How to Develop and Increase the Effectiveness of Advertisements in the Broadcast Media

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Before one can explain how to make advertisements more effective, the word effective must be clearly defined. The first definition of effective cited in The Oxford American Dictionary is as follows: producing an effect; powerful in its effect. What then is the effect that advertising is meant to produce? The question seems straightforward enough, yet it is ridden with controversy and misunderstanding. The advertisements that gain the most acclaim in the advertising world seem to be the ones that are the most "creative." In fact, the most prestigious of all advertising awards, the CLIO awards, are conferred upon the agencies producing the most creative ads. The distinction must be made, however, between award-winning and effective. Advertising is a component of the promotional strategy, the purpose of which is to stimulate demand within the consumer. The effectiveness of an advertisement, then, ought to be measured in terms of whether or not it "wins" at the cash register. Is the advertisement effective in producing sales?

The development of research concerned with testing the effectiveness of advertisements can be divided into four stages. The first stage includes the type of research that is done to determine readership. The test of effectiveness is related to the relative attention-getting power of advertisements. An advertisement is thought to be effective if the consumer can recognize the advertisement as being familiar.
The second stage of research deals with the impact of advertising and the extent to which advertising ideas stick in the mind of the consumer. This stage focuses on recall and the elements of an advertisement that the consumer can describe without having the actual ad in front of them.

Stage three encompasses the kind of research that seeks to find out why some advertisements make more of an impression than others. The objective is not only to discover what consumers recognize (stage one) and recall (stage two), but also to ascertain why certain features of an ad affect the consumer and others do not.

The forth and final stage of research attempts to judge the amount and kind of product usage that will result from given stimulation in advertising. This stage is one to which research is just getting. The ultimate goal is to explain the specific relationship between advertisements and action. This type of research most nearly approaches the concept of effectiveness. Unless some correlation can be drawn between recognition and recall, which has not been done, stage one, two, and three do not test effectiveness. It may be encouraging if the consumer remembers your advertisement, but it is successful and effective when consumer action is the result of exposure to the advertisement.
One important thing to note about the four stages is the nature of development from one stage to the next. The stages have progressed from one stage to the next in consecutive order, yet the emergence of a new stage has never corresponded with the recession of the previous stage. All four stages of research are currently utilized to test advertisements. Perhaps recognition and recall are not direct tests of effectiveness, but they may be related to effectiveness indirectly. Regardless, all four stages are important in that they contribute to the research efforts to correlate advertisements with action.

After having defined what constitutes effective advertising, the next step in explaining how to develop effective broadcast advertising is to consider that which makes advertising in general effective. Some knowledge concerning advertising and what makes it more effective will serve as the foundation upon which complete understanding of a medium-specific study of effective advertising can be built.

According to Don Schultz, author of Essentials of Advertising Strategy, there are three major factors to consider as basis for advertising strategy development. They are as follows:
1. Unique Selling Proposition

Also known as the sales (or selling) idea, the USP is the consumer benefit that the advertised product offers. In short, it is the reason why a consumer should use the product. The unique selling proposition must be a benefit that either the competition cannot offer, does not offer, or does not offer as well. The USP should differentiate the product from its competition. The USP must be strong enough to convince customers. It is possible that the product has a unique feature that is not meaningful to the consumer. In this situation, the advertiser must resist the temptation to present this factor as the USP. The consumer readily must be able to see the USP as being beneficial to him.

In order to understand the idea of a USP, consider Colgate toothpaste. Colgate ads stressed that the toothpaste not only cleaned teeth, but it also freshened breath. Consumers recognized the breath freshening feature to be unique and that this feature was beneficial.

Notice that Colgate ads promised that the toothpaste would both clean teeth and freshen breath. While the
USP was that Colgate freshened breath (as one can presume the competition also cleans teeth), the "cleans teeth" idea was not disregarded. Generally, a product has several selling points. When developing an ad, the advertiser needs to discover what the consumer believes to be most important. Then, these selling points should be ranked in order of influence on buying. Colgate's USP may be that it freshens breath, but apparently the consumers also want assurance that the toothpaste cleans teeth, just like the competition. The advertiser must be careful then, not to get carried away with the USP and forget the other secondary selling points that influence buying. The USP is essential to differentiate the product, but it is useless unless the consumer believes the product to be just as good as (if not better than) the competition on other selling points. Establish that the product would be just like the competition's...if it were not for the unique selling proposition!

