

*NEW!*

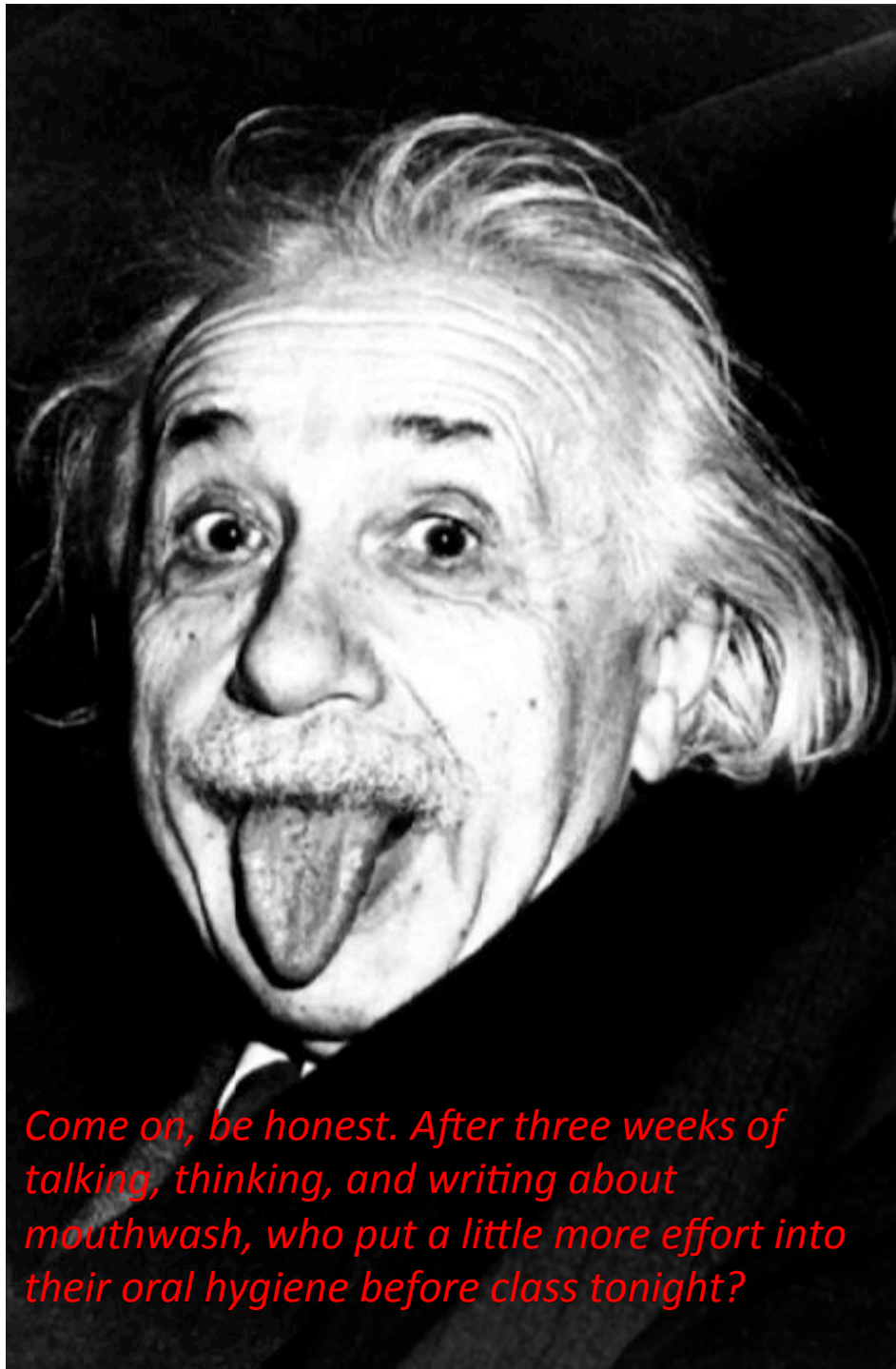
*More  
refreshing!*

# Mouth wishes

**What consumers look for  
and love  
about mouthwash**

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Jim Eiche's Positioning & Communications Strategy  
Columbia University



