

The following passage describes a 1975 study by two University of Pennsylvania professors. In the words of authors Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, the experiment "established that people in surprising numbers and percentages can be made to feel strong preferences for some beers and strong dislikes for others," even when the beer is identical.

A 1975 article by two professors at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania demonstrates that advertisers now have the tools to determine not only what we want before we know it, but to make us want what we want before we know we want it. This significant experiment established that people in surprising numbers and percentages can be made to feel strong preferences for some beers and strong dislikes for others, even though all the beer is identical.

These researchers first spent more than two years perfecting tests and questionnaires to separate what they termed four distinct types of "personality spaces," each a measure of such characteristics as sociability, confidence, and a sense of self-worth. Then they examined and categorized (by personality type) 250 beer *aficionados*—without their knowledge. The beer drinkers believed they were engaged in market research—indicating a preference for commercials—for four prospective new brands of beer for Anheuser-Busch. The names selected were "Bix," "Zim," "Waz," and "Biv," names the researchers had determined to be value- and connotation-free.

Unknown to the beer drinkers who were the subject of the test, each of the brands was exactly the same, having been drawn from the same brew in the same vat. The drinkers then watched story-boards (drawings) of the proposed "commercials," each designed to reach one of the four personality types. For example, one series of drawings showed a working man arriving home from a presumably hectic day and sitting down with his—let us say—"Bix," as the cares and sounds of the day slowly faded away. This was designed to reach those who feel pressured by the world, who drink beer as a reward, and whose idea of peace is solitude.

After watching all the story-boards, the subjects were permitted to drink all they wanted of the four "different" brands, while at the same time discussing the merits and demerits of each brew with their fellow drinkers. The results were most significant. All of the drinkers said they could tell a difference among the various brands, a significant number selected one particular brand as their favorite, and many said that one brand or another was "not fit for human consumption."

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Frank Mankiewicz and Joel Swerdlow, *Remote Control: Television and the Manipulation of American Life*, New York: Times Books, 1978, pp 242-3.