



## APIA® Method Description.

### **Summary**

*APIA®—Analysis of Projective InterAction—is a qualitative research approach based upon group dynamics that primarily involves the use of projective, expressive and associative techniques. Because APIA® makes it possible to investigate the emotional significance and symbolic function of brands and media, companies and institutions, it is an approach that permits efficient brand management and creative communication planning. This approach focuses on the underlying emotional and visual content of a brand’s identity rather on the verbalized formulations of the brand image. Since APIA® circumvents the conscious control mechanisms of the subjects and elicits subconscious motives and thoughts, the findings are extremely valid in terms of emotional relevance. As a result, APIA® provides a valid psychological foundation for communication.*

### **APIA®—The Ideology.**

Strong brands are perceived emotionally, not intellectually, which explains why the feelings a brand triggers represent its real capital. Hidden feelings, and not obvious thoughts, are what create the added value that plays such an important role in models used to evaluate the brands. As a result, brand management essentially involves managing feelings and emotions. However, it is necessary to be able to identify and understand those feelings and emotions in order to be able to structure a brand to appeal to them. That’s easier said than done because it’s extremely difficult to access feelings. One reason for this is that thoughts count more than feelings, especially in Western societies, which have their roots in empiricism and enlightenment.

The realization to the effect that “share of soul” is an essential prerequisite for establishing a brand in a competitive environment has resulted in a paradigmatic change in brand research. Quantitative research is no longer considered sufficient for investigating the underlying emotional dimensions and unconscious signals of brands and communication.

Qualitative research, which is based upon a more hermeneutic approach, makes it possible to isolate and identify the underlying drivers and ideas involved in positioning a brand or company and drawing up the corresponding creative guidelines. APIA® is a qualitative research tool that use precisely such an approach.



## **APIA<sup>®</sup>-Method Description.**

### **APIA<sup>®</sup>—The Instrument.**

APIA<sup>®</sup> is based on a semiotic approach, which means that it proceeds on the assumption that any brand is a code that defines and expresses what consumers need for their self-discovery and self-definition. This code can give consumers a feeling of belonging or, on the other hand, allow them to feel different from others. As a result, APIA<sup>®</sup> uses primarily images and symbols instead of language and logical categories to decode brand content.

APIA<sup>®</sup> is a method based upon technique derived from depth psychology. Appropriate techniques are used to isolate the underlying fantasies and subconscious emotions that contribute to the emotional impact of a brand. APIA<sup>®</sup> makes use of creative stimuli directed at both halves of the brain, which makes it possible to investigate rational as well as emotional aspects since the identity and personality of a brand are stored in both.

APIA<sup>®</sup> involves the use of scenarios that support group dynamics. Social interaction is not considered a disruptive influence, but rather a platform for exchanging impressions with respect to the inherent identity and qualities of a brand. APIA<sup>®</sup> creates an interpersonal microcosm that mirrors the social macrocosm in which individuals exchange their subjective impressions of brands with one another and gradually transform the content of the “official” profile.

APIA<sup>®</sup> instrumentalizes the homo ludens principle, in accordance with which people only reveal their true selves when at play. The use of playful situations allows participants to abandon their usual controls and social roles. As a result, they reveal their innermost feelings and thoughts. This provides the consumer insights that give marketing professionals and ad agencies the content they need to develop consumer-driven brand communication. As a result, they can convey what they really want to say and at the same time create a sense of involvement with their brands on the part of members of their target audiences.

### **APIA<sup>®</sup>—Basic Techniques.**

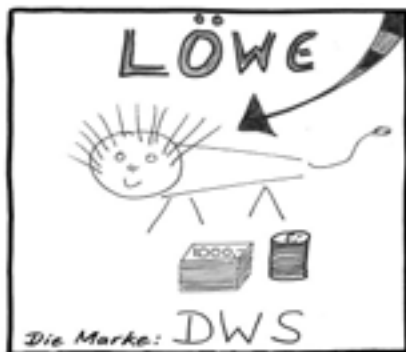
&EQUITY has refined various techniques that belong to the typical repertoire of qualitative research methods. These techniques are specifically adapted to the needs of brand managers who want to add unique emotional appeal to their brands. In addition, &EQUITY has also developed completely new techniques to permit optimum empirical evaluation of the emotional labyrinth found in the head of today’s consumers.