*Come on, be honest. After three weeks of talking, thinking, and writing about mouthwash, who put a little more effort into their oral hygiene before class tonight?*

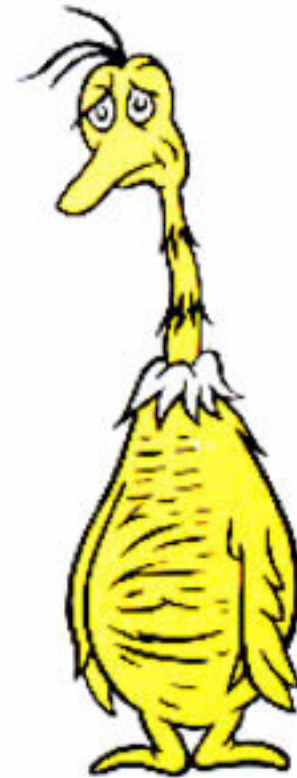


*The truth is, mouthwash is pretty personal business.*

*For the past two weeks, I have interviewed everyone I know (and several nice strangers in a pub) about their habits when it comes to using (and not using) mouthwash.*



*Sometimes, I couldn't help but feel that I was making the non-mouthwash-users feel a little like the plain-bellied Sneetches.*



*But users or not, they all had their opinions. On the next page are the questions I used to get at those opinions.*



## Questions, part I

Do you use mouthwash? If so, how often? Why?

Do you use a particular brand? Which one? Why or why not?

Can you describe your routine? How does it make you feel?

What does mouth-washing do that teeth-brushing and flossing don't?

Are you concerned about bad breath? Do you think about it often?

How would you rate your mouthwash in terms of being effective? Long-lasting?  
Enjoyable to use? Tasting good?

Can you describe how you buy mouthwash? What triggers the purchase?

When you think of Scope, what comes to mind? What about Listerine?

Did your family use mouthwash growing up? If so, what kind?

What don't you like about mouthwash?

If you could smell mouthwash on somebody's breath, would that make a positive or negative impression?

## Questions, part II (a little more “out there”)

What do you think about these alternative products: breath “strips”? Scope “breath drops”? Scope “breath mist”? Are you familiar with them and are you interested in trying them?

Breath spray has a reputation for being creepy. Would it help if it were re-launched as a product for strong, beautiful women, perhaps by a celebrity spokesperson? If so, who would you suggest as the spokesperson?

Did you use it as a teen? Did it, or would it have given you a boost of confidence?

Do you keep your bottle of mouthwash out on the counter? Would doing so help you remember to use it? What if it were in a more attractive bottle?

*People fell pretty distinctly into one of two categories.*

## Use regularly

I use mouthwash because I know it kills germs.

**It gives me the confident, clean, refreshed mouth** I'm looking for.

My routine wouldn't be complete without it.



## Use rarely



Mouthwash is just a layer of perfume for your mouth and doesn't have any actual effect. It's just a waste of money.

I am confident that I can keep my mouth sufficiently clean by brushing and flossing.

Plus, I don't like **the too-strong, artificial taste.**

*There are many different potential target audiences, but we will likely have the most success with those considered “low-hanging fruit” – people who already buy and use our competitor, Listerine.*





*Here's what the Sneetches had to say about Listerine and Scope.*



“The kind my family uses”

“It does NOT taste good but I won’t use anything else”

“I don’t cut corners by buying store-brand”

“medicinal”

“burns”

“proud, well-groomed”

“antiseptic”

“it looks like pee”

“better germ-killing”

“very intense”

“if it tastes this bad, it must work”

“I’m being responsible”



“almost too strong”

“tastes sweet”

“I don’t cut corners by buying store-brand”

“Pleasant to use”

“Cool and fresh”

“I’m taking care  
of my health”

“I have a mini bottle in my  
purse right now! (They give  
it away at my hospital.)”

