natural exposure™

precise science for advancing the art of advertising.
How to make TV commercials that sell (Chapter 8)

"My most valuable source of information is the factor analysis I commission at regular intervals from Mapes and Ross. They measure changes in brand preference. **People who register a change in brand preference after seeing a commercial subsequently buy the product three times more than people who don’t.**"

- David Ogilvy -
As you read this overview of Mapes and Ross Natural Exposure™ you’ll discover the tenets of advertising research we feel strongly about. There are many other approaches in the industry, some of which are easier to execute, some of which cost less. But none has been validated to predict actual in-market sales like our persuasion measure has. This overview will help explain why our approach works better. We encourage you to compare our values with those of our competitors - the more you learn about copy testing, the more you’ll recognize the benefits of Natural Exposure™. – Hal Ross

For over thirty years, Mapes and Ross has focused on delivering the best combination of dependable, validated communications research methodologies and value-added guidance in the industry. We have served the research needs of hundreds of major product and service brands with a consistent mission: to help our clients achieve maximum return on dollars invested in advertising through better-informed creative direction and media spending decisions.

Over 30,000 copy tests later, that mission has kept us loyal to our flagship Natural Exposure™ methodology. While our competitors often change elements of their tests to reduce costs or to try to better correlate with in-market sales, our copy testing approach has remained essentially the same. Since its introduction, the Natural Exposure™ persuasion measure has consistently proven to be the most thoroughly validated, and highly correlated predictor of actual, in-market advertising sales effects in the industry (see the validation section on pages 9-12).

Founding principals Hal Ross, President, and Charlie Mapes, began their research careers working with Dr. George Gallup, who pioneered day-after copy research. They founded Mapes and Ross and created the Natural Exposure™ research approach, which provides measures of day-after persuasion, day-after recall, and idea communication in a single test. They have been featured frequently in television, newspaper, and industry publications, and have often appeared in the U.S. and Europe as speakers on the topic of how to produce effective advertising.

Unlike research companies that concentrate solely on producing numbers, Mapes and Ross’ professionals work closely with clients to provide analysis to understand why the audience responds as they do, and what can be done to improve the communication performance of low performing executions. Our consultants are experts who can identify factors that determine whether communications will perform well or poorly under real-world battlefield conditions.
Conceptually, *Natural Exposure®* is very simple - minimize the biases affecting the copy testing experience and collect higher quality information. Here’s how the methodology addresses the basic challenges and inherent biases in advertising research:

**Challenge One:** Respondents’ awareness of participation in a study about advertising can artificially heighten attention paid to the commercials/ads in the study, which can affect responses.

Respondents in a *Natural Exposure®* test are aware of participation in a study, but they are told that the purpose of the study is “to get reactions to a television program/to make magazines more informative and interesting.” There is no interviewer mention of advertising or brands until after the day-after exposure persuasion measures have already been collected. The respondents are exposed to the test advertisements in their homes, as they watch a regularly scheduled television program or read a real magazine of the same type that they would typically enjoy at their leisure.

**Challenge Two:** In order for research to distinguish the intrusive and enduring advertising reactions from the fleeting impressions, there must be a sufficient passage of time between exposure and questioning.

Measurement of the depth of impression created by an advertising message is crucial because only lasting reactions have an opportunity to change purchasing behavior. Day-after measurement reveals which impressions are quickly forgotten, and which have motivational endurance. That’s why Mapes and Ross’ measures of persuasion, recall, brand imagery, visual elements and idea communication are gathered the day after exposure, rather than immediately after exposure.

**Challenge Three:** The use of aided brand prompting in a study can influence respondents’ predisposed brand preference and perceptions.

The Mapes and Ross Brand Preference persuasion measure is uniquely unbiased because there is no aided brand prompting. The respondent defines all the brands in his or her own personal competitive set, instead of being led by a suggested list of brands that a respondent might not otherwise consider. Further, if the respondent has no brand preference in the category, there is no forced choice as in other copy testing methodologies. Our data shows that across all packaged goods categories, more than one quarter of respondents have no preferred brand, so obligating them to choose one in a test can result in misleading data.

