



No Joke! Comedy Leads to Consumer Brand Insights

By [Nancy Pekala](#)

So, did you hear the one about Dannon Yogurt?

Most brand research doesn't come with its own laugh track but [Rajiv Satyal](#), a comedian and former P&G and Fiji Water brand manager, aims to change all that with a new method of gaining consumer insights that's intended to be a laugh a minute.

Satyal founded the *Funny 'Cause It's True* program with partner Andy Gibson, as an innovative way for marketers to generate insights by using standup comedians.

How does it work? During a recent Brand Innovators Summit session, Satyal explained that to begin the process, Satyal meets with a client's brand team to determine what they're trying to accomplish, what kinds of insights they're seeking. He will share this information with a small team of stand-up comedians who will begin writing jokes and punch lines. Each comedian prepares a 20-minute set which they perform for members of the brand team, researchers and often consumers at a local comedy club. For optimum success, brand team members are seated at the same tables as consumers.

Following the performance, Satyal prepares an insight report based on the results which he delivers to the brand team together with a DVD of the taped event.

Through the program, Satyal has conducted comedy insight sessions with brands such as Herbal Essences, Gillette, Nice'n Easy and Dannon Yogurt.



Comedian and former brand manager Rajiv Satyal uses comedy to drive consumer insights for brands.

“Typically, as marketers, we develop initiatives and advertising around consumer Insights, benefit and the reason to believe,” Satyal said. “Marketers make an observation. The insight grabs your attention and gets your head nodding in agreement; the Benefit is the payoff.”

According to the self-proclaimed “fun-size” comedian, “Everyday, brands are engaged in the continuous fight for relevance.

As marketers, we strive to find ways to connect with our consumers. For some time now, it hasn’t been enough just to educate people about our brand

Benefit; in this YouTube world, consumers expect to be entertained. Then again, sometimes, we get so caught up in making entertaining ads that we lose the benefit message.

At the end of the day, consumers want brands to offer benefits in a way so they know they are being heard.”



Comedian Brian Regan reveals consumer insights about the airline industry in this [video](#).

The goal of Satyal’s approach is to use comedy to identify what makes consumers laugh and then peel back the onion to see where the insight came from.

Consider this example from stand-up comedian Brian Regan. In a hilarious take on the airline industry, he jokes about the way airlines assign confirmation codes in this [video](#). “Sometimes, you’ll get a confirmation code that gets zeros and Os. You write them the same way but they’re completely different keys. They’ll give you the number 1 and the letter i. They don’t care you’ll never be able to communicate this back clearly. I’d like to give these people a code for their big vacation. `Here’s your confirmation code: 11i1o0ooi1oo0il. Bon Voyage!”

Satyal suggests that this approach to consumer insights is particularly effective because “Comedians are closer to your target consumers (and often ARE your target consumers) than your average creative and they are more creative than your average consumer.”

He added, “Comedians provide the stimulus for the consumer. Since they’re free of any filters, they can open up the conversation lane very quickly. Humor is about getting people to let their guard down and it can drive a very honest conversation.”

According to Satyal, the process of using comedians to uncover consumer truths works for both “humorous” and “serious” brands. “The jokes are funny; the insights behind them are often serious,” he said. “The greatest insights come out of the most sensitive moments, the most tension.”

Does it work? During a session focusing on the Herbal Essences brand, core advertising ideas were elicited for a global re-staging of the brand valued at over \$50M in incremental sales. A key insight from another brand's session was that "Coloring my hair should be a joy, not a job" and led to a new advertising direction for the brand.

What do you think? Can comedy lead to valuable consumer insights? Share your thoughts in the Marketing Research group of [AMACConnect](#), the AMA's online community for marketers. Learn more about Rajiv Satyal's Funny 'Cause It's True program by visiting his site, www.funnyindian.com.

[Nancy Pekala](#) is the AMA's Senior Director of Online Content and Editor of [Marketing Researchers](#). Follow us on Twitter [@marketing_power](#).