

# What The Buzz?!

an integrated approach for generation now

By Kristin Hickey and Annette Druce

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## SUBJECT MATTER:

A great deal has been documented about Brand 'Buzz' recently – so much so, that there are numerous companies, consultants, Facebook pages, Twitter applications, books and internet blogs on the topic that it feels like 'buzz' may have already, (ironically), become something of a marketing cliché.

Clearly, Brand Buzz has become part of the modern marketing vernacular and, in an era of immediate and virtually limitless information sources, it seems relatively easy to become a Brand Buzz specialist overnight. This observation presents both strengths and weaknesses for market researchers. On the positive side, it suggests a passion and desire across the industry to embrace new marketing ideas. At the same time, it implies that the idea of Brand Buzz remains simply that – an idea, without, perhaps, a robust and consistent definition, understanding and operationalisation. This poses a real risk for our industry as appearing uncommitted or superficial in understanding Brand Buzz and a further risk that marketers will see talk of Brand Buzz as an opportunity for sales dialogue that lacks depth and credibility.

These concerns and the underlying need for more rigour around Brand Buzz are the impetus behind this paper which seeks to address some obvious, but important questions. Is everyone talking the same language, or are there different types of Brand Buzz being talked about? Has the construct been accurately defined and measured and, importantly, do we have evidence that we are measuring something different from existing brand health measures, or just re-inventing them?

In this paper, the authors begin to bridge the divide between the need to embrace new ideas quickly and the need for a more grounded, scientific approach to understanding Brand Buzz. In doing so, the meaning, validity, robustness, operationalisation and reliability of this loosely-defined construct of 'Brand Buzz' are explored. The learnings from a case study involving over fifty brands and over twelve thousand consumers is then discussed, focussing on the key learnings about Brand Buzz from both a research and marketing perspective. Throughout this paper, existing tools and beliefs are scrutinized and a series of actionable learnings provided for agencies and brand marketers. These learnings are integrated with existing insights around Anticipation Marketing to provide a broader context for understanding how to make brands cut-through and prosper in an increasingly noisy environment.

## INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, I stumbled across the term 'Buzz Marketing' on the internet. Intrigued, I promptly went about purchasing a book of this title from Amazon to make sure I was abreast of the latest and greatest trends in the brand marketing world. While the book proved an interesting read, I was somewhat disappointed that the principle of 'Buzz Marketing' seemed to be about creating brand noise or breaking through a cluttered brand advertising world by doing things differently. The disappointment came, NOT because I didn't believe this premise was true, but, rather, because it wasn't particularly new (after all, agencies have been successfully breaking the boundaries of traditional media and brand messaging for well over a decade). Despite this, the idea of creating brands that 'buzz' struck an accord. What was it that made brands buzz beyond non-traditional marketing campaigns? Was there something particular about the brand itself, its environment or the way in which communication was spread that created buzz for brands? Was brand buzz sustainable, or was it temporal, dropping off post campaign period? Clearly, there were numerous questions to be answered, but first, we had to find a more concrete definition of Brand Buzz to ensure we weren't simply getting excited about something marketers already knew about – something that might be well captured in market research constructs already in action such as brand awareness, or brand advocacy. Once a clear definition could be provided and the differences understood between this and existing brand marketing constructs, we could progress in trying to measure how 'buzzy' brands are and use this data to provide robust analysis to answer some of the contextual questions presented earlier.

This story outlines the structure of this paper. The paper begins by examining why Brand Buzz is relevant and interesting as a modern marketing phenomenon, before moving on to provide a robust and distinctive definition of Brand Buzz. The authors then discuss how the buzzy-ness of brands might be measured and provide evidence, via a case study example of how Brand Buzz differs from other traditionally used market research and brand management constructs. Evidence is then provided on the contextual learnings about Brand Buzz – what environment brands are more or less buzzy in; what type of brands create the most buzz and how buzz is spread or contained in the market. Finally, the authors use the findings to provide a simple series of guidelines for marketers wishing to create, sustain and measure Brand Buzz.

## WHY NOW?

As market researchers, we are always taught to question why things are happening NOW that may not have been apparent earlier. Why, for instance, is a paper on Brand Buzz being presented at ESOMAR 2010 when it wasn't on the agenda eight years ago in Barcelona?

