

Communicating the Importance to the American Public

Workshop on Respondent Burden in the American Community Survey



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8 March 2016

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Presentation Overview

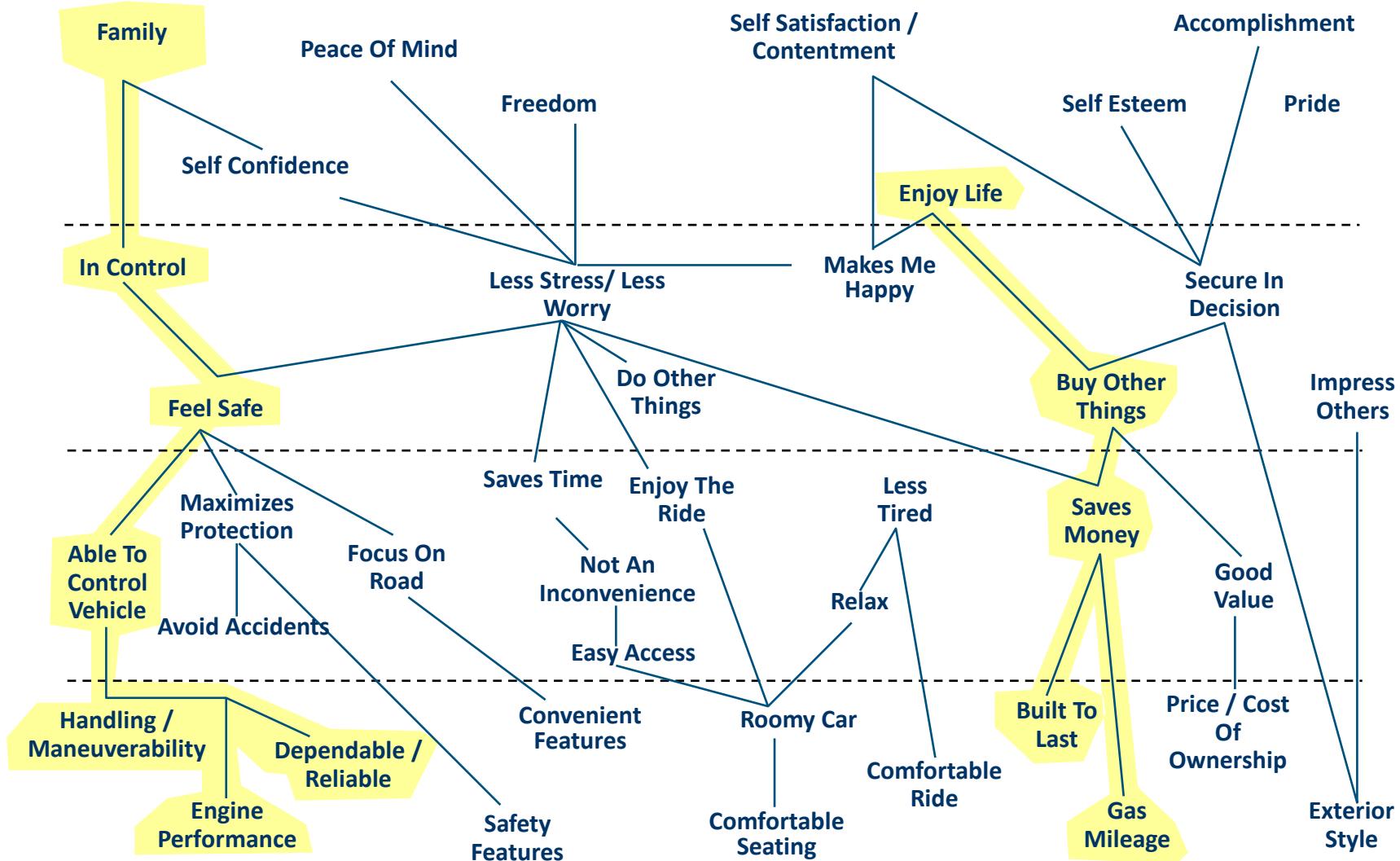
1. John Kennedy, Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan
2. A Laddering Example
3. Levi's Case Study
4. Communications Implications for the ACS







Features and Benefits of Cars: A Ladder



Chip Bergh
Levi's CEO & President



Advertising is Expensive, Is it Necessary?

