SINCLAIR RESEARCH LTD.
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS
ON POST-TEST OF QL
TELEVISION ADVERTISING

Prepared By :

Boase Massimi Pollitt
May 1985

IW/rm

SINCLAIR RESEARCH LTD.
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS
ON POST-TEST OF QL
TELEVISION ADVERTISING

CONTENTS   PAGE

1.   INTRODUCTION

The Sinclair QL was advertised on television for the
first time during April 1985.

The advertising ran in the London and TVS television
areas with a total of 335 Men TVR's planned
(285 ABC, Men).

The principal intended communication point was one of
value - an advanced machine, worthy of comparison with
the IBM PC, Apple Macintosh or BBC B for far less money.
The systems to be compared including, discs, monitor
and business software.

This report summarises qualitative research conducted
amongst the QL's target market to assess the impact
the advertising has had as well as giving us a firmer
direction in terms of supporting the QL from a
product, price and advertising viewpoint.

2.   METHODOLOGY

Six minigroup discussions were conducted; all were
conducted in the London T.V. area shortly after the
advertising burst has finished.

    Hornchurch   - 29th April 1985
    Kilburn   - 1st May 1985
    Wembley   - 8th May 1985.

All respondents (men or women) were recruited on the
following basis :

- All to be small business people, self-employed, own
  their own business (even part-time).

- All ABC1C2 under 50 years old.

- All to be considering buying a computer within the
  next six months.

- Budget £100 - £2000.

- All to be the decision makers when buying a computer
  and the prime users.

- Primary intended use of computer, 'to improve
  business efficiency'.

- All to intend to use the computer for at least one
  of the following :
        - Word-Processing
        - Filing/Data Base
        - Spread Sheet/Financial Modelling
        - Book Keeping.

Four groups were recruited on the basis of working from
home and two groups away from home.

3. DISCUSSION GUIDE

Each group was conducted broadly along the following
lines :

-   Sort of business owned; why want a computer.
-   Software/hardware needs.
-   Models considered, brand awareness and perceived
    differences. Budgets. Knowledge of computing.
-   Advertising Awareness.
-   Reaction to QL film when shown; seen before,
    communication , appeal, relevance.
-   Prior knowledge of QL, strengths, weaknesses,
    reputation. Sinclair reputation.
-   Contrast appeal and relevance between alternative
    positioning concepts (summary of current
    advertising vs BMP proposal).
-   Probe pricing as issue and interest in packaged
    hardware.
-   Interest in product when demonstrated.

4. THE CONCEPTS

1. AT LAST, A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE FOR BUSINESSES TO
    THE IBM OR BBC COMPUTER FOR LESS THAN HALF THE
    PRICE.

    A complete QL system including professional colour
    monitor, software and drives costs £599. A
    similiar system based on the BBC Micro £1500 and
    on the IBM PC £3129.

2.   THE UNIQUE COMPLETE HOME BUSINESS COMPUTER SYSTEM
                      FOR ONLY £599*

    The QL system comes with built in microdrives and
    sophisticated but easy to use software. From day
    one you can do :

                Word Processing
                Spreadsheets/Financial Modelling/Book-keeping
                Filing and Cross Indexing
                Business Graphics

    * £399 excluding professional colour monitor.

THE FINDINGS

5.   THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT / COMPUTING NEEDS

Respondents were recruited from a wide range of
businesses, these included :

- Accountants
- Road Haulage Contractors
- Florist
- Builder, Decorator, Heating Installer/Plumber
- Freelance Actor
- Disc Jockey Organiser
- Machinery Contractor
- Textiles/Clothing Producers
- Photographer

Despite such a wide range of industries, the general
reason for wanting a computer was the same -
time-saving and efficiency.

The most regularly mentioned needs : book-keeping,
filing of records and word-processing. More specific
but general needs, included spread-sheets, stock-control,
payroll and accountancy packages... down to specialist
programmes for cost-estimation (heating equipment,
curtain manufacture).

6. BRAND AWARENESS, KNOWLEDGE AND PURCHASING MECHANISMS

Most of our respondents knew very little about computers; they knew they wanted one but didnt know what hardware or software would suit their needs.

Confusion in the market is enormous - many respondents were completely baffled when others would talk about memory, disc-drives, printers or software ...not everyone knows what these terms mean.

Equally worrying for more enlightened 'considerers', was knowing some of these terms. Knowing 'a bit' about computers is like starting to learn a foreign language, you very quickly become aware of how much you didnt know and can be just as confused as the complete neophyte.

Technical awareness tended to be much greater amongst those who already owned a home computer (often a Spectrum), they know they need software, they know that more than 48k is a lot of memory and they know they will need disc drives ... as yet they don't know what machine they will get.

