

MARKETING AND BRAND

Evidence-Based Marketing

Byron Sharp · Field & Binet · Ritson

PAPER 02 / 03

A Furtherance reference compendium on the intellectual traditions behind organisational design, leadership, execution, and culture.

IN THIS PAPER

The classical foundations set the architecture; this paper asks what the **evidence** actually shows works. It covers the empirical turn in marketing – laws of growth, the balance of brand and activation, and a fad-resistant return to fundamentals. The question it answers: setting fashion aside, what does the data say grows a brand?

Sharp and the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute overturned loyalty dogma with empirical laws; Binet and Field quantified the split between brand-building and sales activation; Ritson reasserts diagnosis and fundamentals against the fads. The through-line: reach and availability, measured, beat intuition.

Byron Sharp *How Brands Grow, 2010*

Ehrenberg-Bass Institute · marketing science

CORE THESIS

Brands grow mainly by increasing **penetration** – reaching more buyers – not by deepening loyalty. Growth comes from **mental and physical availability** and from **distinctive** (not differentiated) brand assets. Light and occasional buyers, not a loyal core, drive most sales.

FRAMEWORK

Empirical law / idea	Meaning
Penetration over loyalty	Growth comes from more buyers, not more loyal ones
Mental & physical availability	Be easy to think of and easy to buy
Distinctiveness > differentiation	Recognisable assets beat claimed differences
Double Jeopardy law	Smaller brands have fewer, slightly less loyal buyers

METHODOLOGY

Large-scale empirical analysis of buying data across categories and decades.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

A powerful empirical corrective that overturned much loyalty and targeting orthodoxy. The critique, per the caveat: the laws are contested at the edges – the distinctiveness-versus-differentiation claim, and applicability to niche, B2B and precision-targeted digital contexts.

Les Binet & Peter Field *The Long and the Short of It, 2013*

Marketing effectiveness · the IPA databank

CORE THESIS

Brand building and **sales activation** do different jobs: brand building is long-term, emotional and broad; activation is short-term, rational and targeted. Analysis of the effectiveness databank suggests a roughly **60/40** split of budget toward brand building maximises long-run growth.

FRAMEWORK

Dimension	Brand building	Sales activation
Time horizon	Long-term	Short-term
Appeal	Emotional	Rational
Audience	Broad reach	Targeted
Budget guide	~60%	~40%

The related idea of **excess share of voice** (ESOV) links spending above one's market share to future share growth.

METHODOLOGY

Empirical analysis of a large database of marketing effectiveness case studies.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

The evidence base for balancing brand and performance marketing. The critique: the databank skews to award entries, and the balance shifts as media and measurement change.

Mark Ritson Marketing Week columns · Mini MBA

Practitioner-academic · fundamentals and diagnosis

CORE THESIS

Good marketing rests on **fundamentals**, not fashion. Strategy must begin with **diagnosis**; segmentation, targeting and positioning still rule; and brand and activation must be balanced. Ritson is a caustic critic of fads – “digital-first” thinking and purpose-washing among them.

FRAMEWORK

Principle	Meaning
Diagnosis before strategy	Understand the market before choosing a direction
Rediscover STP	Segmentation, targeting, positioning remain central
Balance brand and activation	Neither long nor short alone
Evidence over fashion	Resist the fad; follow what works

METHODOLOGY

Practitioner-academic commentary and executive education synthesising the evidence base.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

An influential corrective voice reasserting rigour and fundamentals. The critique: the work is polemical and synthesises others' evidence more than it advances a new framework.

A NOTE ON EVIDENCE

A note on the evidence: Sharp's laws are empirically strong but genuinely contested at the margins – the distinctiveness-over-differentiation claim in particular, and how far the laws hold for niche, B2B or precisely targeted digital brands. Treat these as robust regularities to reason from, not universal laws to apply without judgement; the honest position is “mostly true, and worth arguing about at the edges”.

Synthesis

Contribution	Focus	Key idea	Evidence
Byron Sharp	How brands grow	Penetration; availability	Large buying datasets
Binet & Field	Effectiveness	Brand vs activation; 60/40	Effectiveness databank
Ritson	Fundamentals	Diagnosis; rediscover STP	Synthesis of the evidence

FOR THE OPERATOR

Evidence-based marketing subjects the field's orthodoxy to data – growth through penetration and availability (Sharp), the balance of brand-building and activation at roughly 60/40 (Binet & Field), and a rigorous, fad-resistant return to fundamentals (Ritson). For the operator: grow by reaching more buyers – penetration, availability, distinctiveness – balance long-term brand with short-term activation, and diagnose before you strategise. The final paper turns to positioning and permission in the modern era.