Research SciMark Report

By Jordan Pine

People often ask me: Does a good SciMark Seven (S7) score mean you are predicting a campaign will be successful? The answer is: It depends. Sometimes I predict failure for items that score as high as **6 out of 7**. The question I always ask myself: How important is that one missing quality? To illustrate my point, this month I highlight three campaigns that only have one significant S7 weakness, yet I consider all three unlikely to succeed.

To make things clearer, this month and going forward my ratings will change to be more like a movie rating system. One or two stars will mean I think success is unlikely, and four or five stars will mean I predict a hit.



HEX LIGHT

Description: An armband with six LED lights

Main Pitch: "Fits to your forearm and lets you see and work

totally hands free"

Main Offer: \$19.99 for one

Bonus: Second one (just pay separate P&H) plus six

Stick 'N Click lights

Starring: Anthony Sullivan

Marketer: TELEBrands
Web site: www.BuyHexLight.com

Rating: 1 out of 5 $\bigstar \Leftrightarrow \Leftrightarrow \Leftrightarrow \Leftrightarrow \Leftrightarrow$

Here's another campaign that meets every S7 criteria except one: It isn't needed. How do I know? DRTV companies have tested at least five hands-free lights this year, and not one has rolled out. Widget Light, Flexi-Brite, Hug Light, Literoo ... TELEBrands itself even tested a different type of hands-free light called Flashlight Man.

When a category is 0-for-5 and everyone has chased after it, you cannot chalk it up to creative, market size or any of the other elements that affect DRTV results. The only possibility is that DRTV buyers just don't see this problem as one that needs solving.

MICROTOUCH MAX

Description: The newest version of the No. 1 micro-trimmer for men **Main Pitch:** "Trim hair instantly

and perfectly"

Main Offer: \$14.99 for one

Bonus: 10-piece grooming kit

Marketer: IdeaVillage Products

Web site: www.MicroTouchMax.com

Rating: 3 out of 5



Rating: 3 out of 5 $\star \star \star \Leftrightarrow \Leftrightarrow \Leftrightarrow$

The fatal S7 flaw here is the product isn't *different* enough from what's already on the market. I should know: I helped launch the original MicroTouch in 2003. It was a huge hit back then, and it continues to sell well at retail an astounding seven years later.

However, while a fresh creative is probably a good idea for the brand and for making retailers happy, this commercial is unlikely to pay out on DRTV. As opposed to earlier upgrades of the product (MicroTouch Turbo and MicroTouch Magic), the only thing new about this **MicroTouch** is its design. The features and benefits are the same. The commercial is also identical to the ones that came before it. While I understand the reason, déjà vu is probably not the best way to get DRTV buyers off the couch.

JUST AIR BACKPACK

Description: A backpack that's comfortable to wear **Main Pitch:** "Puts a pillow of air between you and the

backpack contents"

Main Offer: \$29.99 for one

Bonus: None

Marketer: Elite Carry Systems Web site: www.JustAirBackpacks.com



Recently, I was thinking to myself about the success of "throwback" items. The stimulus was Coca-Cola's re-launching of **Mello Yello**, a citrus-flavored soft drink I used to love as a kid. While thinking about the drink and listening to "Pump It" by the Black Eyed Peas on the radio, I decided Reebok should bring back **The Pump**. (Turns out my idea is a year too late. Last November, Reebok did exactly that in honor of The Pump's 20th anniversary.)

I bring it up because this product could be described as The Pump of backpacks. That is, you can adjust the cushion of air on which it rides by squeezing a Pump-like bulb on the strap. Maybe it's just because of my Reebok/BEP fixation, but I think that's *different* and cool. I also think backpack back-pain is a real problem people experience across the country, and a good solution is *needed*. Finally, this creative is well done and meets most of my criteria for a good DRTV commercial (with the exception of the offer). The producer chose a testimonial-driven approach that is quite *engaging* and credible.

So what is this campaign's major S7 flaw? It's incorrectly *targeted*. With rare exceptions, DRTV products fail when they don't appeal to people age 40 or older. This product is aimed at people college age and below.

Some marketers love to argue this important point about DRTV demographics. Their fervent belief is that parents and grandparents (*i.e.*, the people who do tend to buy off TV) will make the purchase on behalf of their child or grandchild. But I've yet to see any evidence that this hypothesis holds water



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