To be honest, there is no simple answer to this question, but there are numerous trends and observations we can make about our modern environment that do help to explain why Brand Buzz may be a more relevant idea in 2010. Let's introduce some of these key ideas which fall into three related areas:

1. The demand for right here, right now
2. The cult of exposure
3. An increasing intensity of brands per market

The first of these ideas relates to the extraordinary pace at which mobility and technological innovation have fundamentally changed our lives as consumers. In today's environment, consumers have become more demanding, expecting products, services, friendships and brands to be available anywhere, anytime they are required. This not only changes our expectations of brands, but also our relationship with them as they are integrated into our lives via technology more and more.

The second idea is related and is more of a social phenomenon arising out of this increasingly visible and documented context referred to by Black, McNeill and Martin as the 'cult of exposure'. This phenomenon – broadly, the increased value placed on sharing previously considered private or personal information – explains the desire amongst some consumers to engage actively in social networking media, product or brand blogging and is changing the role of consumers from users of products and services to social broadcasters crafting conscious personas through which to provide comment to others. Whilst not for everyone (Black et al introduce two segments – the 'Exposed' and the 'Discreets' with different degrees of involvement in social broadcasting), the emergence of this new consumer voice is an important parallel to the role brands must now play in society to cut through and become the source of recognition and conversation.

The final theme that is critical in explaining why Brand Buzz is of more relevance today than ever before is that of increasing brand competition. In almost all competitive market environments, the number of branded offers emerging<sup>1</sup> is increasing rapidly. Indeed, in traditional Porter-ian mode, markets continue to expand through being sufficiently profitable to attract new entrants, then fragment to create new markets or 'sub-categories' within the same category. Forty years ago, for instance, the emergent choice in a supermarket may have been between block butter and the new advent of margarine. Today, however, the category looks very different, with literally hundreds of SKUs within each of butter and margarine categories appealing to different consumers, needs and preferences. This proliferation of brands makes it increasingly difficult for individual skus to grab the attention of its target buyers, but also changes the role of the brand itself, from a representation of mainly *product* attributes, to a representation of positive consumer *experiences*.

Each of these three forces therefore work in combination to produce an environment where Brand Buzz is potentially more important than ever before. As alluded to in last year's paper, 'Anticipation Marketing'<sup>2</sup>, brands that can cut through the clutter, understand and better deliver to the following seven principles, will dominate in a world where a focus on true brand engagement via the development of brand 'energy' can create super-normal levels of consumer demand.

1. The Scarcity Principle
2. The Cult of First
3. The Games We Play
4. Group Narcissism
5. The Principle of Otherness
6. Judge Me By My Cover
7. The Equilibrium Principle<sup>3</sup>

These insights therefore provide an explanation as to why Brand Buzz and its understanding is more important now than ever before, but they do not help modern marketers without a clear definition of what Brand Buzz actually is.

## **WHAT IS BRAND BUZZ?**

Let me pose a simple question - what do the following brands have in common?

- The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (book)
- Cumulus (restaurant/bar)
- The i-pad (technology)
- Tattoos (body art)
- Justin Bieber (singer)
- ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) medication

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<sup>1</sup> Including retailer and generic brands of course

<sup>2</sup> Hickey, Baron and Merrell, *Anticipation Marketing: Understanding Buzz for Generation Now*, ESOMAR Qualitative Conference Papers, Istanbul 2009

<sup>3</sup> See original paper for full details

- MasterChef (reality television show)

Whilst there may be a number of cryptic 'correct' answers plausible, one correct answer is that all of these 'brands' have been able to generate extraordinary levels of interest or demand<sup>4</sup> in recent times due to being able to successfully generate a certain 'vibe', talkability and desirability through their brand development and marketing choices. Whilst this might be different in other markets, in Australia at least, each of these brands is considerably more omnipresent than it may have been twelve or twenty-four months ago. Each has outperformed expectation and are amongst the most profitable in their category.

Why is this? Each of these brands has a special 'something' about it that makes people NOTICE it, DESIRE it and want to TALK about it. These brands seem to have simultaneously built (a) presence, (b) desirability, and (c) social respect (perhaps not talkability per se, but certainly shareability). Presence is obvious in that we see or hear more about these brands; desirability is seeded by this omnipresence and social respect means that consumers aren't shy to be seen with or be heard talking about these brands.

