

SCIMARK REPORT

BY JORDAN PINE

More exciting news from the SciMark-DRMetrix alliance: My annual review of DRTV categories is now powered by AdSphere. DRMetrix provides the data, and I provide the subjective analysis that tailors the data for retail marketers.

GOOD CATEGORIES

1. Cookware & Kitchen
2. Lights (Tools)
3. Toys & Games
4. Cleaning
5. Apparel & Accessories

Here's a breakdown of the five good categories:

COOKWARE & KITCHEN: No surprise here. This has been my No. 1 category of the past six years and continues to produce a high hit rate despite a higher-than-average number of attempts: 62 in 2016, the most of any category. In other words, the industry has caught on and is trying anything it can find in this category in the hopes of landing a hit — and it's working! Who would have thought just three years after the monster hit **Ogreenic**, no less than three similar pans would be dominating the airwaves and retail shelves? Moreover, those brands (Emson's **Gotham Steel**, TELEBrands' **Red Copper**, and Tristar's **Copper 360**) have delivered multiple hits and brand extensions such as Gotham Steel knives, a Red Copper mug, and so on.

LIGHTS: The success of this category was another big surprise. Recall: lighting was my *second-worst* category of 2016, and it was my No. 3 worst category of the five years preceding that. Apparently, all it took was the right positioning to turn that around. Last year, tactical lights took the market by storm. The trend began with Emson's Bell+Howell **TacLight** and TELEBrands' **Atomic Beam**, continued with Emson's **TacLight Lantern** and TELEBrands' **Atomic Lantern**, and will continue this year with headlamps and more. Although not a tactical product, Ontel's **Ever Brite** was also one of the top items of the year.

TOYS & GAMES: I typically discount this category because toy companies, even ones with a DR-focus, have a different business model than pure-play DRTV marketers. Yet last year, enough happened outside of the toy companies to warrant inclusion. Some examples: TELEBrands had a hit with **Battle Balloons**, IdeaVillage rolled out with **Rocket Copters**, **Swerve Ball**, and **Pocket Racers**, and Ontel led the category with **Magic Tracks**.



CLEANING: The resurgence of this category is a great example of why I update my good categories/bad categories list every year. One of the worst categories in DR for many years, household cleaning delivered better than a one-in-three hit rate. Examples include SAS Group's **Dutch Glow Amish Cleaning Tonic**, Hampton's **Sani Sticks**, and Ontel's **Turbo Scrub**.

BAD CATEGORIES

1. Electronics & Software
2. Pets
3. Jewelry
4. Automotive
5. Hardware

APPAREL & ACCESSORIES: In the past, I would have put compression garments in this category. Following the DRMetrix system, those products have been reclassified as "orthopedic." What's interesting to me is that apparel wouldn't have made the top-five list without such items such in 2015, but in 2016 the category didn't need help. Ontel's **Miracle Bamboo Bra**, Tristar's **Sensual Contour**, and InvenTel's **Hollywood Pants** were among the diverse items that contributed to the success of this category. Even more surprising: accessories are suddenly viable. Wallets could be counted on to deliver a hit now and then. But last year, three wallets were on the shelf: Allstar's **Wonder Wallet**, TELEBrands' **Dura Wallet**, and Ontel's **Lock Wallet**. Even more surprising, two belts rolled out: IdeaVillage's **Comfort Click Belt** and InvenTel's **Click-It Belt**.



Finally, an odd category known as "novelty chemical products" deserves an honorable mention. Although logging only a handful of attempts, most of those attempts were successful. This includes the juggernaut known as **Flex Seal**, Avento's **Wipe New Headlight Restore** and **ReColor**, and Ontel's **5 Second Fix**/TELEBrands' **Lazer Bond**.

As for the five bad categories, here's my analysis (the term "false positive" refers to campaigns with many weeks on air with little spend):

ELECTRONICS & SOFTWARE: This is a general DRMetrix category that includes tablet and cell phone accessories, my worst category last year. Excluding a false positive or two, the category went one-for-18. The one? Allstar's **Boom Touch** speaker.

PETS: Once again, Allstar saved this category from having zero hits in 2016. Its **Knot Out** pet brush in the first half and **True Touch** grooming glove in the second half were the only notable winners.

JEWELRY: Several attempts to bring back an "Old Gold" item from 2007, IdeaVillage's **Clever Clasp**, failed, as did a few variations on the "magical jewelry" theme. Discounting one false positive, I'm declaring this category zero-for-eight.

AUTOMOTIVE: This category went from good (my third-best category) to bad in 2016 with zero products going the distance, so far, on about a dozen attempts. I note one or two items that may still break out, but the trend (multiple creatives tested) isn't promising.

HARDWARE: This category is a bit of catchall. It's grouped as "Misc. - Novelty Hardware" in AdSphere. Even though it includes **Star Shower**, I am placing it on my bad categories list for two reasons. First, with the exception of variations of the exact Star Shower concept, there have already been several attempts to launch another holiday lighting hit without success. We'll see if that changes as more information comes in about Q4. Second, once you remove holiday laser projectors from the mix, there was absolutely nothing going on in this category. I counted at least a dozen flops.

WHAT MAKES UP THE SCIMARK SEVEN?

The **PRODUCT** should be: (1) needed; (2) targeted; and (3) different.

The **CATEGORY** should be: (4) un-crowded.

The **COMMERCIAL** should be: (5) engaging; (6) motivating; and (7) clear.

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