- A top brand in a relatively-small apparel category, e.g., a type of jeans or shoes, might spend between 2-4% of total sales per year on advertising.
 - TV, Digital, Email, PR, Trade, Print, Outdoor
- The numbers add up quickly....
 - 8 million units sold at \$50 per unit = \$400 million
 - 3% of \$400 million = \$12 million
- If that kind of money's not available for advertising, there are other options.
- The messaging, irrespective of the amount of money available, should be consistent, compelling and persuasive.
- As Sandra noted, **“Every touchpoint needs to be consistent in tone, language, look and feel.”**

How Might the ACS Modify its Messaging? (1)

- *The ACS is sent monthly to a small percentage of the population, with approximately 3.5 million households per year being included in the survey.*
 - They've been selected at random but they're special, and part of an exclusive group. Invitation only, akin to how Google first recruited Gmail users. And how Nielsen, via the Nielsen Ratings, positioned its service for decades.
 - They should be made to feel as though they've won the lottery.
 - The challenge is to communicate the benefits of the ACS (and participation in it) in way that resonates at a personal level.
 - Reducing interview length to accommodate respondents reinforces the message that they count. It shows respect too.

How Might the ACS Modify its Messaging? (2)

- *However, the entire country benefits from the wealth of information provided from this survey of over 11 billion estimates each year for more than 40 topics covering social, demographic, housing, and economic variables.*
 - Why use the word “however”? Better to strike it. The entire country benefits through the participation of the 3.5 million lottery winners, the lucky ones others trust, depend on, and even envy.
 - Their individual participation leads to direct benefits for themselves, their communities, and their country.

How Might the ACS Modify its Messaging? (3)

- *The data that the ACS collects are critical for communities nationwide – it is the only source of many of these topics for rural areas and small populations.*
 - What are the benefits to the individuals within the communities? And to the 3.5 million individual respondents?
 - As things stand, it almost seems as though the ACS, and participation in it, is a necessary evil. That's got to change.

How Might the ACS Modify its Messaging? (4)