This, 'special something' about brands is what we call Brand Buzz. Recognising the importance of finding a singular meaning, we googled 'Brand Buzz' for greater illumination on the topic, but was surprisingly disappointed to find a lack of hits on any definition of this sort. Perhaps this means that Brand Buzz really isn't a phenomenon at all, or simply that no-one has bothered to define it? Probably the best definition we could find was one presented by a fellow market researcher which suggests that Brand Buzz is:

***"The attention grabbing properties of the brand and cascading impact it can generate"**<sup>5</sup>*

The only weakness of this definition is the double-barrelled nature of it, which suggests we need to measure two elements in a single construct, so in order to streamline this, we present a tighter definition, isolating and focussing on the attention part in isolation. Here is the definition we would like to offer in order to move forward and provide a more robust understanding of Brand Buzz:

***Brand Buzz is the degree to which a brand is gaining attention (being seen or heard) in market (by the relevant audience at the relevant time).***

This definition has several important characteristics:

1. It includes exposure of any type and is not limited to WHAT people do with this brand exposure (i.e. independent of whether they talk to others about it or not, as we believe this is a function of not only the exposure, but also on the individuals' natural propensity to share brand information with others)
2. It is not limited to point in time campaigns, but is intended to be more holistic to allow brands with subtle buzz (versus attention grabbing buzz) to be captured
3. It is not limited by how individuals are exposed to the buzz (i.e. how they see or hear or experience the buzz)

This simple definition is certainly not perfect by any means, but it is important to point out its key components, in particular, to distinguish it from other currently used constructs, as there may be immediate push-back by some who believe 'gaining attention' is well covered already in measures such as Spontaneous Awareness. Before we consider how these measures differ, let us briefly look at what efforts have been made thus far to measure Brand Buzz.

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<sup>4</sup> Significantly greater than market levels within their category

<sup>5</sup> Anand Varadarajan, <http://www.slideshare.net/anandtv/emerging-trends-in-consumer-behavior>

## HOW IS IT MEASURED?

Brand Buzz is claimed to have been measured by some researchers, but predominantly seems to be talked about rather than evaluated or tested in hard metrics.

One of the most readily found offers is the measurement of Brand Buzz as a function of the number of times a brand is mentioned on consumer blogs and internet sites. Some analysts have made a healthy contribution to this basic system by providing positive and negative counts in addition to simple word count or content analysis. Whilst this methodology has added some value to the concept of Brand Buzz, mainly in raising awareness of the idea, it seems disproportionately skewed to **discussions** about brands (i.e. word of mouth and consumer commentary) which is really a *function* of buzz itself, rather than the cause. It also assumes that the consumer creates the buzz, not the brand itself, which may or may not be the case. In the case of the i-phone, for instance, it appears that the pure visibility of the brand (as seen by other consumers using it) and high levels of interactive engagement are the main drivers of buzz rather than, necessarily, the documented commentary of brand users themselves (although obviously this will contribute to buzz).

Finally, this measure places complete focus on consumers' interaction with the web and disregards what happens within much tighter social groups (families, friendships, school or work colleagues) where traditional word of mouth, shared opinions and values may be considerably different in both magnitude and nature.

After scouring available published or documented sources (books, internet, research papers and articles), we have been unable to reveal alternative measures of Brand Buzz, but that is not to say they aren't out there being used by marketers and researchers alike, so look forward to researchers sharing their knowledge and findings in this invaluable area so we can progress our understanding as an industry.

## HOW IS IT DIFFERENT?

Brand Buzz is not the same as other marketing measures such as Awareness, Advocacy or Consideration. Nor is it simply a new way of measuring Advertising Awareness or the quality of Media Investment. How do we know this?

We are able to form these conclusions on the basis of extensive research into and measurement of Brand Buzz in line with the above definition. In doing so, we developed meaningful hypotheses about how Brand Buzz might be different and were able to test these via inclusion of a consumer Brand Buzz question in a brand equity monitor conducted continuously with Pernod Ricard Australia since October 2008. The study to date has involved seven categories, sixty-four brands, nineteen months and involving over twelve thousand Australian consumers. Although the results are limited to a single overall category (alcoholic beverages), the variation within categories examined (i.e. still wine, bourbon, RTD, etc) provides insight which we believe can be reliably used to make broader inferences applicable to other brands and categories.

