

Prepared By:

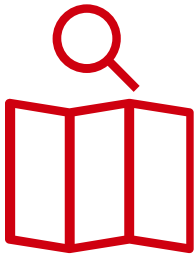
Metrix Data Science

<https://m-metrix.com/>

info@m-metrix.com

The Sleeper Effect

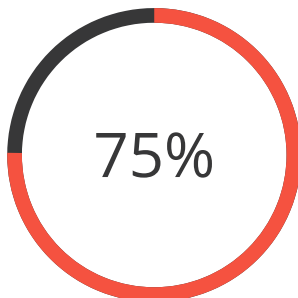
October 2021



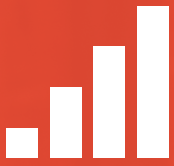
Psychology in advertising:

There is a long-established connection between advertising and psychology. Here at Metrix Data Science (MDS), we are always on the lookout for fresh ideas and interconnections between fields that help explain different phenomena. This brings us to the controversial sleeper effect theory, that has hotly debated in amongst psychologists and in the advertising industry.

The top 5 supermarkets (Tesco, Sainsburys, ASDA, Morrisons and Aldi) currently make up 75% of the market.



Psychology is the study of why certain people act in a certain way, so it's no surprise that businesses want to utilise the power of psychology in order to enhance advertising. Whether it be trying to increase sales or change general behaviour - for example eating more healthy foods – the power of suggestions is widespread. Organisations are constantly looking for inventive ways to sway people to purchase their products instead of turning to competitors. This is especially evident in oligopolistic industries where the market is saturated. Take the supermarket industry for example, the top 5 supermarkets (Tesco, Sainsburys, ASDA, Morrisons and Aldi) currently make up 75% of the market. Tesco, having the largest share of the market with 27%, invested £81 million in advertising in 2020 to maintain this position of strength. It comes as no surprise that Tesco are trying very hard to sway people to shop at their stores with large scale advertising campaigns, so that when consumers need to do a shop, they choose Tesco. These advertising campaigns are designed to change consumer behaviour, and persuade consumers to choose Tesco over their competitors. The key here is the point at which consumers need to do a shop. Not all advertising investments reap instant rewards, there is usually a delay on when consumers purchase a product. This is why it is key for marketers to understand the sleeper effect...



Most psychological studies that relate to persuasion and exposure to communications come to the hypothesis that attitudes return to the positions held before exposure to the communication which can be seen in figure 1.

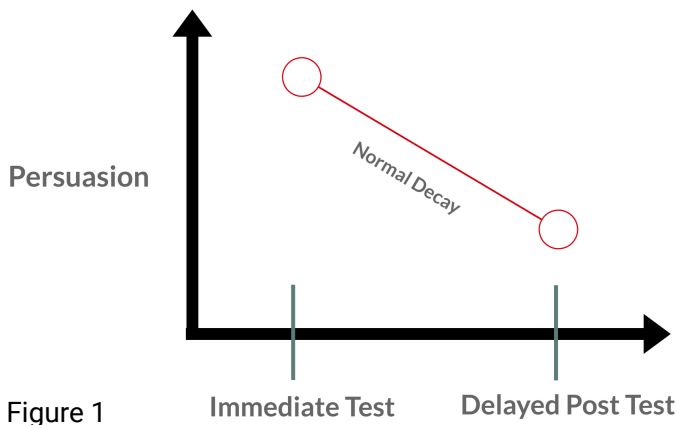


Figure 1

Figure 1 demonstrates what normally happens after a consumer receives communications from a brand, over time the persuasion of that message decreases. However, the sleeper effect theory relates to the delayed increase of the effect of a message that is accompanied by a discounting cue. This is shown in figure 2.

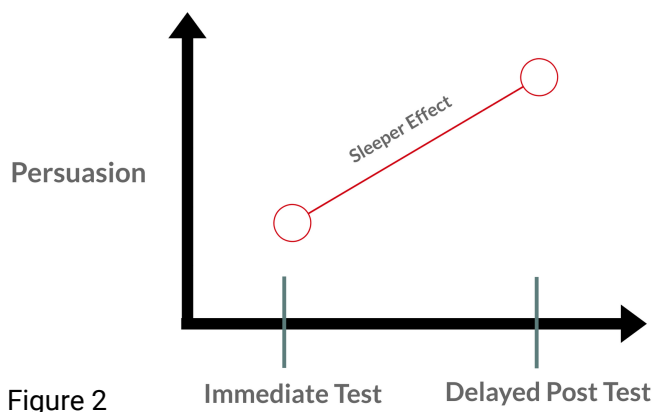


Figure 2

A discounting cue can be a number of things, for example, a message disclaimer or a message with a low credible source. Figure 2 demonstrates that over time, persuasion from a message increases over time when the discounting cue is present. The reasoning behind this increase is over time people distance the communication from the discounting cue but recall the merits of the message. A good example of this is a smear campaign in politics, if an undecided voter sees a campaign discrediting a candidate, but then sees the advert was promoted by their rival (the discounting cue), initially the message is not persuasive. Over time the undecided voter forgets the discounting cue, resulting in the undecided voter more likely to be persuaded by the campaign.

The credibility of the sleeper effect -

The sleeper effect theory does not come without controversy. Since the theory came about in 1951, marketers have been trying to establish a connection between the theory and advertising. In 1961, Martin Weinberger discussed the relevance of the sleeper effect to advertising research. He came to the conclusion that repetition of advertising is probably more likely to reinforce the original effect of the initial communication than to produce the sleeper effect. Many researchers suggest a null hypothesis to be the most appropriate course of action.

What does this mean for marketers today?

Whether the sleeper effect is true or not, the key component is that time scale proves to be an important part of any brand's marketing campaign. As seen in figure 1, persuasion decreases over time. So, when the time does come around for a consumer wanting to purchase your product, marketers need to make sure that the persuasion level is higher than competitors in the market. Persistent advertising will optimise the possibility that your brand is at the forefront of a consumer's mind when they eventually need your product or service.