**Challenge Four:** Respondent awareness of the test brand in a study tends to promote a false positive reaction bias due to the ‘obliging phenomenon.’

The sequence of events during a *Natural Exposure®* study is such that respondents have no opportunity to discover the brand being tested until after all the day-after exposure Brand Preference and unaided recall data has been collected. Respondents cannot “tell the interviewer what they think they want to hear” because the test brand is well camouflaged, and there has been no mention of advertising.
Why don’t other research firms follow the intuitive formula of Mapes and Ross *Natural Exposure*? Minimizing the bias in advertising research methodology adds complexity – other approaches are easier to execute, but at the expense of information quality.

**the more rigorous natural exposure methods:**
- Representative sampling
- In home environment
- In media / on air
- Pre-exposure and day-after post-exposure interviewing
- No mention of advertising/brands affecting persuasion or recall measures

**the easier shortcuts:**
- **Group settings**
  - Issue: Group behavior influences individual responses (e.g. respondents may be conditioned to think an ad is funny because others in the group laughed).

- **Panels / Internet polling**
  - Issue: Self-selection of non-random study participants, usually from volunteer panels with overrepresentation of those who have stronger opinions. Results cannot be statistically projected to a general population.

- **Forced exposure / Central location (theater, mall intercept, etc.)**
  - Issue: Advertising exposure in an abnormal setting and media format results in heightened consciousness of study participation and unnatural attentiveness to ads.

- **Immediate reaction interviewing**
  - Issue: No distinction between advertising impressions that are memorable/intrusive and those which are temporary and fleeting.

- **Off-air videotape presentation**
  - Issue: Unlike watching a program as you naturally would on-air, viewing a videotape results in heightened consciousness of study participation and unnatural attentiveness to ads. This is exacerbated if respondents are coached not to fast forward the commercials, which reveals that the advertising is the purpose of the study.

*Natural Exposure* is the most logistically challenging copy test method to execute. For some advertising research objectives (e.g. diagnostics), less meticulous methods can make sense. But when you want to know how an ad will affect in-market sales, the added precision of *Natural Exposure* is beyond compromise.
One variable is much better than three. In the Natural Exposure™ system, the pre/post persuasion measures are based on the same sample. This way, the changes in measured brand preference can be attributed to a single variable – the effect of exposure to advertising. This results in extremely precise and sensitive measurements, where even small advertising effects can be detected with statistical significance.

Other approaches attempt to measure persuasion by employing two different samples drawn at separate points in time, sometimes months apart. Accordingly, brand preference changes observed between the baseline and test samples can be attributable to three independent variables:

1) Random differences between the samples
2) Differences due to the time gap between baseline measurement and test measurement
3) The effect of the advertising

The expected differences in predisposed brand preference among different randomly-drawn study samples are important, and clearly quantifiable by a standard statistical formula. The influence of the time gap is harder to assess, but could have substantial influence due to the effects of publicity, promotions, competitive activity, and other factors during the gap.

The separate sampling and time gap can introduce substantial variance into the measurement of the advertising effect. In some cases, the distortion caused by these two additional variables can fully obscure the underlying performance of the advertising. For example, a commercial execution that has a strong advertising persuasion level of +5% could register as a meager +1% due to a post exposure sample with a below-average predisposition toward the brand.

That's impossible under the Natural Exposure™ system, since the same people provide the pre and post exposure responses, and even small changes produced by the advertising can be detected and measured with great certainty. On a 150 case Natural Exposure™ sample, a brand preference change of only +2% can be significant at the 92% confidence level.*

* Assuming no negative change.
The Natural Exposure™ methodology separates the meaningful idea communication feedback from that which is soon forgotten. Most copy test methods include collection of the key advertising messages that respondents express, but Mapes and Ross does so in a way that adds insight about relative impression strength. We focus on the day after exposure feedback of those who are reached by the advertising when it is experienced in a natural battlefield environment (i.e. proven recallers). This separates the memorable, and therefore valuable, ideas and elements of a test ad from those which are merely recognizable during, or immediately following, exposure.

