depend on what changes have been made in other elements. For instance, if changes are to be made to the product, one of the direct roles for the advertising may be to get people aware of the changes or to try the improved version. If there are additions to a range, it could

be to get them to clip a coupon asking for a catalogue. If the pack style is to be radically altered, maybe a direct role for advertising will be to familiarise people with the new one.

Basically, the questions are: In the new circumstances, at what stage in the thinking about/choosing/deciding/buying/using spectrum is advertising intended to have a direct effect? How much direct effect is it realistic to expect? And how important is this effect in relation to the indirect effect?

Indirect role. Here the question is which responses to the brand from which people should be changed in what way by advertising in order to contribute most to the total brand strategy. The creative strategy for the advertising will be complementary to the brand strategy, but not necessarily identical. The complete brand strategy will be achieved by a blending of product, marketing activities and different forms of communications, and they are likely to have slightly different roles.

The creative strategy derives from the brand strategy, but usually has more limited aims - specifically those that advertising might be expected to achieve. To link with other objectives, it too should be structured in T-Plan language; that is, in terms of

Target group

Desired responses to the brand - what we want
the target group to notice, believe and feel about it

The target group is set in terms of people's buying/using behaviour and attitudes to our brand and competitors, and is in essence an explanation of why they are in the target group (which is an explanation of how the advertising is intended to work).

The desired responses are set in terms of changes that the advertising aims to achieve (even if only changes in intensity) and of comparison with key competitors.

The priorities in responses involve decisions on the relative importance of the sensual, rational and emotional responses. Given what responses the product and the pack are likely to achieve, where should the advertising concentrate? And beyond this a decision on the relative importance of motivators and discriminators. Which of the motivating responses is too important to be left out? Which discriminating responses most clearly pick out our brand from the competition?

These are not necessarily the same as the priorities in the past. It is very common for brands to need quite long-term cycles in which rational or sensual responses alternate in prime importance with emotional responses, or in which motivators alternate with discriminators.

(3) Developing campaigns

The end-product of this stage is advertisements and media plans; this is where specific campaigns begin to emerge.

Creative

It is the true creative process of starting with a defined problem (how to develop a campaign that will achieve specific direct objectives and that will draw specific responses from specific people); developing theories, ideas, hypotheses; taking them to experimental form; judging them against known data; trying to invalidate them by testing; modifying the ideas, and on through the cycle again.

Essentially creative people are searching for symbols - people, words, sounds, pictures and so on - that can make the link between the brand and the desired responses to it. The totality of an advertisement, and the individual elements within it, act as stimuli to draw responses; and the responses can differ from the apparent input. So it is a very experimental process. Rough copy and layout and scripts are produced, argued about, torn up, modified, abandoned, revived. Gradually campaigns and pack designs emerge.

Media

This is a familiar enough process in creative departments. What it not always so clear is that the basic inter-media selection is an integral part of the process, and it is just as much a matter of hypothesis and judgement. It is simply not possible to take any advertising idea to a practical stage without making some hypothesis about a suitable medium.

The media selection (inter-media) decision is in fact part of the whole campaign planning process, and is affected by three main factors:

(i) Creative/media relationships

The most important factor affecting basic media selection is the relationship of medium and creative treatment. That is, the proper question is: which creative/media combinations will best achieve the desired direct and indirect advertising objectives?

Media selection can be based on ability to achieve each type of response:

Which medium has values that will most help the desired response from the senses? Will it be a matter of size, colour, movement, sound, quality of printing?

Which media values most help achieve the desired beliefs about the brand? Demonstration, detailed information, testimonial, serious context?

Which media values most contribute to the desired feelings towards the brand? Colour, music, time of day, external context, style of medium?

Each medium can, in fact, be looked at from two points of view. First, what can it contribute as a medium (in the sense of an artist's medium)? What can the creative man produce in this medium which is physically impossible in another? Secondly, what can the medium contribute as a "message" (in the McLuhan sense)? What associations and context can this medium contribute that others do not?