How will people decide which one to get?

Brand (if not model) awareness is high - most people know of BBC, Sinclair, Commodore and IBM, with Apple, Olivetti and Atari forming a second division.

When probed in the context of advertising, Wang, ICL and Hewlett Packard are brands also associated with computing.

At this moment in time, very few respondents thought they knew which computer they would get (one or two keen on the BBC, Commodore 64, Sinclair Spectrum).

What people want most of all is help ... someone to talk to and advise them.

As people get closer to the point of purchase they seek more help and advice. The two most common sources of help are computer-retailers and other end-users.

Computer-retailers are obviously suspect but fears of bad advice can be weakened by visiting various outlets, going to specialists (First Computer etc.) or where a more serious budget allows, asking salesmen from various companies to visit the businesses premises. Ideally, the consumer would explain their exact requirements and hope for unbiased advice.

End-Users are even better. Friends or others in a similiar line of work are ideal advisors. 'Hands-on' experience and an un-biased viewpoint is the strongest recommendation.

A minority claimed to have flicked through computer magazines, though as an information source, it is probably too technical and too little benefit-based to be motivating.

7. ADVERTISING AWARENESS

Recall of specific advertising campaigns was surprisingly good.

Most groups succeeded in recalling details from a large number of advertisements, though this was almost invariably television advertising.

Although the excutional details were well recalled, branding was often a problem, with many respondents unclear who the manufacturer was.

Specific campaigns recalled included :

- Hewlett Packard, 'We can work it out'
- Olivetti 'Mr Men'
- IBM, 'Charlie Chaplin'
- ICL, office automation
- Wang
- Spectrum +

The best recalled commercial of all was for the Sinclair QL.

Every group recalled this film, with the majority of respondents having seen it.

Unlike many of the competitors advertising, the QL advertisment was very well branded. Everyone was aware that the advertisment was for a Sinclair computer and probably a new one.

The chief piece of recall was Sir Clive Sinclair jumping
across a number of other computers.

Beyond this, recall was very vague and often wrong.

Respondents believed the chief model was a new Sinclair
machine, and hazarded a guess it was called the XL.
The other machines were unknowns, possibly competitors,
possibly previous Sinclair machines.

Respondents were not left with any specific product
message beyond new and advanced - price comparisions,
memory or packaged software was not recalled at all.

8. <u>REACTION TO THE QL ADVERTISING</u>

a)   <u>T.V.</u>

As a piece of advertising, the QL film was generally
well-liked.

The presence of Sinclair, made it memorable if not funny,
well-branded, personal rather than technical.
     "its what I'm trying to do, take a leap-forward".
All respondents recognized Sir Clive and felt his
presence was a positive recommendation of the products
quality. A good endorsement from <u>the</u> man associated
with computer products.

The Spectrum has a fine reputation (amongst our
respondents) and the Sinclair name sits happily with idea
of a small business machine for the self-employed.

On the less positive side, the problems with recall of
the advertising seen days previously was reinforced when
showing respondents the films afresh.

Many respondents failed to read the screens, they missed
what the competition was and what price they were.
This missing of the first ¾ of the film is compounded
by insufficient information at the end.

Most respondents noted the large 128k memory but didnt notice
the drives or software. When the reference to software was
noted, some people thought the film was suggesting only
four-titles were available rather than four titles come
with the machine.

On repeated viewings, communication became clearer -
the problem is that 'at home' such attention wouldn't
be given to the advertising.

"At the end its telling you, you will get your software
package and your computer monitor for £690. Its telling
you what you need to know. Possibly at the beginning
its a bit, its having a go at other people, not
praising itself, by running down the others. The first
part is gimmicky, the last five seconds tells you what it
is, the first ¾ wasn't selling the machine.

b)   PRESS

The press executions had not been seen before ... possibly
because more of our respondents were readers of the
newspapers!

The press executions were generally not thought to be the
sort of advertisements that would attract the eye, and
the price comparison quite easily missed. On the
positive side, the copy did explain more about what the
machine was and did, as well as going some way to make
credible the large price difference between it and the
competitors.

How motivating is the proposition? This was explored both
in the context of the advertising and the concept
(see below).

What is communicated is that Sinclair has got a new
machine and it is for small businesses ... it is certainly
one worth considering.

"I've every admiration for the guy. I wouldn't have any
qualms about buying a Sinclair. My first calculator
was a Sinclair."

"he has the name for being good and economic."

9.   <u>INTEREST IN THE CONCEPTS</u>

a)   One concept was deliberately intended to reproduce the
     advertising proposition - comparison with more
     expensive machines.

     Although this does create interest it also seems to fall
     flat :

     - It can't really be as good as a £3000 machine, can it?
       Am I being conned, is it a fair comparison?

