



# Say it AGAIN, Sam<sup>\*</sup>

by Thomas Smith<sup>1</sup>

As Excerpted from Marketing Text and Cases, chapter on buyer behavior

Perception depends upon stimulus factors: frequency, repetition, contrast, intensity, movement, size color, isolation. Consumers are continually exposed to communication efforts. Within the boundaries, they establish for concentrating their interest, there are competing claims for attention.<sup>2</sup> Consumers can fail to note and forget.

An early view on repetition as necessary (which appeared originally in comic-strip form), which today is rather entertaining, is this:<sup>1</sup>

The first time a man looks at an advertisement, he does not see it.

The second time he does not notice it.

The third time he is conscious of its existence.

The fourth time he faintly remembers having seen it before.

The fifth time he reads it.

The sixth time he turns up his nose at it.

The seventh time he reads it through and says, "Oh brother!"

The eighth time he says, "Here's that confounded thing again!"

The ninth time he wonders if it amounts to anything.

The tenth time he thinks he will ask his neighbor if he has tried it.

The eleventh time he wonders how the advertiser makes it pay.

The twelfth time he thinks perhaps it may be worth something.

The thirteenth time he thinks it must be a good thing.

The fourteenth time he remembers that he has wanted such a thing for a long time.

The fifteenth time he is tantalized because he cannot afford to buy it.

The sixteenth time he thinks he will buy it some day.

The seventeenth time he makes a memorandum of it.

The eighteenth time he swears at his poverty.

The nineteenth time he counts his money carefully.

The twentieth time he sees it, he buys the article or instructs his wife to do so.

Does Thomas Smith's simplistic model have any support today? Ebbinghaus, studying memory, concluded that the more complex and the longer the message, the more it needed to be repeated in order to get retention.<sup>3</sup> Research since that time has confirmed the conclusion.<sup>4</sup> Repetition with variation is, however, desirable.<sup>5</sup> Repetition is necessary because there are many competing messages.<sup>6</sup>

\*editor's title added

1 Thomas Smith, *Successful Advertising*, 8th Edition (London: 132 Fleet Street. E.C., 1886)

2. Benton J. Underwood, "interference and Forgetting" *Psychological Review*, volume 64 (1967) pp. 49-60

3. Hermann Ebbinghaus, *Memory*, translated by Henry Al. Reiger and Clara E. Bussenias (New York: Columbia Teachers College, 1913)

4. Carl I. Hovland, Irving L. Janis, and Harold H. Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953)

5. Donald F. Cox, "Clues for Advertising Strategists," *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 39 no. 5 part 1 (September - October 1961) p. 160; no 6 part 2 (November - December 1961) p. 160

6. Underwood, "Interference and Forgetting," pp 49-60.

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