The key areas we are about to examine are:

1. How does Buzz differ from brand awareness?
2. Is Buzz conditional upon brand size or spend?
3. Is Brand Buzz related to recent usage or loyalty?

## Awareness and Spontaneous Awareness

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Brand Buzz is different from Awareness and Spontaneous Awareness as these two constructs measure recognition of the brand, but not the degree of 'energy' within this recognition. This was an important initial hypothesis, critical to the inclusion of a 'buzz' measure in the alcohol tracking study. We recognised three important category aberrations which made us realise the measure we were looking at would be quite different from simply measuring Total Awareness, Spontaneous or Top of Mind Awareness alone.

The first observation was that some categories are so dominated by a single brand that awareness measures (even TOM) no longer provide the richness of information we need to determine whether this brand is still making relevant noise in the category. An example of such a category in Australia is white rum, where Bacardi dominates with 94% volume share within category, so has strong awareness measures with minimal variance over time. The intent of a Buzz measure, therefore, is to help determine whether brands of this nature still have energy in the market.

The second observation was the antithesis of this situation – in categories with particularly high fragmentation, total awareness figures are often slow to move and spontaneous awareness figures limited by the number of brands consumers can realistically recall (or the number we can realistically be expected to capture and code). An example of such a category in Australia is the still wine market which hosts more than 1800 consumer brands<sup>6</sup>. In such categories, awareness measures may 'miss' something important about the brand.

Finally, we also observed situations where particularly tiny brands, some without a category 'home' were making innovative imprints in the minds of consumers, but traditional measures of awareness fail to capture these trends because the brands themselves fall outside the traditional category boundaries. An excellent example of this is Jagermeister (liqueur spirit) in Australia, that doesn't really compete with traditional liqueurs such as Kahlua and Baileys, but neither competes directly with other forms of spirit (e.g scotch or whisky). Nonetheless, the rituals and on-premise visibility of Jagermeister, its presence in blogging forums, MySpace and YouTube videos and documented publican backlash created such a degree of brand 'hype' it was virtually impossible to ignore despite its minimal presence in category sales.

Given the three considerations above, we hypothesised that Brand Buzz was quite distinct from simply being aware of a brand and that Buzz would help us capture the *degree* to which brands were being seen and heard from a consumer point of view. As such, our buzz measure was developed *within* awareness – only asking consumers aware of a brand whether they felt the brand was being seen and heard more today than before<sup>7</sup>. Asking the question in this way meant that we could combine the two measures to develop a sense of both TOTAL exposure or reach of the brand as well as degree of ENERGY or BUZZY-NESS around the brand.

The chart below illustrates the relationship between Spontaneous Awareness and Brand Buzz based on the top 64 brands included in the study (both scores are averaged over the entire period of nineteen months).

### Insert Chart 1

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<sup>6</sup> [www.winediva.com.au/brands/brandsAZ.asp](http://www.winediva.com.au/brands/brandsAZ.asp)

<sup>7</sup> Note: 'before' is implied and not asked directly in the consumer questionnaire, so needs no specific time frame or reference point.

Clearly, there is a relationship between the two measures given that Buzz is a function of Total Awareness (which is highly correlated, obviously, with Spontaneous Awareness). However, what is interesting is that, despite an overall relationship, there are clearly brands with low awareness and low buzz (lower left quadrant – see Chart 2 below) and vice-versa (upper right), but also brands with low Spontaneous Awareness and high Brand Buzz as well as brands consumers are very aware of, but don't seem to have a Buzz about them<sup>8</sup>.

### Insert Chart 2

We can therefore confirm that Buzz and Awareness, whilst strongly related, are definitely *different* constructs as hypothesised, as even though the correlation is strong, it is certainly not perfect.

### Brand Size and Investment

The above pattern of findings are repeated when we look at how brand size affects Buzz. Running this type of analysis, we find the correlation between volume share of category and Brand Buzz is 0.55<sup>9</sup>. Once again, this illustrates that there is no doubt that Brand Buzz increases with brand size, with larger brands being seen and heard more in the market place than smaller brands:

### Insert Table 1

This table illustrates a statistically significant difference in the Buzz score for large brands, reinforcing that the two dimensions, size and buzz, are highly correlated, but not entirely identical.

