



The art and science of standing out

AUDIENCE BEHAVIOR

Just Noticeable Difference (**jnd**) is a scientific term that describes the minimal amount of change in a stimulus it takes to be perceived. For example, how much louder does a sound have to get or how much heavier does an object have to be for you to notice the difference? But it may also be a good way to think about the dynamic between audiences and brands. Psychologists have suggested that as much as 95 percent of human behavior is controlled by the unconscious mind; we are creatures of habit that learn quickly to tune out what we don't need. So, in a sea of marketing sameness, audiences tend to ignore the familiar and pay attention only to what they notice as different. Just being wildly different for the sake of standing out, however, can sometimes be confusing for audiences. Often it's a brand's Just Noticeable Differences that audiences connect with most.

BRAND BEHAVIOR

In today's hyper-competitive world, standing out can often seem daunting. It's important for brands to recognize the value of its Just Noticeable Differences when aiming to change audience perceptions. It's a delicate balance between these improvements not getting noticed at all and being conspicuously uncharacteristic of the brand. The featured cases illustrate how minor change can challenge the status quo, increase recognition and successfully evolve and differentiate the brand.



IPOD HEADPHONES

The ultimate example of Just Noticeable Difference might be the iPod's white headphones. Using white headphones to launch Apple's mp3 player wasn't merely disruptive for a category with commonly black headphones, it was also ownable as the iPod's signature color. Further, the distinctive color publicly identified the consumer's brand preference—a fact previously hidden in the consumer's pocket—creating a tribe-like community and encouraging a wider audience to join the digital music revolution.



TARGET RX PACKAGING

Target revamped the conventional amber prescription bottle and replaced it with clear containers. The new pill bottles, dubbed ClearRX, were paired with six color-coded rings to help family members identify their drugs. These minor changes successfully marry function with intelligent design making it noticeably more user-friendly and safer (nearly 60 percent of prescription drugs are taken improperly as result of unclear labeling). Target's prescription drug sales increased 14 percent in the first year after ClearRX's launch.



BP "BEYOND PETROLEUM"

To shake off its image of a traditional oil company and as part of its effort to be perceived as an energy provider committed to the environment and solar power, BP decided to move away from its inter-state shield to a Helios symbol in form of a green and yellow sunflower. Syncing the launch of the new logo with introducing a new corporate slogan "Beyond Petroleum" provided not only a meaningful definition of the company name but proved to be the Just Noticeable Difference for audiences to perceive BP as a company with bigger ideas for the future.