



THE

“ENTERTAIN ME”

GENERATION

BY TOMMY NEWTON

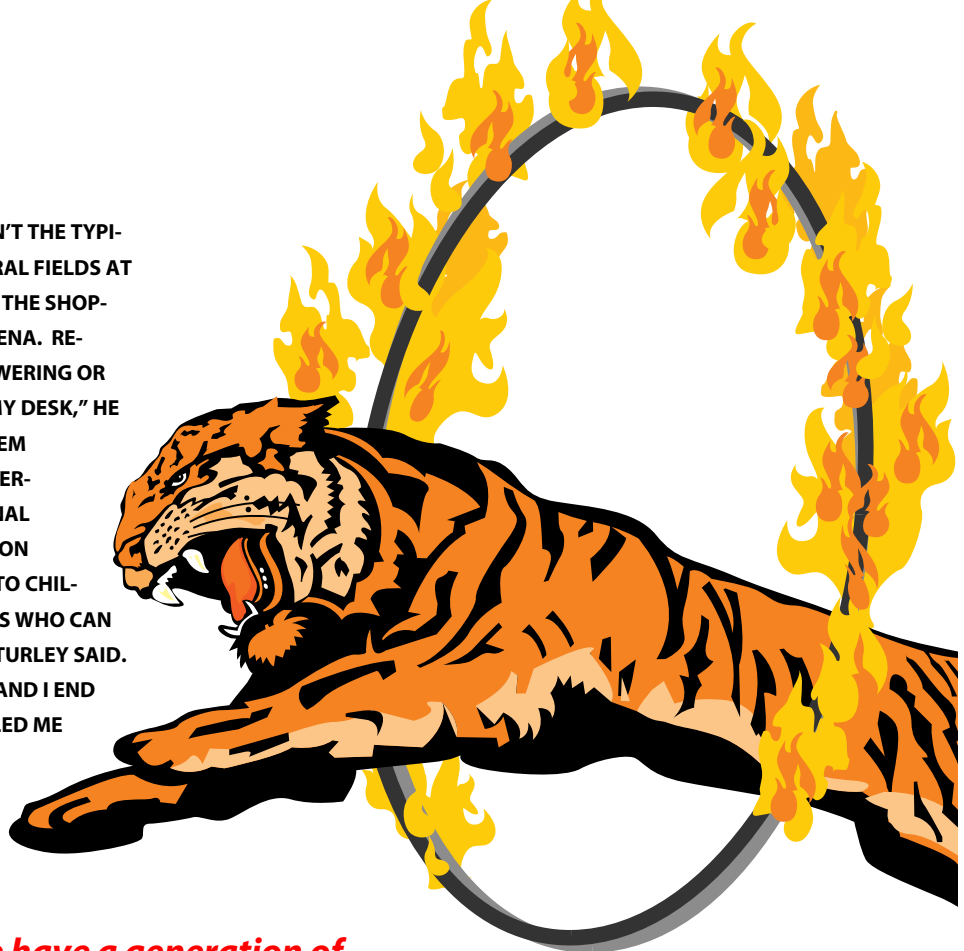


MARKETING PROFESSOR LOU TURLEY SAYS HE ISN'T THE TYPICAL RESEARCHER. "I TEND TO DO RESEARCH IN SEVERAL FIELDS AT THE SAME TIME," TURLEY SAID. HIS RESEARCH LAB IS THE SHOPPING MALL, THE GROCERY STORE, OR THE SPORTS ARENA. RESEARCH IDEAS OFTEN COME TO HIM WHILE HE'S SHOWERING OR DRIVING. "I DON'T GET THEM WHILE I'M SITTING AT MY DESK," HE SAID. "I HAVE TO PULL OFF THE ROAD AND WRITE THEM DOWN." HIS RESEARCH INTERESTS HAVE INCLUDED SERVICES MARKETING, RETAIL MARKETING, INTERNATIONAL MARKETING, SPORTS MARKETING, CONSUMER DECISION MAKING, MARKETING EDUCATION, AND MARKETING TO CHILDREN. "I'VE ALWAYS KIND OF ADMIRER RESEARCHERS WHO CAN GO INTO ONE RESEARCH STREAM AND STAY THERE," TURLEY SAID. "BUT I JUST CAN'T DO IT. MY INTERESTS ARE VARIED AND I END UP FOLLOWING MY CURIOSITY AND THAT'S KIND OF LED ME INTO A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT AREAS.