(ii) Coverage

A useful, if crude, filter, best seen in a negative sense. That is, advertisements which cannot be seen by the target group cannot be effective. However, there is a whole range of ways of reaching most target groups. So coverage figures do not normally contribute very much to inter-media decisions.

(iii) Cost, size/length v. frequency

It is relatively easy to predict how many people will have how many opportunities to respond per £ spent in each major medium. But comparisons between media depend on a judgement of whether a 30-second spot should be compared with a full page, half-page or a quarter-page; with a 48-sheet or a 16-sheet poster. And that judgement will depend on our view of the relative effectiveness of each, in this particular context, in achieving our objectives.

In other words, we cannot compare media on cost, on their own. We have to compare campaigns (medium plus creative treatment) in specific circumstances.

Within campaigns, decisions about size of advertisements/length of commercials are matters of fairly complex judgement, based on the minimum size and cumulative effect of repetitions needed to achieve both the direct and the indirect objectives, in the context in which the advertisements have to appear. There can be a conflict here between the direct and indirect objectives. Direct objectives (like getting coupon returns, supporting a sales campaign, bringing a brand to the front of the mind) tend to call for high frequency.

On the other hand, the indirect objectives of modifying or intensifying people's total impression of a brand tend to require reasonably long commercials/large spaces; as does the need for advertising to stand out from its surrounding material.

All these decisions about media are just as judgemental and just as inter-related as the decisions on creative treatment. Media research is particularly weak in the area of "communication values", and this puts a premium on imagination in inter-media decisions and on interpretation of campaign effectiveness.

(4) Feedback

Throughout this process of creative development there is continual modification, based on common-sense, judgement and research. As each advertising idea is taken to practical form, the creative strategy is re-examined. Is it really right? Can it all be achieved? Are we being too timid in one area; is there too much wishful thinking in another? Is there even an entirely new positioning for the brand that would be better than the first one?

The point is that until something practical and positive has emerged, the creative strategy and even the brand strategy are simply hypothetical forms of words. Other words may be more accurate or more stimulating. Since setting the strategies is itself a creative act, it must always be subject to later refinement and improvement. Of course, each improvement must itself be examined and checked back against the original analysis.

So there are two sorts of feedback. First, modifying the objectives, if necessary. Secondly, aiming to invalidate the latest experimental work against the objectives. The attempt to invalidate comes both from judgement and from research. Much of the judgement comes from the account group as a whole, and this is where it is valuable to have a project group with an overlap of function and skill. It is a delicate matter to try to invalidate someone's tentative ideas in a way that is both objective and constructive; it is very necessary to move away from an idea that is wrong, but also necessary to avoid crushing people whose ideas are almost right. If there is a project team whose shared aim is to end up in the right place and all of whose members feel a direct responsibility to do so, there is a much greater chance of getting the balance right.

More judgement will come from people who are outside the project group, but who still have a broad knowledge of the brand and its objectives: most valuably, from Review Boards.

Research is used in two main ways:

First, it can be used to stimulate ideas, particularly through creative people taking part in or observing group discussions among members of the target group. The group discussion can be about the product field in general or, more valuably, can be reacting to experimental things - products, a new pack design, new pack sizes, a pack with a "new, improved" flash on, an experimental advertisement, a bit of film and so on. The important point here is that the group discussion's purpose is not to measure what goes on in the world, but to help generate new ideas. So the more interesting the stimulus that can be used and the richer the language evoked, the more helpful it will be.

Secondly, research can be used in an attempt to cast doubt on or invalidate an advertising idea. Again, because the object is to disprove rather than to prove, what is needed is fullness of response rather than very large numbers of representative members of the target group. We want to find out what might be wrong and why; not for how many it might be right. Small-scale qualitative research usually works best for this.

5. ARE WE GETTING THERE?

The final stage in planning is really an extension of this process of feedback, which provides new information for the cycle to begin all over again.