**APIA®-Method Description.**

**Example 3: APIA® Drawings. A Metaphoric Drawing of the Brand.**

When people draw, they are involved both intellectually and physically. As a result, visual metaphoric renderings of brands or their users often make it possible to obtain surprising insights into the consumer’s subconscious thoughts because this holistic form of expression short-circuits rational and emotional processes. The emotional authenticity of such brand drawings results from the fact that right-hand side of the brain controls visual activity.



„DWS-Customers: Their majesties aren’t tempted by peanuts.“



„DEKA-Customers: Are also enough for happiness in the comfort of one’s own home.“

**Example 4: APIA® Photosort. A Phenomenology of the Brand.**

Brand images are so complex and variegated that consumers cannot articulate them with language alone. Nevertheless, they have a precise impressions somewhere in the back of their minds. However, it takes a stimulus to bring these ideas out of the twilight zone of the subconscious into the light of consciousness. APIA® provides them with this stimulus—in the form of images.



„VW is like this teddy bear. Familiar, nice and indestructible.“



„VW bares its teeth. Wants to reach the top and is fighting to make sure it does.“

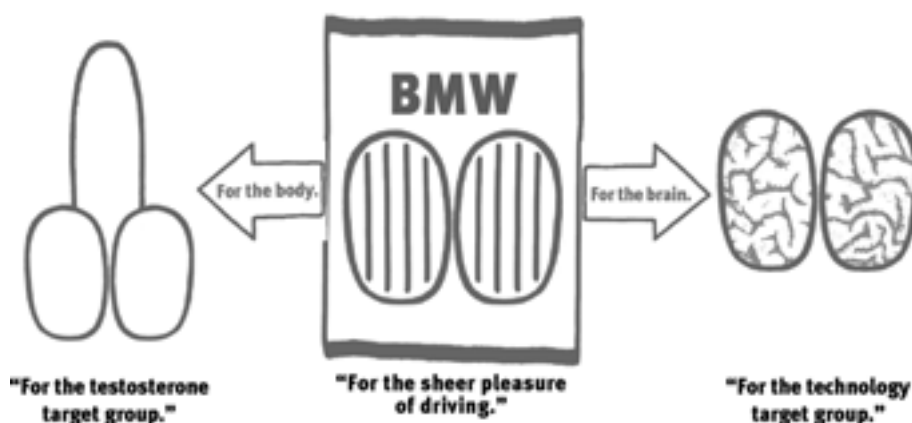


„VW at crossroads: Luxury or mass-market products?“

## APIA<sup>®</sup>-Method Description.

### Example 5: APIA<sup>®</sup> Tribunal. Differential Analysis of the Brand.

Different segments of a target group will decode the secret messages of a brand in different ways. However, one and the same person may also experience a brand in different ways depending on aspects of the brand signals the viewer focuses on. The reason for this is that brands are like what psychologists refer to as “ambiguous figures”, which means they change as a function of the aspects the subject focuses on. The APIA<sup>®</sup> technique Tribunal, which involves prosecution and defense functions, graphically portrays the double valance of a brand to yield important guidelines for emphasis when encoding a brand’s emotional content and personality.



### APIA<sup>®</sup> – Organizational Implementation.

An APIA<sup>®</sup> workshop takes up about 4 to 5 hours and is made up of ten representative participants from the respective target audience. The participants are recruited by field organizations on the basis of quota guidelines. We recommend trying to achieve a certain degree of homogeneity in terms of the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants except in cases in which the goal is to produce an atmosphere conducive to confrontations between people with different lifestyles and values.

APIA<sup>®</sup> workshops are conducted by two specially trained &EQUITY moderators, and the results are then analyzed by an interdisciplinary team.



## **APIA®-Method Description.**

### **APIA®—The Performance Scope.**

APIA® is an instrument designed to support strategic planning for purposes of corporate and brand communication. As a result, it also includes analysis of brand equity, which provides the basis for preparing a briefing for implementation by the client's agencies. This analysis not only includes an in-depth overview of the status quo of the brand but also presents a scenario for the future development.

However, APIA® is also ideal for creating empirical psychographic portraits of target groups and provides answers to various questions. What do certain type of individuals think and feel? What do they want? What do they do? What desires and values determine their lives and goals? And, last but far from least, what does that mean for a specific brand or company?

Since APIA® is a qualitative method, it is not representative in a statistical sense but is in terms of psychological validity. APIA® does not come to conclusions in terms of how "how much" but rather tells us "why", which means it can provide the input required to produce creative brand communication that is right on target. Used in combination with CAPO®, another &EQUITY investigative instrument, APIA® provides marketing management with the answers to both questions in the form of representative results based upon large samples on the one hand and in the form of accurate descriptions of emotional perception on the other hand.