

# What makes an ad persuasive?

Not all TV advertising aims to be immediately persuasive. But when your goal is to influence consumers in a way that has a direct impact on their behavior, and generates a short term increase in sales, there are four key factors which dictate how successful you will be. To achieve a strongly persuasive effect, your ads need to communicate something new, relevant, believable and differentiating. However, an ad which is not enjoyed may hinder the ad's persuasiveness; an ad which is disliked is unlikely to be highly persuasive.

## Achieving strong persuasion

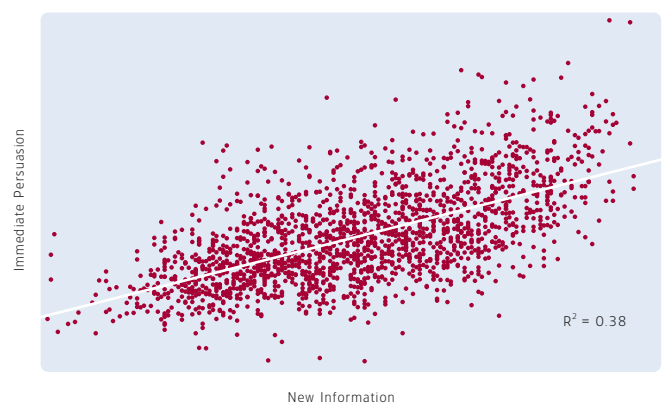
A lot of advertising seeks to influence behavior over a long period of time, but here we are looking specifically at how ads can bring about an immediate alteration in consumer behavior — changing their opinion of the brand at the time of viewing. Depending on the advertising objective, this may result in changes in frequency of usage or weight of purchase, or brand switching.

This is what our Link™ Persuasion questions measure. And we see a clear relationship between having a persuasive ad and the likelihood of a short term sales share increase. With new or small brands in particular, weak persuasion seriously reduces the chance of an increase in sales share; whereas ads for new brands which score highly on persuasion result in larger than average short term increases in share.

Four factors contribute to an ad's ability to communicate a

motivating message that achieves the desired persuasive effect.

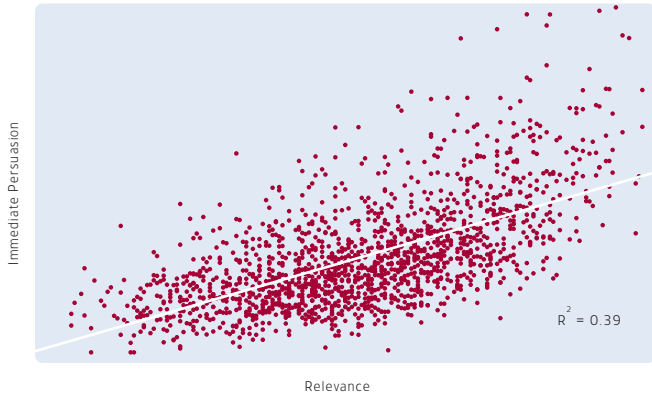
First, we see that persuasion correlates strongly with how ads perform in conveying **new information**:



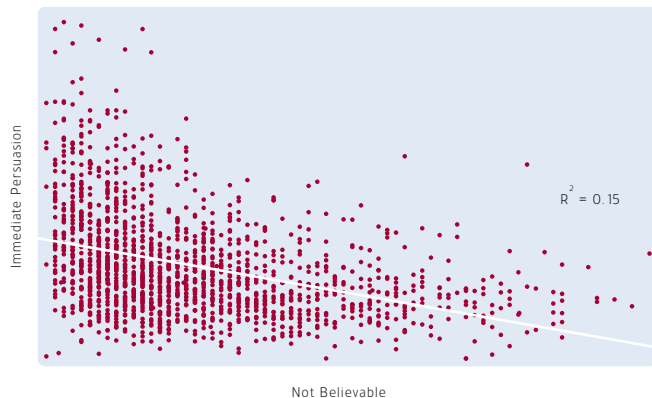
“News” here is defined by the consumer; what they see as “news” isn’t always the same as that intended by the advertiser.