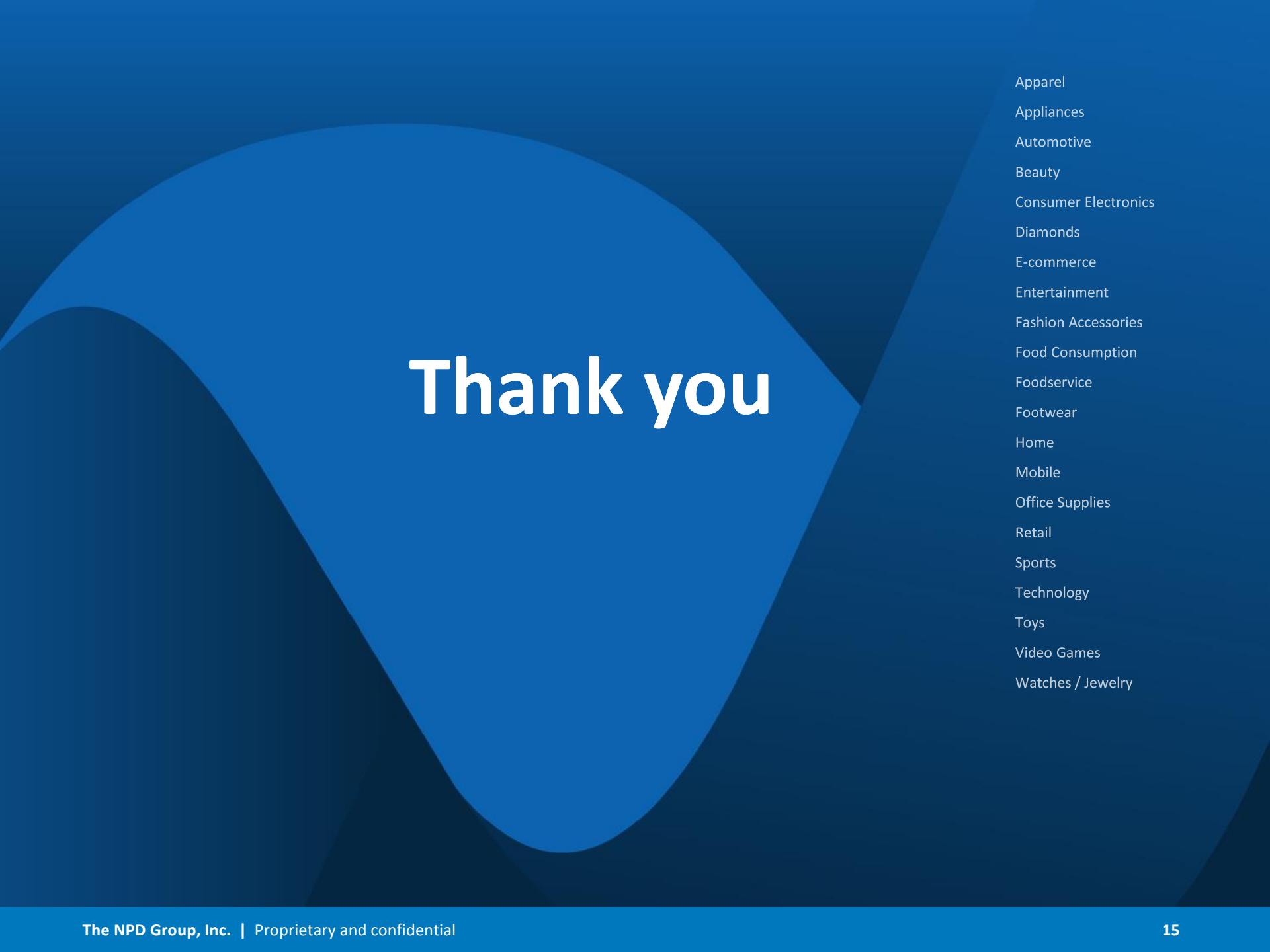
- *...Target, JC Penney, Best Buy, General Motors, Google, and Walgreens use ACS data for everything from marketing to choosing franchise locations to deciding what products to put on store shelves. Because ACS data are available free of charge to the entire business community, the program helps lower barriers for new business and promotes economic growth.*
 - So it's great for businesses? So what? What are the benefits to individuals? Does the information create more jobs for working people? If so, say it.
 - And how else do businesses use the information? To ensure they have in stock the products people need and want, which can vary by region? If so, then it is a consumer benefit that the ACS should communicate.

How Might the ACS Modify its Messaging? (5)

- *First responders and law enforcement agencies use ACS data during natural disasters and emergencies to assess impacts and prioritize recovery efforts....State and local economic development offices use ACS data to attract businesses, make decisions, and manage growth.*
 - This is important—family, safety, peace of mind--but disasters and emergencies are rare, not things people think about every day.
 - The messaging needs to focus more on the close-in benefits to individuals.

How Might the ACS Modify its Messaging? (6)

- *Your response to this survey is required by law. Your response is critically important to your local community and your country. Responding promptly will prevent your receiving additional reminder mailings, phone calls, or personal visits from Census Bureau interviewers.*
 - A necessary evil? (Recurring theme)
 - Can you imagine a Levi's ad ending with the phrase "you are required by law to visit a Levi's store in the next seven days"?
 - The same people who wear Levi's, or drive VW Passat's, also participate in, and benefit from, the ACS. They're more accustomed to soft sells than to not so subtle threats.
 - Let people know they count. It's about them...



Thank you

Apparel
Appliances
Automotive
Beauty
Consumer Electronics
Diamonds
E-commerce
Entertainment
Fashion Accessories
Food Consumption
Foodservice
Footwear
Home
Mobile
Office Supplies
Retail
Sports
Technology
Toys
Video Games
Watches / Jewelry