Other copy test methods gather impressions immediately after exposure, and commingle the more meaningful feedback of proven recallers with that of respondents who were not reached, and who had to be re-exposed to test ads so that they could observe them under conditions of artificially heightened attention. Respondent playback after re-exposure can be valuable for diagnostics, but it is important to place special emphasis on the impressions of those who are reached in the more rigorous conditions of the actual world, particularly after time has passed.

With sufficient sample sizes and persuasion levels, the Mapes and Ross diagnostic process can also include cross tabulation of the playback of key impressions among the persuaded and the non-persuaded respondents. This allows us to identify the particular messages and elements that drive persuasion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Playback Idea</th>
<th>Among the Persuaded</th>
<th>Among the Non-Persuaded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 25% Faster than brand B</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Waterproof</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Now available in green</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Myth: Quantitative advertising research stifles creativity and leads to stereotypical executions.

A well-designed test methodology enhances the creative process, and rewards fresh approaches. Mapes and Ross performance measures consistently reveal the weakness of hackneyed, stereotypical advertisements, and indicate a performance premium for many distinctive ones. The key is to be different in a functional way that delivers a resonating brand message. Simply being unusual without an obvious connection to the brand story is usually ineffective in both reaching and persuading prospects.

Harvard Business Review
Research on advertising techniques that work - and don’t work

“We have observed that the best copywriters and art directors study the research, refer to it, and employ it judiciously as one of the most useful tools of their craft. If clients were to support further research along these lines, more creative people would use the findings, and more advertisements would do their jobs.”
- David Ogilvy and Joel Raphaelson

Entertainment and likeability are not the key measures of a commercial. Statistics show that like creativity, entertainment can be a strong brand preference motivator, but only when the entertainment is the vehicle for communicating a compelling brand idea or image. Measuring the level of entertainment itself only distracts attention from measuring the purpose of that entertainment – to improve brand perceptions and thereby increase sales. How many times have you found yourself amused by a commercial, but unable to recall which brand it was that sponsored your amusement?

In advertising, entertainment is a means, not an end. If you want to predict sales influence, what ultimately matters is persuasion, and no method measures that more accurately than Mapes and Ross’ Natural Exposure™.
The Mapes and Ross persuasion measure is simply the pre versus post-exposure change between:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-exposure</th>
<th>Post-exposure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No brand preference</td>
<td>Best brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like to try brand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recap: Why does the Mapes and Ross persuasion measure correlate with actual sales while others do not?

- Day-after exposure measurement reflects the persuasion that is enduring enough to affect purchasing behavior.
- The *Natural Exposure* methodology minimizes the effects of study participation and test brand awareness.
- Pre and post brand preference is **100% unaided**, allowing competitive brand set to be defined by each respondent. This differs from other methods which obscure real preference changes by prompting respondents to name a brand from a list or from a presentation of product prizes to comply with the requirements of a questionnaire.
- Format acknowledges the fact that many prospects don’t have a preferred brand in the category. For the average of all packaged goods categories, 28% of women think all brands are the same.
- Increased persuasion measure precision results from using same sample for pre and post-exposure preference inquiries.
Step One:
Media placement arrangements are made by Mapes and Ross for test commercials (finished or animatic) to appear in specified commercial breaks during a program, or for print ads (tip-ins or run of press) to appear in actual magazines, newspapers, trade publications, or medical journals.

Step Two:
Respondents are recruited to view and give reaction to the entertainment content of a regularly scheduled prime-time program, or magazine, newspaper, etc. The exposure takes place in the respondents' homes.

Step Three:
At recruitment, pre-exposure levels of brand preference in the test category are taken, along with those of five other categories to provide a camouflaging effect. The brand preference questioning is introduced as part of a separate project from the TV viewing/magazine reading exercise; the inquiries are non-advertising related and, to avoid sensitization, the interviewer never mentions brand names.

Step Four:
Respondents are contacted again the day after exposure, and brand preference levels are taken using the same categories and question sequence. The shift from pre to post-exposure levels of brand preference (net change to best, better, or “like to try”) defines the level of persuasion.

Step Five:
Following preference questioning, advertising is mentioned for the first time, and recall levels are obtained in response to both category and brand prompts. All respondents who claim recall are probed in-depth to determine which impressions they remembered. User imagery metrics and supplemental questions are often included here for tests where they add value.

