

CASE STUDY



Research Ensures Children's Hospital Keeps Living Its Brand



CHALLENGE

Measure the success of branding initiatives among core constituencies and evaluate advertising effectiveness with target audience.

OUTCOME

Children's Hospital was able to achieve substantial increases in awareness, brand leadership and referrals by using research to define its message and strategies and to track changes among key audience perceptions and choice.

METHODOLOGY

Perception Analyzer Focus Groups.

The foundation of a successful brand is a clear understanding of its core principles and the ability to accurately communicate its essence to appropriate audiences.

SITUATION

Brands are communicated in everything that is done to market a product or service including advertising, public relations, promotions and events. Perhaps most importantly though, brands are communicated through customer experiences...both positive and negative, along with how an organization handles problems and how it prevents problems from happening in the future.

While there are several ways to determine a brand's essence, one method that has proven successful for many organizations is to identify a brand archetype¹. This was the situation for Children's Hospital, a 142-bed freestanding pediatric hospital located in Omaha, Nebraska. The hospital contacted The MSR Group after having undergone an extensive internal clarification of its core principles and brand personality. The process had culminated in the identification of an archetype for the Children's Hospital brand: The Hero.

Having conducted brand awareness and perception studies with The MSR Group since 2000, Children's had baseline data that would allow it to gage the success of its newly clarified positioning efforts. In addition, the hospital wished to ensure its new advertising would accurately communicate the Hero brand in a way that was meaningful to its target audience.

APPROACH

In order to accurately measure the branding success within the marketplace, The MSR Group recommends three types of research:

- On-going Customer Experience Monitoring
- Brand Perception and Awareness (annual or bi-annual)
- Advertising/Communication Testing

Because Children's Hospital had in place a quantitative method to measure customer experience and it had been conducting brand awareness and perception studies with The MSR Group since 2000, it was starting from a position of advantage. The MSR Group recommended that Children's Hospital first conduct advertising testing followed by a repeat of its brand perception study.

With the help of The MSR Group, Children's Hospital conducted a unique interactive, pre-testing measurement of advertising concepts to ensure the hospital's advertising clearly communicated the essence of The Hero. Once this research was complete and the advertising had run for several months, The MSR Group was able to provide a quantitative assessment of the success of branding efforts through a repeat of earlier Brand Awareness and Perception research.



Perception Analyzer® technology allows for immediate feedback without other group members influencing responses.

Ensuring Accurate Brand Communication Through Advertising Testing

Multiple concept evaluations, including both print and broadcast stimuli, and a desire to receive feedback from a larger sample than what traditional qualitative research offers, created a natural fit for Perception Analyzer® (PA) technology. PA is used to allow test subjects to record their reactions to any form of test material (e.g. advertising, new concepts, copy testing, etc.) using electronic hand held dials, which have a wireless connection to a personal computer. Information is translated into data and graphic output, which is presented in real-time to either the group moderator or the viewing client. The real value in enhancing qualitative research with PA is its ability to provide instantaneous data turnaround allowing the group moderator to scan the opinions of every group participant without any inter-subjective contamination inherent in traditional focus groups.

Children's Hospital's Advertising Test with PA identified among three tested television concepts the one with greatest appeal and highest perceived alignment with the Hero archetype. Furthermore, the testing was able to provide additional direction in terms of ad production. Testing showed in precise seconds the length of time a medical procedure could be shown before it became a "turn off" for viewers. In addition, contrary to other healthcare industry research which indicated that the inside of a hospital should not be shown in its advertising, this research revealed that because of the unique, child-friendly atmosphere of Children's Hospital, including visuals of the facility would achieve the objective of differentiating Children's Hospital in the marketplace.

RESULTS

Measures of success were drawn from the hospital's Brand Perception and Awareness Survey. From 2000 to 2006, Children's saw:

- An increase in the percentage of first mention responses as preferred hospital for a child's healthcare in a series of questions on routine (up 9.1 percentage points) and serious or complicated care (up 13 percentage points);
- An increase in the percentage of "much better" responses to a series of comparative questions on hospital quality attributes; and
- An increase in the percentage of respondents who consider Children's Hospital a "nationally recognized children's healthcare organization."

Additionally, in a survey of physicians who refer patients to Children's Hospital, there was a 10 percentage point increase in the number of physicians reporting that they had referred a patient for admission to the hospital. Among those with patients needing hospitalization, there was a 13.3 percentage point increase in the number of physicians reporting that a parent had requested Children's Hospital.

CONCLUSION

Ensuring an organization is truly "living its brand" requires a multi-dimensional research program. When executed properly, a robust brand monitoring program will provide:

- Actionable information on how to improve customer experiences;
- A litmus test to ensure communication clearly expresses the essence of the brand; and
- Measurements to identify positive and negative trends with regard to brand perception in the marketplace.

The MSR Group has the experience, technology and insight to provide a roadmap for success that will aid in the development of a powerhouse brand.

¹Developed by Carl Jung, archetypes help us understand visible reality. They are personified symbols that allow the conscious mind to identify with or access subconscious desires, meanings and truths. Human desires and motivations are characterized by twelve archetypes. To understand the organization's archetype is to understand its story, its role and its direction. Further reading: "The Hero and the Outlaw" by Margaret Mark and Carol S. Pearson.