As a marketing researcher, Turley strives to make sure the people who operate businesses, retail stores, malls or sports venues aren't confused about what they should be doing or the atmosphere they are creating. "One of the neat things about marketing is that we don't understand consumers enough to perfectly hypothesize how they're going to react." Consumers have their own wants and needs and continue to amaze researchers and retailers, he said. "Today's consumer is really different from the consumer of 20 years ago." Turley said today's consumer is part of the "entertain me" generation. Consumers, he said, want convenience and time savers along with the experience of shopping. "We have a generation of consumers that have grown up with expectations of being entertained. When they come into a store shopping, they expect to be entertained."

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Retail atmosphere and its impact on shoppers' behavior



has been one area that Turley and others have studied in recent years. One of his works in progress is a study of adolescents and their perceptions of malls. "We are finding that what we do in regard to the atmosphere we use in the mall has a direct effect on what goes on inside the store," Turley said. Music, color schemes, store layout and interactive displays all play an important role in the 21st century shopping experience. For example, he said, some big-city malls are grouping stores together in an area that is more colorful and plays louder music. "It's not just enough to have the product any more," he said. "You have to surround it with a package of entertainment." That concept is evident in another research area: sports marketing. At sporting events just a few years ago, the game, a public address announcer, and cheerleaders were enough to keep fans interested and enthusiastic, he said. "That's not enough any more. You've got to have an interactive video screen that shows replays. You've got to have a mascot. You've got to have the pep band. At every timeout, something happens on the floor." Those forms of entertainment aren't limited to professional or college athletics. "Even high school games use multimedia things to fill in the dead spaces," he said. "I think we have entered into the 'entertain me' generation.

People have very short attention spans and if you lose them, they're gone."

Attention spans and marketing savvy are at the heart of another project Turley is completing this year. He and Dr. Scott Kelley of the University of Kentucky have analyzed five years of Super Bowl advertisements to determine what makes an ad successful and memorable. "The Super Bowl is the one time where everyone watches together," Turley said. "The ads take on a life of their own. If you spend \$2 million for an ad, you hope people will like it afterward." Among their early findings in reviewing more than 250 Super Bowl ads: Creative ads that use emotion, humor, cartoon characters, or other quirky setups typically score higher, while informational and service-related ads have lower appeal. Viewers of the evening news might want to see informational ads for new products, but during the Super Bowl "they want to be entertained," Turley said.



PHOTO BY LADONNA HARMON

To keep fans interested and enthusiastic at sporting events, it used to be enough to have the game, a public address announcer, and cheerleaders. Today, audiences expect souvenirs, mascots, interactive video, instant replays and analysis. They expect a pep band and constant activity on the floor, even during timeout. High schools are responding to fans' short attention spans by using multimedia to fill in during athletic events.

Despite the attention to the atmosphere and shopping experience, "you still want to put the milk in the back of the store and have shoppers walk by as much merchandise as they can," Turley said. "As they walk by the merchandise, you have displays to slow them down." That's why some stores have learned that offering free cookies to children makes good business sense from a public relations and sales standpoint. When parents stop to pick up a cookie as a way to make the shopping experience more pleasurable for the child, they're more likely to purchase an item or two from the bakery aisle, he said. "If people just walked into stores and bought the things that were on their lists a lot of retailers would go broke. The idea is to foster impulse buying." Turley is fond of a quote from a Wal-Mart executive who called his store a sandbox where people come to play. "I think there are a lot of retail firms and marketers these days trying to figure out how to make their sandbox more fun than their competitors' sandbox," Turley said.

As the eclectic marketing researcher, Turley will continue to follow his curiosity, looking for ways to help make



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Marketing professor Lou Turley

businesses more successful and to keep his teaching more vibrant. "The primary benefit to any research is the sense of closure you get as a researcher. You have posed the question that says 'What if?' or 'What happens when you do this?' Then you go out and perform a study, determine the variables and answer the question. At least for me, it keeps me more alive and thinking in my discipline. I think as long as you're alive and thinking in your discipline, it

makes you a better teacher."

Turley became a college teacher in 1978 after earning his master's and bachelor's at Murray State University. After teaching marketing and coaching soccer for several years, he returned to Kentucky and received his doctorate from the University of Kentucky in 1989. A member of the Western Kentucky University faculty since 1989, he has received several awards for his teaching and research and

has had his work published in numerous publications such as the *Journal of Business Research*, the *Journal of Advertising*, *European Business Forum*, the *Journal of Marketing Management* and the *Journal of Services Marketing*.

As the father of four, Turley anticipates his next research project will involve marketing to children. "My kids are a real sense of joy and pride. They just see things differently. A kindergartner looks at life differently than his dad does."