As campaigns are taken to a finished stage, with detailed material produced and media schedules built, there is a review of whether the advertising is helping to achieve the brand's objectives, before it appears.

Then, over a longer period, there is measurement of how the marketing mix as a whole is performing, in the marketplace.

(1) Pre-exposure

By the end of the continuous processes of the previous stage, the broad campaigns will have been developed into finished advertisements, packs, promotional material, leaflets, etc. And the media plan will have been taken to tactical detail.

In trying to answer "Are we getting there?" before the campaign appears, what we would ideally like is to measure accurately whether it will succeed in achieving the objectives we have set for it. Unfortunately, there are several reasons why this will never be possible.

First, it is quite impossible in a "pre-test" to simulate accurately the context in which our advertising will appear - the natural exposure, the relationship between different aspects of the marketing mix, the activities of competitors, and so on.

Secondly, it is impossible to simulate the effects of the passage of time - the repetition of advertising, the cumulative effect, the relationship between buying and responding to advertising.

Thirdly, it is never possible to prove a hypothesis in advance. The most we can expect to do is fail in our attempts to disprove it, examine its commonsense likelihood and try an experiment; then believe in it with greater confidence.

In fact, in the normal sense of the word "test" (as in, for instance, testing the tensile strength of a sample of steel), it is not really possible to pre-test advertising at all.

What we can do is expose members of the target group (in inevitably artificial circumstances) to advertisements, and make the best judgements that we can of the way in which they respond to them. We can relate these responses back to the indirect objectives, and infer from that whether the desired responses will be achieved in the marketplace.

The questions for research, in fact, are:

As a result of seeing these advertisements, did the target group notice what we wanted them to notice about the brand? Do they now believe what we wanted them to believe? Do they feel towards the brand what we wanted them to feel?

These are fairly subtle questions, and this means that the research used to try to answer them should be subtle. It should pay attention not only to what people say, but how they say it, the intensity with which they say it and indeed what they don't say. One of the problems with many of the quantitative "advertising testing" methods used is that they are very superficial - for instance, suggesting that the words which people recall from an advertisement are an accurate reflection of a change of beliefs. On the other hand, a certain size of sample is necessary to ensure that the people responding are reasonably representative of the target group - remembering that we need broad answers, not accuracy to two places of decimals. (It is a different matter from trying to disprove a hypothesis, which can be done by a handful of people).

The best compromise is usually a small number of people (a minimum of, say, 20) interviewed singly and in depth: but those people selected meticulously from a much larger sample as being fully representative of the target group.

(2) Post-exposure

After the campaign is exposed to the public, what we need is data directly comparable to that used in answering the first question - Where are we? That is, a new comparative map of the position of all brands in the market and in people's minds.

Exactly the same principles apply to an area test of an experimental campaign, with the advantage of an extra dimension of comparison with the control area. While it is rare for such tests to produce unequivocal results, it is rarer still to learn nothing of value from them.

What we are trying to do here is answer this sort of question:

Have the people that we specified changed their responses to the brand as we hoped they would? If they have, has this resulted in the changes in behaviour aimed at in the marketing plan? If the responses have changed but the behaviour has not, are our brand and advertising strategies wrong? If the responses have not changed, is it because the objectives were too ambitious? Or is it because the advertising is ineffective? Have we allowed long enough? If the advertising seems to have worked, precisely how has it worked? What is the model of the process in the market? How does it relate to the role we set for advertising?

Since marketing and advertising are continuous processes, the best research is itself continuous - such as consumer panel and API data. It can be tempting to replace them with periodic ad hoc research, particularly if attitudes and behaviour change rather slowly. In theory, repeats of ad hoc research certainly answer the question "So where are we now?" In practice, what they do not do is distinguish between a temporary fluctuation, a sampling quirk and the start of a genuine long-term movement. Part of "Where are we now?" is "and in which direction are we travelling now?"