What about if we look at brand investment? This question presents a much trickier challenge, essentially because of the lack of accurate spend information for competitor brands beyond traditional advertising media (which we know constitutes a much smaller share of overall spend than a decade ago). This lack of effective information proves a stumbling block as far as progressing our understanding of the relationship between brand investment and size, however remains an important unanswered question we will continue to explore. At this stage, we can only conclude based on our *reported* consumer awareness of brand advertising, there is no relationship between reported advertising recognition and Brand Buzz scores.

### Brand Usage and Loyalty

Perhaps Brand Buzz can be better explained by looking at brand usage and consideration? We might, for instance, expect that those who were closest to the brand would be those most likely to see, hear or experience the 'buzzy-ness' of their preferred brands.

This hypothesis was tested by comparing brand usage figures (proportion of consumers who claimed to have tried the brand in the past four weeks) with the Brand Buzz scores to begin with. We then looked at the relationship between Brand Buzz and a five point loyalty measure. The correlation coefficients and ANOVA results are illustrated in the following table:

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<sup>8</sup> Note, quadrants are derived from mean scores on each axis for illustration purposes

<sup>9</sup> Pearson's correlation coefficient (significant at .05 level)

## Insert Table 2

Interestingly, whilst recent *consumption* of the brand does correlate strongly with Brand Buzz (which is expected, as it is also a function of awareness), our brand loyalty measure does not. This might be because the measure of loyalty we used for this purpose is *reported* loyalty, combining both emotional and behavioural loyalty, but it also suggests that Buzz might still exist without necessarily driving immediate emotional or behavioural connection to a brand.

Once we have a longer history of data, it will be possible to test this relationship again, this time with a time lag included. We believe that brands which are buzzy don't create immediate brand loyalty, but may, over time, develop a stronger sense of resonance and connection with a particular target of interest. At this stage, however, we are unable to conduct this type of analysis due to the limited number of time periods of interest.

While there are a number of other constructs we could continue testing Buzz against, we feel adequately armed to conclude, at this stage, that Brand Buzz is largely explained by a number of existing measures, yet remains sufficiently **different** to be of interest to us as researchers and marketers. So what else can we learn from this measure?

### WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT BRAND BUZZ?

The most important learnings from our investigation are independent of our comparisons with traditional brand health measures and form the following four insights:

1. Brands with strong *emotional* resonance have seem to have stronger brand buzz
2. Buzzy brands are unconventionally boisterous
3. Buzzy brands appear to be timeless
4. Some consumers are more buzz-conscious than others

Each of these 'insights' requires not simply data analysis, but the combination of knowledge and experience with consumers and brands in the categories of interest being studied (in other words, the overlay of previous knowledge, desk research and qualitative information). In our example, these insights are therefore limited to alcoholic beverages, but we encourage examination and feedback across other categories to see if the insights reach beyond alcoholic drinks.

Unfortunately, due to client confidentiality, we are unable to list the top ten BUZZY brands in the Australian wine and spirits market, but hope that the insights shared will provide more general application to brand marketers globally.

## ***Brands With Strong Emotional Resonance Have Seem To Have Stronger Brand Buzz***

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The first insight comes from examining the highest scoring brands on their Brand Buzz scores and comparing these to the lowest scoring of the included brands. It is true that the highest scoring brands tend to be strong market leaders, but there is something more than just their size, market support or their longevity in market (since some are newly launched and others are well established).

As we make this comparison, the key thing we notice is that five of the top seven scoring brands are particularly **masculine** brands, defined both by their categories (rum, bourbon, whisky), but also by their brand image. When we explore whether there is a difference between males and females in terms of their brand buzz responses, however, we find no significant differences in gender response. So what does this observation mean?

If we move further down the list, we see that the top listed brands have the following element in common (whether they are masculine or not):

***They have STRONG and singular brand propositions, visual identities and/or consistent executional campaigns stretching across a number of years***

Whilst we know, theoretically in the marketing world, this is a desirable end goal for brands, the data we have seems to reinforce this, with each of the top ten brands being associated with a clear and consistent idea in the consumers' minds. In addition to owning a clear piece of perceptual real estate, the leading brands seem to have (a) an archetypal brand image (or brand icon); (b) a unique drink or drinking ritual (whilst others can be mixed or served in a large variety of ways); and (c) are iconic in terms of how they are represented on shelf or in bars (i.e. clear, discernible and CONSISTENT product packaging).

