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The Association Test

Measure the Conscious and
Subconscious Communication

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Design elements such as colors, shapes, typefaces, photographs and vignettes can have a powerful effect on the behavior of people exposed to them. There are numerous brand identity and packaging examples which illustrate this. Often, those exposed to the designs are not aware of the effects the designs have on their behavior. The Association Test has been designed to measure both the conscious and subconscious communication values of designs which influence human behavior.

The Association Test interview consists of showing the respondent two to five different visuals, simultaneously, e.g., brand names, logos or packages.

Respondents are asked to pick one and only one of the visuals shown to them as being most strongly associated with each statement in an attribute/imagery battery. Respondents are required to select one visual, and only one visual, as most associated with each phrase. After completing the battery, respondents are asked for which visual they would most want to win a gift certificate (of appropriate monetary value) if their name were drawn in a random drawing and why.

It is important to note that visuals are always referred to as the products they represent. For example, candy bar wrappers are referred to as candy bars, pasta cartons are referred to as pasta. All attribute/imagery statements refer to the product, as well.

In this way, we will be able to measure whether or not one design better communicates, either consciously or subconsciously, certain key attributes, such as freshness, naturalness, quality, healthfulness and sophistication. Also, by correlating imagery associations with preference, we will be able to identify the specific reasons why respondents prefer one brand over the other, even when the respondents themselves are unaware of those reasons.