2. Brand Image

The brand image is the personality of the brand. Often a consumer buys a product for both the physical and psychological benefits it promises to deliver. Not all
products have succeeded in creating an image, but if a product has developed an image, the advertising should further the image and every advertisement should be considered to be a contribution to that image.

If a product has not yet developed an image in the eyes of the consumer, all is not lost. Advertising can be utilized to create brand image. In this situation, the advertiser must realize that this is usually a lengthy process. However, developing a brand image is a long-term investment and it is certainly something for which to strive. A product that either has or is in the process of developing brand image should always be advertised in a manner consistent with that image. Brand image is invaluable and no ad that might threaten the image should be considered.

In recent years, the importance of brand image has increased immeasurably. In the past, a product could probably do well without a brand image, provided it had a unique selling point. Today, any product with a unique selling point can expect that the competition will react by introducing a similar product or improving upon an existing product so that the unique selling
point is no longer unique. Most products are parity products, hence brand image can serve to distinguish one brand from another in the consumer's mind.

Leo Burnett (Chicago) utilizes trade characters in order to create brand image. The trade characters are used in order to facilitate development of the product personality. The trade character serves to make the product "come alive" in the minds of the consumers. Examples of trade characters used by Leo Burnett are the Marlboro Man, Tony the Tiger, and the Jolly Green Giant.

3. Positioning

The term position is used to indicate how the marketing program is perceived by the consumer relative to the program of key competitors. Product positioning is affected by all elements of the marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion) as they each influence the consumer's perception of a product. As it pertains to advertising (within the promotional mix), positioning refers to what the advertising does for the product in the prospect's mind. The general concept is
that advertising is used to gain a foothold or occupy a place for a product in the mind of the consumer. Rather than advertising a product that has specific advantages, positioning works to make the product fill all of the needs of the consumer within a particular category.

To illustrate the concept of positioning, consider 7-up. Seven-up was introduced as a lemon-lime carbonated drink in the highly competitive soft-drink market. After battling it out with the well-established colas, 7-up was repositioned as an alternative to the colas. Seven-up was advertised and subsequently perceived as the Un-cola.

Understanding the functions of an advertisement also is beneficial in building an understanding of advertising. According to Charles Whittier, author of Creative Advertising, there are five basic functions of an advertisement. Whittier terms these functions "the five I's of advertising." These functions are as follows:

**IDEA**

The first function of an advertisement is to present an idea. The idea is the premise upon which the entire ad is built. After
ascertaining that an ad has an idea, the next task is to determine if it is a good idea.

**IMMEDIATE IMPACT**

The second function, immediate impact, is the stopping power. The advertisement should halt minds concerned with other things so that the consumer will display greater concern for the advertising message. If the consumer does not notice the advertisements, the quality of that ad is irrelevant.

**INCESSANT INTEREST**

Once the advertisement has captured the consumer's attention, it must maintain interest. The objective is to ensure that the consumer will take in the complete advertising message.

**INFORMATION**

The next function of an advertisement is to provide information. The advertisement ought to contain sufficient information about the product and how it will benefit the consumer. Sufficient information probably is not all of the information about the product. Rather, sufficient information is enough to satisfy some of the consumer's curiosity and create conviction.

**IMPULSION**

The final function is impulsion. In short, will the ad give a
great many people a keen desire to own the product? The advertisement ultimately will create an irresistible urge to own the product, or to see and examine it at an early opportunity.

With this understanding of basic advertising, the next step is to consider briefly broadcast media overall. Some background information about broadcast media advertising taken as a whole is necessary before dividing the analysis into television advertising and radio advertising.