## ***Buzzy Brands Are Unconventionally Boisterous***

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Whilst many of the brands that lead the Buzz table are leadership brands (as we have already shown), one of the elements they share in common is a non-conventional approach to building presence. When we look at each of these brands, therefore, relative to their industry competitors (these differ for each brand), we see that the key types of buzz reported by consumers, outperform competitors on:

- Seeing other consumers drinking them (distribution focus disproportional to above the line expenditure or traditional advertising)
- Sponsorship of consumer-relevant activities or interests (music, sporting sponsorship, but again, single-minded creating a disproportional sense of 'owning' this initiative relative to competitors)
- A focus on the brand itself rather than forced brand line extensions. Whilst most of these brands have, in fact, successfully taken their offer beyond their core brand offer, the brand comms and distribution focus does not seem to have been distracted by the launch of new flavours, sizes or varietals as it has in some of the other instances

Each of the leading brands seems to have used innovative approaches, therefore, to develop a strong community of drinkers without creating the appearance of being mainstream or 'pushy' in their marketing communications. These initiatives also seem to have a much stronger chance of not only being seen and heard (thereby creating brand buzz), but in translating into brand talkability and providing appropriate 'forums' or experiences where the brand can be enjoyed and shared.

Indeed, this finding might differ significantly across non-beverage categories, but in this category where the role of traditional advertising is being increasingly questioned, it does appear that non-traditional forms of investment are creating strong resonance and consistent meaning for consumers. Brands that deliver experiential involvement, discovery and meaning, therefore (such as the i-*phone*), are most likely to create buzz in a modern environment.

### *Brands with high buzz scores also appear to be timeless.*

Brands with high buzz scores also appear to be timeless. Many continue to still epitomise or represent the core values of the category they compete in (male bonding and humour in rum; rebellion in bourbon; desirable sharing in wine; luxurious moments in liqueur etc) and many have done so now for decades on end. Whilst some were strongly associated with modern values, others were seen to maintain modern values, even in the face of their significant size and tenure in market.

This point reinforces the two earlier points in terms of highlighting that buzzy brands don't simply 'shout louder' to create a noise about themselves, but tap into the core essence of the bullseye consumer through:

- Strong understanding of the category pillars (core category imprint and meaning) and segments within the category
- Clear understanding of how their brand OWNS these pillars in a highly differentiating and resonating way (i.e. unique spin they bring to deliver to this meaning)
- Clear understanding of how brand cues on pack, in glass or via user profile reinforce this meaning, even as consumer needs change

Each of these elements seems to ensure brands are able to become timeless icons (at least in the immediate decade!) because they appeal at a much *deeper* level than simply trying to be different or superior to their immediate competitors. In an ever changing environment, the need for brands to resist the temptation to change, to be more modern or to talk about product **quality** is important – brands that focus on *connecting* with consumers because they understand and tap into critical rational and emotional needs seem to stand a stronger chance of creating and sustaining brand buzz.

### *Some Consumers Are More Buzz-Conscious Than Others*

The final insight relates to consumers rather than brands or categories. As we explored Brand Buzz scores, we were interested to discover that the correlations between brand buzz scores (i.e. across brands), are high for any individual. In other words, certain CONSUMERS are more or less likely to experience Brand Buzz or to report brands as being 'buzzy'.

Our initial hypothesis was that this would be because certain individuals are more highly involved in particular categories (therefore more likely to notice brands in this space). To test this hypothesis, we used a category involvement question contained in ONE of the modules which related to the degree of emotional interest and engagement in the category. Five segments were defined and average buzz scores compared across segments. The results are illustrated in the chart below with the least involved segment on the left hand side of the chart through to the most involved on the right hand side.

### Insert Chart 3

Clearly, these results challenged our hypotheses, perhaps suggesting that those NOT emotionally involved in the category in fact have a 'cleaner' canvas to assimilate brand information (assuming, of course, that it remains relevant to them), however the differences between these means are not statistically significant.

When we tested the hypothesis using *behavioural* involvement in the category (versus self-claimed interest as previously), we found similar patterns, however the means, once again, were not statistically different across the behavioural segments.

