

Introducing MindLink™ Cool Test

A revolutionary new marketing tool has been created to measure cool as a differentiator and predictor of future brand success. Results from a recent study of fourteen technology brands are described in this paper to illustrate the new insights available by measuring cool.

Not since the launch of Net Promoter Score™ and Interbrand's Best Global Brand Study™ measurement has a more profound measure been developed that enables leaders to make better business decisions and compete more efficiently and effectively.

Business leaders can now find out whether their brands assets are felt to be cool and how much emotional heat the brand contains as a measure of future business success. This research identifies what dimensions need more development for the brand to achieve a high cool status, making the elusive concept of cool more tangible for marketers to manage.

Today there is too much noise, too much clutter and too many choices for customers to navigate in virtually every category. When a brand evokes the characteristics of cool it stands out and drives consumption. For brand owners it has been increasingly difficult to differentiate on functional features and benefits to get ahead of competitive brands and private label. Over the past four years, Buyology has been quantitatively measuring the impact of cool on brand favorability. The accumulated research has shown:

- Cool is a key driver of brand favorability across a wide spectrum of product and service categories.
- Cool is relevant and important to all age groups, although what is considered to be cool may vary by age.
- Cool brands have different characteristic patterns.
- Cool is more reliably measured through non-conscious measures, where perception and intuition operate in our thinking.

While research has attempted to measure cool through traditional cognitive measures, our research suggests these measurements are unreliable. Cool, like love and trust, is an emotion that resides in non-conscious thinking, where perception is formed. Buyology has applied its proprietary technology in large sample size studies to assess cool at a deeper, more accurate measurement of this important indicator of brand health and potential. We believe this is the first time business stewards can accurately assess, track and act on their brands' cool factor.

Overview of MindLink Cool Test

In Buyology's most recent study 240 brands were measured among 800 men and women in the U.S. ranging in age from 18- 60 years old. The purpose of the research was to survey consumers on the intensity of cool and brand favorability and secondarily, to rate the brands on ten characteristics of cool. The quantitative Cool Test data was

collected through Buyology’s proprietary MindLink™ methodology to obtain a non-conscious response to the survey questions using a forced-choice model. The non-conscious evaluation is an important factor in assessing consumer response to cool at a deeper level where our perception and intuition are formed. Daniel Kahneman, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, describes the importance of non-conscious thinking this way, “It is the secret author of many choices and judgments that consumers make.”

The ten attributes of cool in the Cool Test are drawn from the most recent academic literature in marketing and other fields. Several potentially useful constructs have been developed such as a scale measuring the characteristics of cool brands (Loureiro and Lopes, 2011¹) and the investigation of individual traits and what people mean when they say cool (Dar-Nimrod and Hanson, 2012²).

Cool Brands Rating

The rating of technology brands among the total sample group is shown on the following chart. Amazon is rated at the top of the Cool Test list and does particularly well among men. However some indication of brand erosion is seen in the 20-29 year old female segment where Amazon slipped from number one to number four in the ranking.

Brands like Pinterest are primarily driven by women and they rate much higher on cool than among the total sample group of men and women.

Technology Brand Rating	Rank	Highest Rated Attribute
Amazon	1	Inspiring
Google	2	Unique
Apple	3	Attractive
You Tube	4	Authentic
Facebook	5	Inspiring
eBay	6	Authentic
Netflix	7	Attractive
Yahoo	8	Attractive
Hulu	9	Attractive
Twitter	10	Unique
Pinterest	11	Creative
Instagram	12	Creative
LinkedIn	13	Attractive
Cityville	14	Takes Risks

¹ Loureiro, S.M.C., R. Lopes. 2011. Characteristics of Cool Brands: The Development of a Scale. *presented at ANZMAC 2011, Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, 28 – 30 November 2011.*

² Dar-Nimrod, I., I.G.Hansen, T. Proulx, D. R. Lehman, B. P. Chapman, and P. R. Duberstein. 2012. Coolness: An Empirical Investigation. Pp. 175-185 *in Journal of Individual Differences 2012 Vol. 33(3)* (Hogrefe Publishing)

Consumers were asked in the second portion of the test to evaluate the technology brands on ten characteristics associated with cool: “Authentic”, “Inspiring”, “Creative”, “Attractive”, “Edgy”, “Rebellious”, “Surprising”, “Mysterious”, “Unique”, and “Takes Risks”. By understanding the characteristics of cool, a brand’s strengths and weaknesses can be understood.

Different patterns of cool characteristics emerged among the brands tested. The top scoring characteristic listed above illustrates the brand’s strongest leverage points within its cool stats pattern. Amazon excels on the attributes of Inspiring, Attractive and Unique. However among the 10-29 year old female group Amazon was rated fourth on cool; their score for Inspiring is significantly lower. Understanding the brand’s unique cool pattern is important information to inform business decisions and optimize customer engagement through cool.

Harnessing Cool

Accurately measuring cool is the next big idea in Marketing. There is a substantial commercial opportunity to build cool into every category to improve the relationship with consumers and drive sales. Common belief is that being cool is hard, takes a long time and isn’t for everyone. Our research says that being distinctively cool is essential and a powerful amplifier across the entire value chain. Taking the step to measure and manage your brand’s cool stats will give you an immediate advantage to excite your current and potential customers.