“Intense”

“makes me think of  
splashing in a pool”

“minty”

“tastes lighter”

“kills fewer germs”

“proud, well-groomed”

“We used it growing up”



# Unique competitive advantage

- Scope and Listerine are equally effective.
- But mouthwash users agree that Scope tastes better.
- Therefore, Scope's unique competitive advantage is that **it offers superior taste without compromising effectiveness.**



# Communications objective

- Scope's communications objective should be to get the target audience to buy (and use) a bottle of Scope instead of Listerine the next time they buy mouthwash.

# Target audience

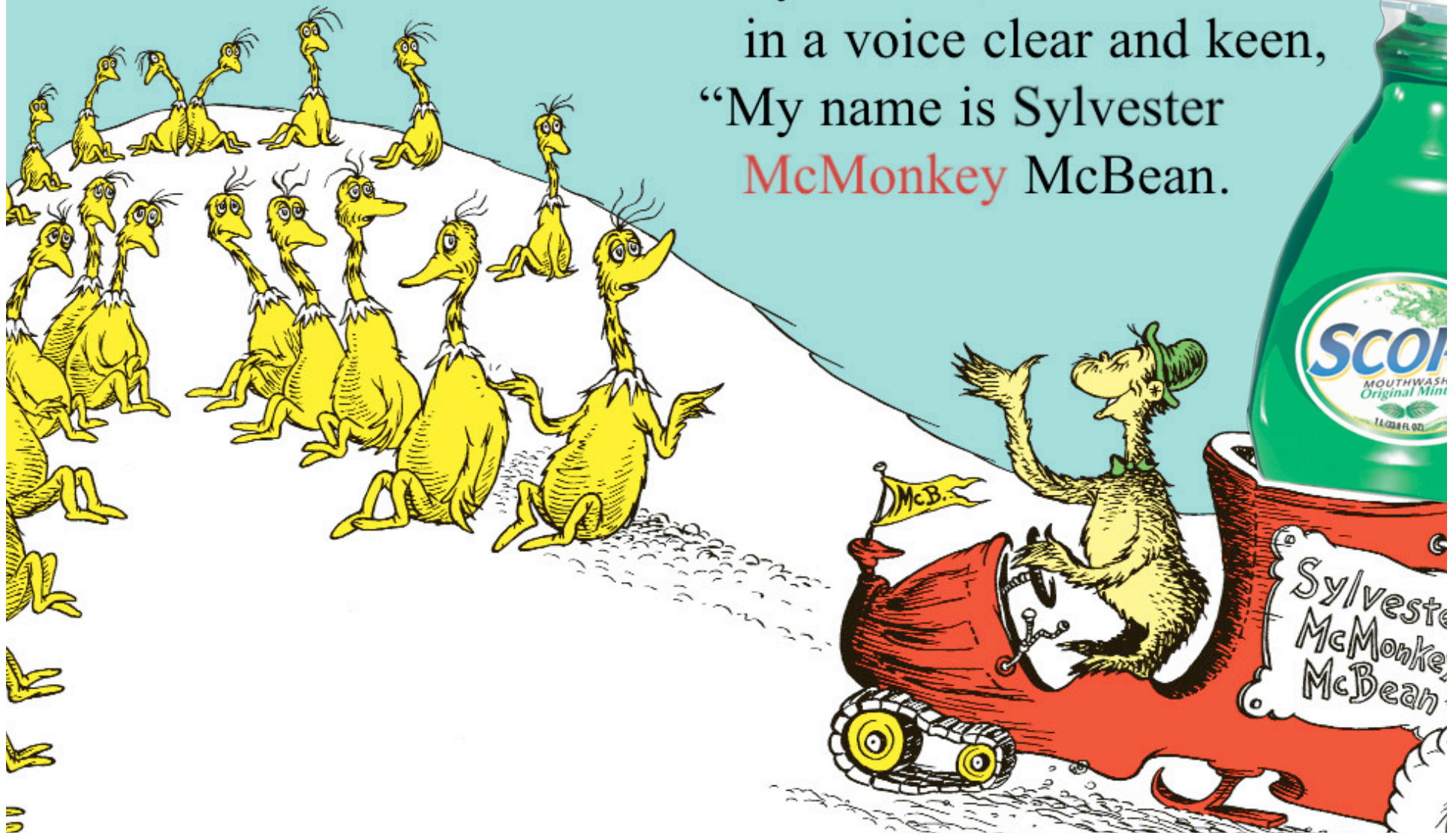
- I would recommend that Scope target current Listerine users, aged 22 – 55, who have close interaction with people on a daily basis.
- Why?
  - They may be entering the workforce at age 22
  - They will begin to take more preventative health measures as they age
  - We want to get them to become loyal users before age 55