     'I'm <u>not</u> looking for a
     £3000 machine, I only
     want somthing simple,
     that will do the job ...
     its not for me'.

     'Well, I was thinking
     of an IBM, but they'll
     service it, got all the
     software. Why risk it.
     Its not for me'.

     - Regardless of budget, the prime motivator is
       <u>it will do the job</u>, the purchasee has in mind. On the
       basis of this concept (or advertisment) the question
       remains, will it?

b)   The second concept elicited a far more positive response.
     Although not all the applications are required
     (especially business graphics) the others would be valuable
     and are often just what people require. Microdrives
     (assumed to be floppies) are a bonus.

     "its just what we need"
     "on the face of it, thats what I'm looking for"
     "its more interesting to me, it can do what I want to do".

10. PRICING AND PACKAGES

Pricing is a very difficult area to research. At £399
(given a demonstration) everyone felt the machine was
excellent value for money and very interested in getting
one.

Most respondents (including many working from home) felt
a package for £599 including monitor was simpler and better,
whilst a minority preferred to save £200 and use their
existing T.V. or buy a second one ... often this was a
result of ignorance re. picture definition, width of
screen.

A more interesting area in the context of price was the
idea of a package including monitor and printer. Again
most people need a printer (invoices, accounts etc.) and
are unaware of product differences.

A simple, complete package for under £1000 has very
large appeal and if sold as such would be the first
on the market.

11. PRODUCT DEMONSTRATION

The most exciting and interesting part of the research for
respondents was the product demonstration.

A simple demonstration of Abucus, Easel, Quill and Chess,
intrigued and excited.

The graphics were found very impressive, the speed of
loading programmes, the size (and cost) of the cartridges
and perhaps most importantly the apparent ease of use.

A minority of respondents found the keyboard off putting,
the lack of slope as well as spacing between keys.

Everyone wanted to know whether they could do their
job on it and what other software would be available.

Most respondents went away impressed with an intention
to investigate it further.

12.   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In summary :

The current advertising has been successful in generating
awareness of the presence of a new computer, aimed at
small businesses and manufactured by Sinclair.

The problem as such is that this is not enough, most
potential small business (self-employed) buyers are not
computer buffs and need to be convinced that the machine
will do the job for them ... be it book-keeping,
word-processing or filing.

The QL is the ideal machine for small businesses, at an
ideal price. The concept of a complete home business package
(inc. monitor, printer and software) is very appealing
and should be exploited both through the advertising and
the trade.

The central proposition remains, the complete home business
computer system for £X, be it with monitor and/or
printer.

We must make people aware that the QL is the computer for
them, using our general and specific targetting to
maximise the perceived utility of this system.

Sinclair QL Preservation Project (SQPP)

On January 12th 1984 Sir Clive Sinclair presented the Sinclair QL Professional Computer in a typical Sinclair-extravaganza type launch event at the Intercontinental Hotel, Hyde Park Corner, London. This was exactly 12 days earlier than Steve Jobs presented the Apple Macintosh.

The QL is a very good example of an innovative, stylish, powerful and overall underestimated product and ecosystem. On one hand it failed in the market but on the other hand it influenced many developments which ended in many of today's computing devices.

Check out the website http://sinclairql.net/ – The semi-official website related to the Sinclair QL Professional Computer. **QL forever!**

Urs König (aka QLvsJAGUAR)
http://sinclairql.net/about_urs.html
https://www.youtube.com/QLvsJAGUAR
https://plus.google.com/+QLvsJAGUAR

Sinclair QL Preservation Project (SQPP)

On January 12th 1984 Sir Clive Sinclair presented the Sinclair QL Professional Computer in a typical Sinclair-extravaganza type launch event at the Intercontinental Hotel, Hyde Park Corner, London. This was exactly 12 days earlier than Steve Jobs presented the Apple Macintosh.

The QL is a very good example of an innovative, stylish, powerful and overall underestimated product and ecosystem. On one hand it failed in the market but on the other hand it influenced many developments which ended in many of today's computing devices.

Document details

Topic: _Sinclair QL TV ad research_

Notes: _A very unique original from the Sinclair archives._
I bought this together with other unique papers in early 2015 from the Tedeschi Family when they sold-off Enrico's collection.

Number of pages (including SQPP cover and back pages): _22_

Scanned: _2018-06-17_ on a _HP M477fdw_

Check out the website http://sinclairql.net/ – The semi-official website related to the Sinclair QL Professional Computer. **QL forever!**

Urs König (aka QLvsJAGUAR)
http://sinclairql.net/about_urs.html
https://www.youtube.com/QLvsJAGUAR
https://plus.google.com/+QLvsJAGUAR