Step Six:
Topline Recall and Brand Preference Change persuasion measures are presented to client compared to category norms, and a full report and optional presentation follows with interpretation of performance, key idea reception, and other relevant guidance factors.
case histories

validation.
validation.
validation.

Manage creative direction and media spending with confidence in an evaluative process backed by real world proof, not just theory.

If you investigate the validation claims made by many advertising research firms, you will find that they rely on proprietary 'black box' models or anecdotal reports to substantiate their ad persuasion measures and sales score indices. Mapes and Ross puts brand marketers on much firmer ground by validating our persuasion measure with actual in-market sales correlation studies.

Our day-after exposure persuasion measure accurately indicates the actual buying behavior effect of our clients’ advertising. This has been validated in multiple ways, including the most extensive independent copy test validation study ever published. The following pages document three corroborating examples, all client-supported and all independently validated, providing excellent proof that the Mapes and Ross Brand Preference Change measure is highly predictive of individual advertisement sales effects.
A time-series study was conducted to determine to what extent Brand Preference Change in Mapes and Ross Natural Exposure™ tests related to subsequent purchase behavior. The results of this research were published in the Journal of Advertising Research and later reprinted in the Journal of Advertising Research Classics: Eight Key Articles That Have Led Our Thinking.

JAR Published Study

- All commercials tested in the Natural Exposure™ system over a five-month period were included, except for new brands, out-of-season products and considered-purchase items.
- The sample of tests covered 55 product categories, with 142 different commercials.
- In total, there were 2,241 respondents, representing 7,283 commercial exposure/product-category purchase opportunities.

The goal of the study was to measure the extent to which respondent brand preference changes are validated by changes in a test brand’s share. Two weeks after each Natural Exposure™ commercial test, respondents were re-contacted by telephone. In this unrelated interview, the same individuals were questioned on an unaided basis about category and brand purchases during the two-week period since the advertising exposure. Brand share was measured among those who made a category purchase.

The results of this follow up buying-behavior study were then matched to the responses of the same persons in the copy-test interview. Actual purchase levels were compared to different levels of response to the test commercials. For each commercial exposure/purchase opportunity, three types of respondent classification were possible:

- Preferred Pre: Respondent preferred the test brand pre-exposure - not eligible for positive change.
- Persuaded: Respondent did not prefer the test brand at the pre-exposure stage but changed to the test brand in the day-after exposure callback.
- Not Persuaded: Respondent did not prefer the test brand pre-exposure and did not change preference to the test brand in the day-after exposure callback.

Among those who bought in the product category, purchases of the test brands were an average of 3.3 times greater for those who changed their preference to those brands in the copy tests versus those who did not (42.8% versus 12.8%). Control sample data confirmed that this difference was the result of advertising exposure.

The results clearly show that Mapes and Ross’ persuasion measure predicts significant changes in actual purchase behavior.
natural exposure™ validation
case history two

A series of 16 proprietary in-market sales tests were conducted by a consumer packaged goods industry marketer to validate the predictive nature of Mapes and Ross’ Natural Exposure™ persuasion measure. The results showed a remarkable level of correlation between controlled in-market sales changes and Mapes and Ross’ Brand Preference Change.

In-Market Sales Correlation Study

- Commercials tested in the Mapes and Ross Natural Exposure™ system were subsequently run in separate markets.
- The commercial tests included several products, and a range advertising performance, as measured by the Mapes and Ross Brand Preference Change persuasion metric.
- Brand Preference Change performance and in-market sales changes were found to have a very high correlation.

Many Mapes and Ross clients have conducted independent validations of Mapes and Ross' Brand Preference Change measure of persuasion to ascertain how sales of their brands correlate in the actual marketplace.

One client's extensive experience provided a total of 16 opportunities wherein commercials were tested using Mapes and Ross' Natural Exposure™ method. The 16 commercials represented above average, average and below average levels of Brand Preference Change (persuasion). Subsequently, the 16 commercials were aired in distinct markets to determine whether or not the sales effect of these commercials was consistent with the Mapes and Ross copy test performance.