But an important corollary of this is that once the communication is no longer seen as “new”, it is unlikely to be persuasive; a second burst of the ad is unlikely to be as effective.

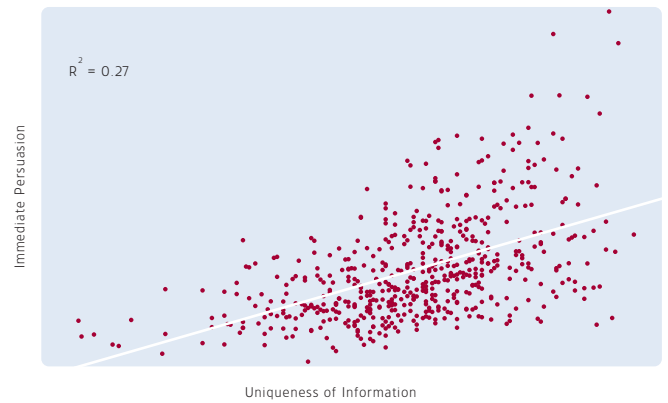
Also vitally important is the **relevance** to the consumer of what the ad communicates:



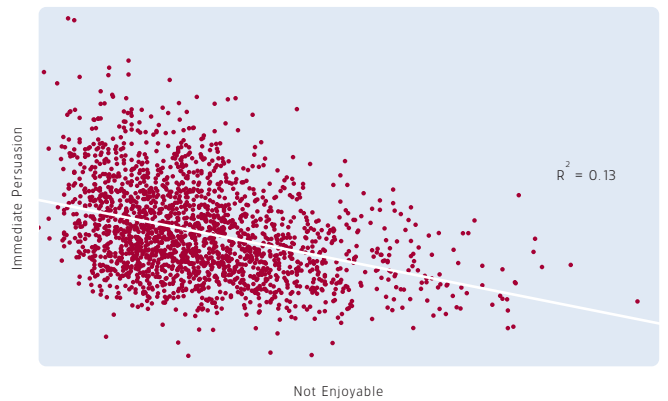
.... and the extent to which the messages communicated are credible. Actually, the key thing here is that the communication should not be seen as incredible; by contrast, a sceptical response such as “I would have to check it out first before I believed it,” is common, and could actually encourage trial through curiosity.



Finally, ads have a much better chance of achieving a strong persuasive effect if they are differentiating; if they are able to communicate news that is perceived as genuinely distinctive — or, better still, unique — that sets them apart from other brands in their category.



An ad being rated as enjoyable does not have a big positive effect on its ability to persuade, but there is evidence that ads which aren’t enjoyed are less likely to achieve strong persuasion. Disliking the messenger can be a barrier to accepting the message:



### So which factor is most important?

None of the four factors described above has enough weight by itself to compensate for poor performance by the others. Rather, they are conditions which all need to be met if an ad is to generate the motivation necessary to change consumer behavior. Think of the Immediate Persuasion score like a cake: if just one of the main ingredients is missing, then the final result will not be very appetizing.

The chart below shows how, if an ad scores well against most or all of the four key diagnostic factors, its chances of scoring highly for persuasion are greatly increased:

**New, relevant, credible and unique**

Number of diagnostics with above average scores	Proportion of such cases with above average score on Persuasion	Proportion of such cases with top quartile score on Persuasion
0	10%	1%
1	16%	3%
2	33%	7%
3	56%	24%
4	83%	57%

Note, in particular, the very high proportion of cases scoring highly for persuasion when all four factors are rated above average.

TV advertising can have many different objectives; but if immediate persuasion is your goal, addressing the issues raised here will help you maximize the effectiveness of your next campaign.

*Knowledge Points are drawn from the Millward Brown Knowledge Bank, consisting of our databases of 50,000 brand reports and 40,000 ads, as well as 1,000 case studies, 700 conference papers and magazine articles, and 250 Learnings documents.*

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