



PROCEED WITH CAUTION: VISUAL VAMPIRES AHEAD

BY: LEE WEINBLATT, CEO

As a veteran of the research industry, I've seen and tested a lot of ads. When I'm asked for unsolicited advice about copy testing approaches, my answer is always "Beware of Visual Vampires." Since the reaction I often receive is "What's a visual vampire?" I thought I would elaborate.

I define visual vampires as creative content that diverts attention from the product being advertised. Since 2007, I've cautioned against this tactic as detailed in [Adweek](#) and my position has only strengthened over the last 8 years.

My concern with visual vampires is twofold. First, visual vampires offer a false sense of success. Many research companies heavily rely upon aided or unaided recall as key barometers of an ad's performance; however, a high recall score does not equal persuasion or meaningful change in brand perception. In the end, isn't the purpose of advertising to persuade consumers to purchase a product, short term and long term, rather than playback irrelevant ad detail that isn't going to change purchase behavior?

Second, in order to avoid what I often refer to as the *recall pitfall*, it's important to consider specific element consumer engagement when evaluating advertising. At PTG, we specialize in demystifying human behavior through science by using the eye's innate objective clues to understand engagement. In other words, the more visual information the brain wants, the more actively the eye vibrates on those elements. These mini-movements are known as macro-saccades. In order for the brain to remember a specific visual, the eye fixates and stops moving for a fraction of a second. These macro-saccades and fixations reflect an objective level of respondent behavioral engagement that is uniquely recorded by PTG's patented Saccadic Eye Movement Recording system.

By measuring the eye's macro-saccades and fixations, we know if and which stimuli is visually engaging, when and where consumers focus their attention, their total level of behavioral engagement and if engagement with irrelevant elements is interfering with concentration on key copy and visuals. The data gathered is used to refine and improve brand communications and product marketing efforts.

In the absence of a biometric indicator such as saccadic eye movement, false conclusions can be made when they are based upon recall metrics that reflect visual vampires rather than truly persuasive advertising.