# Role for communications

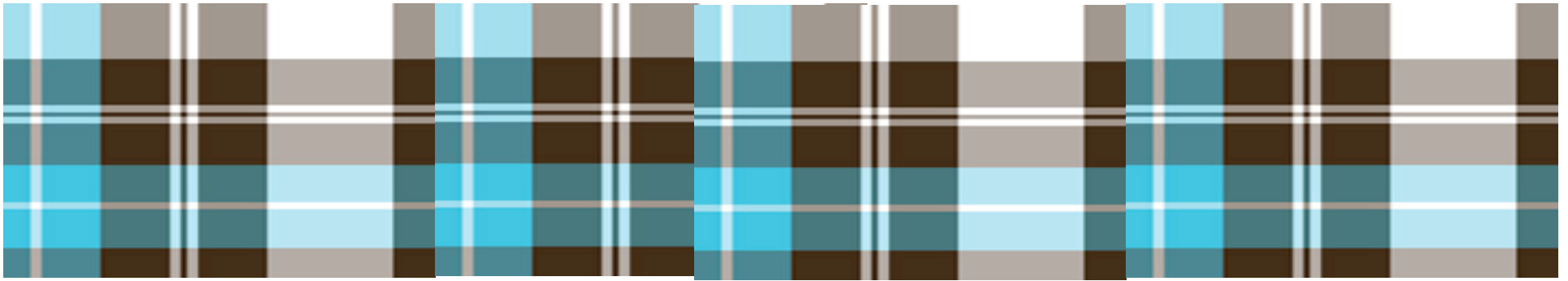
- The role of communications is to move the audience from believing that Scope is less effective than Listerine to believing that it is just as effective as Listerine.
- Mouthwash users generally believe that Scope tastes better, so there is no need to change this belief. However, it can be reinforced as a secondary measure.

*Just like Mr. McBean, we can capitalize on people's quirks and preferences when it comes to mouthwash.*

“My friends,” he announced  
in a voice clear and keen,  
“My name is Sylvester  
**McMonkey** McBean.”







*There are patterns that emerge and suggest various strategies...although their effectiveness may be limited to smaller target audiences.*

- People appeared and sounded self-conscious to admit that they do not use. They sounded a little defensive, frankly.
  - Should Scope explore an embarrassment tactic?
- Some low-frequency users forget to use it because it is stored out of sight.
  - Should Scope promote more attractive counter-top solutions?
- Most mouthwash users thought Scope's taste as better. Some preferred Listerine because they had grown up with it and considered it more effective.
- Respondents who worked closely with the public emphasized the importance of using mouthwash before interacting with patients, customers, and colleagues.
- Users who had grown up in a mouthwash-using household were more likely to use mouthwash regularly.

*For example, how about trying to hook teenagers? Nice idea, but respondents said they would have seen little benefit to their confidence had they used mouthwash.*



**“I was a very confident teenager.”**

**“Mouthwash would not have solved the problems I was self-conscious about.”**





*Some people talked about being self-conscious about coffee breath and welcomed the idea of adopting a breath-freshen ritual after their last cup of the morning.*





*And some said...*



“A more attractive storage / dispenser system might remind me to use it more often...”



“...but we are hurting for counter space.”



*And might it be time to explore more adventurous flavors?*

*(OK, we're getting a little too creative here.)*



*The strategy that is most likely to succeed is the one that targets the low-hanging fruit, consumers who regularly buy and use Listerine, but who would secretly say:*

“I’m willing to invest a few bucks and time every day to get my mouth super-clean. In addition to brushing, I use Listerine because it’s the most powerful germ-killer...**I just wish it tasted better.**”



*Voila! Our critical consumer insight.  
(because ours does!)*