We then tested to see whether younger consumers might respond to brand exposure differently, using the hypothesis that younger audiences might be more exposed to alcohol brands in particular, but specifically to innovative media investment or brand communications.

Whilst there were some differences in the pattern of responses across age groups, our hypothesis that younger people might be more brand aware did not hold true.

### Insert Chart 4

As we explored more, using CHAID analysis to explain differences between consumers who gave high brand buzz scores versus low brand buzz scores, we were unable to find demographic, psychographic or industry-relevant variables that helped predict or explain this group membership. Frustrating as this is, it raises some interesting questions – clearly it suggests there are consumers who are more 'buzz responsive', but these consumers are found across age groups, genders, category involvement groups or self reported rate of new product adoption.

Obviously, in the context of a brand equity monitor, not all possible insight about consumers can be captured – for instance, few category attitudes are captured or degree of media involvement, so this type of information may add further insight should we include Brand Buzz measures in other research instruments.

To see if we could glean any additional insight into what makes a consumer more 'buzz responsive', we asked ourselves the question whether 'buzz responsive' consumers were more likely to DO anything with the brand information they were seeing or hearing. If the answer to this question was 'Yes', this would suggest a highly actionable finding for brand marketers and support further research into what makes a consumer more buzz responsive.

In order to test this hypothesis, we divided consumers into four groups as per the following table (*what* consumers did with buzz was a subsequent question used in the tracking study), where the blue percentages are significantly higher than their column counterparts and the red figures significantly higher at 95% level of confidence):

### Insert Table 3

Despite our inability to find demographic or psychographic identifiers, therefore, we seem to have found a unique sub-segment of consumers who are more responsive to Brand Buzz AND are likely to spread this buzz amongst other consumers. This finding seems to validate Malcolm Gladwell's<sup>10</sup> concept of Mavens, however, without further evidence as to what motivates these consumers to respond to brand ideas and who they are, this is difficult to confirm within the current constraints of our data.

### **SO WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT ABOUT BRAND BUZZ IN SUMMARY?**

As any reader will appreciate, this paper represents an initial foray into the world of Brand Buzz, which we hope has been insightful and useful. The key learnings are summarised below:

1. Brand BUZZ does exist and, whilst strongly correlated to a number of key brand marketing metrics and research constructs, is not fully explained by existing information
2. This means Brand BUZZ is NEW to marketing, so requires its own definition, set of measurement tools and understanding (we hope we have helped start this journey!)
3. Existing definitions and measurement tools are limited either in their focus exclusively on word-of-mouth, or on the internet as a singular domain, so we have provided what we believe is a broader and more relevant definition for researchers and marketers to take on board
4. Brand BUZZ will become increasingly important in an environment where self exposure and brand connection is taking on a whole new experiential meaning
5. We have learnt that brands that are BUZZY, share common characteristics in terms of being single-minded, consistent and timeless, have strong emotional resonance and are unconventionally boisterous in their engagement with consumers
6. We have also identified a consumer segment who is both highly responsive to brand buzz AND willing to actively share what they see and hear about brands with others around them

Whilst there are obviously a myriad of unanswered questions (see Limitations section below), we believe this is a solid start in providing depth of insight and robustness around this exciting new marketing concept.

### **LIMITATIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

Frustratingly, as with any new investigative journey, there are always significant road blocks that appear, often leaving us with more questions than we originally began with! Some of the major limitations inherent in this piece of work are around: (a) the methodology and data set (a question within a study that was never designed, specifically, to investigate this measure); (b) the categories studied (limited to alcoholic beverages, so we are unable to test whether these findings extend beyond this category); (c) conducted in a single market (whilst it seems highly unlikely, it might be that these findings are limited to the Australian market); (d) the inability to overlay accurate media spend information to further test the relationship between investment and Brand Buzz.

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<sup>10</sup> Gladwell, Malcolm, *The Tipping Point*, Little Brown, 2000

Whilst there are limitations, therefore, of this paper, we are excited about the learnings and this opportunity to share them with our broader industry partners. We welcome feedback on the journey to date and look forward to pursuing our investigations of Brand Buzz more widely in both qualitative and quantitative pieces of work to try to address some of these remaining questions. In the meantime, we will continue to look, listen and learn from brands that have energy, pizzazz and the 'X Factor' about them, and look forward to continued learning and sharing of how to connect brands and consumers in Generation NOW!

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