In-market buying behavior was measured by IRI in split-cable market tests with control cells. Sales were tracked over multiple purchase cycles during the airing of the commercials. Several product lines were used in the test, including category leaders and non-leaders in large and small categories. The brands were established in the markets where in-market testing was conducted; however, no relevant brand advertising had occurred in the markets recently.

When the IRI data was compared to the copy-test results, 15 of the 16 in-market results corresponded. The overall correlation between in-market sales change and Mapes and Ross' Brand Preference Change measure was very high (r=+.80).
This case study exemplifies the principal reason for conducting copy research - increasing sales performance through better advertising. A commodity food marketer with a history of weak performance in Natural Exposure™ tests asked Mapes and Ross to recommend executional changes. The revised commercials tested much better, and a negative sales trend consequently reversed to significant positive growth.

National Sales Validation Study

- Mapes and Ross recommended five elemental changes for two commercials.
- Ad agency incorporated the ad factors associated with high persuasion performance into two revised executions.
- Subsequent Brand Preference Change measure tripled, and sales increased substantially.

In this study, a commodity board was frustrated with a sales slump that coincided with supporting the category with two :15 commercials. The commercials were tested in the Mapes and Ross Natural Exposure™ testing method and were determined to have below average persuasive effect as measured by Brand Preference Change. Mapes and Ross worked with the client advertiser and a cooperative agency to identify a number of recommendations for how the commercials could be improved. These recommendations were based on performance data from thousands of observations, and included:

- Provide greater visual and verbal emphasis to the product
- Establish the key idea earlier in the commercial, both visually and verbally
- Clearly identify the product visually and verbally early in the commercial
- Synchronize audio and video so that the visual segment supports the claims made in the audio
- Present the idea in a newsworthy manner

With only executional changes to existing creative strategy, two revised :15 commercials were developed incorporating the recommendations. When retested using Natural Exposure™, Brand Preference Change was over three times higher than the originally tested commercials.

The new commercials then replaced the original executions in the marketplace. As the graph depicts, sales initially stabilized behind the new commercials, and then continually increased with no additional media spending.
services.

Mapes and Ross offers a wide range of communications research and consulting services. Whatever you want to learn about the effectiveness of your marketing communications, we can help with a research method that addresses your needs. The list below shows our most popular services, and we can create custom research as needed. We have expertise in hard-to-reach samples, unusual media, special events, and other custom quantitative research.

**natural exposure™ real world advertising impact**

The most conclusively validated, sales-correlated evaluative advertising research method in the industry. In-home exposure, day-after persuasion and day-after recall measures, along with key idea communication, presentational effectiveness, and custom inquiries. Available for TV, print, radio, newspaper, trade journal, and other custom media.

**profile™ user imagery**

An add-on service for Natural Exposure™ studies, with a unique trade-off method designed to define brand user imagery vis-à-vis a competitive brand set, and to measure changes the day after a single ad exposure.

**equimax™ brand equity**

An add-on service for Natural Exposure™ studies, focused on gathering attitudinal information from current users of a large-share brand to measure brand loyalty that results in increased sales. These studies frequently include follow-up longitudinal studies of exposed respondents (versus a control group) to measure actual buying levels.

**coresearch™ diagnostic research**

A communication and reactions approach, best used for diagnostic ad research. These studies are usually conducted using a central location, with exposure in a clutter environment with immediate recall measures, followed by a second focused exposure with detailed reaction data-gathering. Available for TV, print, radio, newspaper, trade journal, and other custom media.

**concept & positioning research**

Fast, cost-effective quantitative research into consumer preferences and reactions to new and existing brand concepts and positioning strategies.

**tracking research**

Ongoing research among your target audience, usually at regular intervals on a continuous basis, to measure the effects of marketing initiatives on awareness, attitudes, behavior, and other factors.

**creative development consulting**

Make the advertising performance optimization process proactive instead of reactive. Analysis of performance measures for tens of thousands of ads has taught us to recognize the factors commonly present in effective commercials/ads, and the pitfalls often present in weaker executions. Insights from this learning can be shared early in the creative process. Before finalizing a concept, send us your storyboard for suggestions that can significantly increase copy test and subsequent in-market performance.