Advertising in the broadcast media is unique in that it provides for instantaneous transmission of the sales message. The advertiser can control precisely when their messages will be received. Additionally, the advertiser can determine the speed with which the message will be received.

Another advantage of broadcast media advertising that seems rather obvious deals with the fact that the advertisements can be heard. The expression of tone, inflection, authority, sympathy, and laughter all serve to make the message more real and dramatic. Too, according to various studies, it is easier to remember that which we hear versus that which we read. Also, the message certainly can be more personal through the use of the human voice.
Despite these advantages, the broadcast media definitely is not ideal for advertising. Television and radio commercials interrupt programming content. Of course, print advertising interrupts editorial content of a magazine or newspaper, but the interruption by advertisements in the broadcast media is far more abrupt. Advertisements in the broadcast media are obtrusive because they momentarily displace everything else in the medium. The ads force themselves on the viewer's or listener's consciousness and they must run the entire time span before the audience can return attention to other contents of the medium. The audience does have the option to stop watching or listening, but advertisements in the broadcast media are significantly less avoidable. Perhaps this condition is partially advantageous in that the audience is somewhat captive. However, it may also be a disadvantage as the interruption may cause impatience or irritation. The audience both is more easily attracted and offended.

The first broadcast media advertising this paper will address is television advertising. Before focusing on the actual advertisement, consider the recipient of the message, the television viewer. The viewer is watching television primarily for entertainment purposes. It is highly unlikely that the viewer is
breathlessly waiting to see a commercial. In fact, the television viewer likely is the victim of information clutter. Studies indicate that the average person in the United States watches at least one hour of television per day and is exposed to thirty five television commercials. Of these thirty five, the typical American remembers one commercial.9

This advertising noise has caused television viewers to set up barriers of disbelief. The viewers have come to distrust advertisements. Furthermore, due to the look-alike nature of most commercials, brand name recognition among major advertisers is lower than it has ever been, regardless of the millions of dollars spent on advertising annually.10

Concerning the actual advertisement, there are various structures through which the sales message can be conveyed. The type of structure that is most appropriate depends upon the product, the market, the audience, the production budget, and the intended number of exposures. The structure is the vehicle through which the sales message reaches the viewer, although the structure alone will neither compel nor sell.

There is some disagreement about how many different structures there are. Most commercial structures, however, can be grouped into one of six categories.11 The following list
explains the structures and suggests when each structure might be suitable:

1. **Demonstration** (when you can show a product advantage)

   Television provides a unique forum in which consumers can actually see the product and perhaps how it is used. If the product advantage can be demonstrated, it is wise to show it in every commercial. Show the viewer what the product does. It is extremely important that the demonstration be used in order to prove a point that is of some consequence to the consumer.

   Many advertisers appear to believe that the demonstration is a dull method of presentation. On the contrary, the demonstration can be as creative and as interesting as any other structure. An example of an interesting demonstration is an advertisement substantiating the sturdiness of Tonka toy trucks. The advertisement, which is in slow-motion, depicts a Tonka truck and a very similar looking truck falling off of the side of an extremely steep cliff. The other similar looking truck is the real, metal and rubber version of the Tonka truck. The voice-over discusses various points which emphasize the durability of the Tonka toy truck. In the final scene the real
truck is destroyed as it crashes to the ground. Conversely, the Tonka truck takes a beating, but emerges unscathed. Clearly, the demonstration need not be dull.

Some products may not lend themselves to a demonstration in the strict sense, but may be advertised successfully using a symbolic demonstration. Taster's Choice simplistically demonstrated the freeze-dried process in order for the consumers to see how the process insured freshness.

2. **Testimonial** (when you want to make a claim believable)

The testimonial is particularly appropriate when the product advantage cannot be visualized. There are basically three types of testimonials: testimonials by experts, testimonials by celebrities, and testimonials by ordinary people.

