

PERSUASIVE ADVERTISING

Evidence-based principles

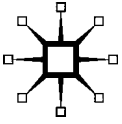
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check with friends to learn about their experiences, or even better, check with *Consumer Reports* or various Internet sites.

- *Credence products* are those that cannot be evaluated accurately even after the product has been used because of the consumer's lack of technical expertise or because the cost of checking the truth of a product's claim is higher than the value of the information. For example, typical customers are not able to determine whether "Intel Inside" improves their experience with a computer.

Target market

Woman is the buyer of everything.
N. C. Fowler, 1904

Advertisements should focus on benefits relevant to the product's target market. While advertisers discussed this concept in the late 1800s, it was not widely used until after the 1950s when, due to improved technology, firms were better able to target specific groups with their messages (Goodrum and Dalrymple 1990). For example, magazine, and especially Internet, advertisers can now tailor their advertising to different segments of customers.

When a given product can be sold in many distinct target markets, each market might require a different campaign. Advertisers occasionally overlook this.

Many characteristics of customers can influence thinking about how to best influence them. For example, is the target market intelligent? Able to purchase? A business agent or final consumer? Old enough to make decisions? A current customer? Able to see and hear easily? Experts can often provide reasonable judgments of these questions. Target market surveys can supplement these judgments.

What does the target market currently know and believe about the brand and product category? Find out what customers need to know about your product prior to taking action. This involves asking questions such as: What benefits are they seeking? Do they know how to purchase the product?

Some of the more important considerations regarding target markets are as follows.

What interest groups are relevant?

Ads can be targeted not only to customers, but also to the community, employees, investors, suppliers, retailers, or employees. The Avis "We try harder"[™] campaign was aimed at both its employees and customers. A copywriter for DDB, the ad agency for Avis, rented an Avis car and found the ashtray full of cigarette butts. His next copy was: "I write Avis ads for a living. But that doesn't make me a paid liar. If I am going to continue writing these ads, Avis had better live up to them. Or they can get themselves a new boy." They ran the ad for the general public, but it also helped raise standards among the employees.

In some cases, you may want to target purchasers who are not the end users. For example, an ad for children's toys might target parents, and an ad for chocolates might target suitors.

Sometimes it pays to target those who can influence others. A World War I recruitment ad in England showed a picture of women looking out a window, with the headline “Women of Britain say – GO!”

When trying to discourage certain types of behavior, it might be better to aim the campaign at influencing people to censure the actions of others. For example, ad campaigns in schools that offered students money for turning in their guns had no effect because it reinforced the idea that defiance of authorities was cool. However, a campaign with cash rewards to those who reported students carrying guns proved quite popular because most students did not regard gun carriers as cool (Kahan 1999).

This approach has been used in anti-smoking campaigns. Advertisements are aimed at people who object to smoking, encouraging them to express their disapproval when they see people smoking indoors. For example, a restaurant put up a sign that said, “No smoking. Enforced by customers.”

Is the product (or brand) new to the market?

Is the product an improvement of an existing product, or is it something the consumers have never seen? This aspect, “newness,” is important when developing an advertising campaign. The advertising campaign should typically change over the life cycle of the product. Customers need information when products are new; emotional appeals become relatively more effective when products are well known.

Is the message consistent with the attitudes and behavior of the target market?

The task of advertising is easier when it reinforces current consumer attitudes and behavior, or provides an obvious way for customers to meet their needs. Effectively, the advertisement should say, “Here’s how to get what you want.” If it calls for a change in attitudes, the advertising task becomes more demanding.

The client will be able to provide much of the information needed to specify the conditions relevant to advertising the product. To aid in this process, you can use non-directive interviewing with your client. The glossary provides guidelines for non-directive interviewing.

Exhibit B summarizes some key areas of conditions.

Exhibit B Key areas of conditions

Objectives

- Relevant
- Comprehensive
- Explicit and challenging
- Measurable?

Product

- Comparative advantage?
- High or low-involvement?
- Utilitarian or hedonic?
- Pro-social?
- Search, experience, or credence?

Target market

- What interest groups?
 - Familiar with product?
 - Consistent with attitudes?
-

Strategy

Advertising says to people, 'Here's what we've got. Here's what it will do for you. Here's how to get it.'
Leo Burnett, 1940s

The “Strategy” section is organized into four areas:

Information is widely used in advertising. Consider an ad for a car: “This car has 8 cylinders and goes 200 miles per hour.”

Influence presents information in a way that motivates customers. For example, an ad using a scarcity principle might read: “This car is a limited edition—only 300 will be made.”

Emotion comes into play in the process of convincing customers who already have sufficient product information to make a purchase. “Feel the thrill of speed in this sports roadster.”

Mere exposure is applicable when an ad provides no information or emotion—only the product, brand name, or logo. “This concert was sponsored by Honda.”

These basic strategies are not mutually exclusive. All four might be incorporated into a campaign.

General tactics

Tactics are more detailed than the strategies. They relate to reducing resistance, gaining acceptance, crafting the message, and attracting attention:

Resistance: How can advertisers overcome resistance to change? Much advertising seeks some type of behavioral change, so the section on reducing resistance is often relevant.

Acceptance: Principles for gaining acceptance should be considered for all ad campaigns.

Message: The principles related to crafting the message are broadly applicable. They are especially relevant to high-involvement products with strong arguments.

Attention: It might seem odd that the section on gaining attention comes last. After all, an ad must first gain attention if it is to have any impact. However, attracting attention should not drive the design of the ad. It is only after crafting a persuasive message that advertisers should turn to the issue of gaining attention.

9. Still media

The principles in this section are relevant to advertising in many types of still media: these include magazines, newspapers, brochures, direct mail, posters, point-of-purchase, banners, packaging, package inserts, and billboards. And of course, they apply to the Internet.

The first print ad appeared in the 15th century, and the first handbill (flyer) in the 17th century. An explosion of print advertising continued over the next century; Hogarth, a famous painter, was one of the leading promoters. Here is an example of these ads, many of which were direct and informative: “Richard Fanson, Woolen Draper/ The North Side of St. Paul’s Churchyard, London/ Sells all sorts of Woolen Drapery Goods/ Wholesale and Retail at the Lowest Prices.”

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, advertisers experimented with different approaches to print advertising, and tracked the results. This led to gains in knowledge about effective advertising.

Before launching into the principles associated with still media, consider this headline for a full-page advertisement that appeared in the December 19, 2004 edition of the *New York Times*. The headline is laid out as published, only it had dark gray print on a light gray background. How many mistakes can you find?

**BUYING A GIFT FOR
A DESIGN AND ENGINEERING
AWARDS JUDGE? WE KNOW
WHAT THEY’D LIKE.**

This headline violates or ignores many principles, including three from section 9 alone. (My list is provided at the end of this chapter.)

The following still media principles are discussed in this section:

9.1. Headline

9.2. Pictures

9.3. Text

9.4. Structure of body text

9.5. Typeface

9.6. Layout

9.1. Headline

*you must write the headline first, and then having done that,
the art ... illustrates the headline.*

Albert Lasker (famous advertising executive), early 1900s

According to Presbrey (1929, p. 68), the headline was the outstanding addition to English print advertising in the 1700s. Benjamin Franklin played a key role