The first type of testimonial, testimonial by experts, can be an effective means of reaching the consumer if the expert is perceived to be an authority on a matter related to the product. The consumer is likely to trust the opinion of someone who he believes to possess superior knowledge about the product.
The second type of testimonial is the testimonial by celebrities. There is considerable disagreement among advertisers as to the judiciousness of using celebrities to tout products. Some advertisers assert that the viewer can guess that the celebrity has been bought and will disregard their claim.\textsuperscript{12} There is also the danger that the viewer may remember the celebrity, but forget the product.

Other advertisers claim that celebrities can contribute to the impact of the commercial. These same advertisers, however, also admit that the mere presence of a celebrity does not automatically guarantee a more effective advertisement. It is essential that the celebrity carefully be selected so that his image is appropriate for the product. The celebrity should be someone to whom most viewers will have a positive reaction. If the viewer dislikes the celebrity, the sales message probably will be disregarded.

The final type of testimonial is the testimonial by ordinary people. This type of testimonial is enormously believable. Real people reactions are extremely effective when the viewer can be convinced that the person is "just like me." If the testimonial appears contrived, the credibility is lost. The most effective testimonials by ordinary people
show loyal users testifying to the product's virtues in response to the interviewer who pretends to find fault with the product. This defense shows the viewer how strongly the user believes in the product.

3. **Presenters** (when you have product news)

   The presenter structure indicates news, even if there is no news. The best presenters are ones who help build an image. The presenter must be carefully chosen to match the product image. As with testimonials, experts and celebrities are possible choices for presenters. The same points that were made concerning experts and celebrities in the testimonial section are equally applicable in this section.

   The presenter structure lends itself well to advertisements that purport to explain a new way of using an existing product. An example of such a situation deals with Arm and Hammer baking soda. After many years of being marketed as a baking supply, the product was re-positioned as an air deodorizer, while at the same time maintaining its usefulness for cooking. The use of the presenter for advertising this new use could have been quite effective.
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4. **Slice-of-Life** (when you want to involve people with your product)

The slice-of-life structure is one in which a play unfolds involving people with the product. The advertisement is supposed to assimilate a typical experience in the day of the life of the user. There are several elements of a slice-of-life advertisement that make one better than another.\(^{14}\)

The first element is simplicity. The advertisement should focus on a single product benefit and make that benefit clear to the viewer.

The second element is the problem/solution format. The classic slice-of-life shows the doubter being convinced that the product "really works" and does so in a remarkable way. The doubter has first-hand experience with the product and is amazed at how wonderful it is. The pitfall is that this approach may seem corny if improperly executed. On the other hand, if the problem/solution format is executed well, it can be quite realistic and charming.

The third element is the utilization of an authority figure. The authority figure can be as simple as the neighbor who seems to do everything right or the service station
attendant who knows all about cars. The person is authoritative if the viewer perceives him to be. Many successful advertising campaigns have been built on the authority as a continuing character. Cora and Mrs. Olsen know all about coffee, Madge knows dishwashing liquid, Rosie knows paper towels, etc.

5. **Life-Style** (when you want to focus the attention on the user rather than the product)

Life-style advertising is particularly useful when product differences are small and when the product's use tends to be social, not just functional. With so many products being perceived by consumers as parity products, Life-style would probably use the product. Life-style advertising created the Charlie woman as well as the Hathaway man with the eye patch.

6. **Animation** (for special communication purposes)

This type of structure is especially effective in reaching children. Using animation in commercials is effective because children notice, enjoy, and remember these advertisements better than any other kind of advertisement. 15

Animation might also be considered in simplifying complex ideas or in treating abstract or even distasteful subjects.
The preceding list of television structures is neither complete nor mutually exclusive. There are many different ways to develop and present a television advertisement. What the list does represent is a categorization scheme in which television advertisements can be classified. The list is not mutually exclusive as some advertisements may have elements of two or more types of structures. For example, it is not uncommon to see a demonstration in a slice-of-life advertisement. Such an advertisement would, however, be classified as slice-of-life in that this is the general structure within which the demonstration takes place.

Within the previous list of structures, there were several suggestions and guidelines dealing with when and how to use these structures and how to do so effectively. The information presented general ways in which each structure could be used to yield effective advertisements. There are, however, various other points about television advertising that apply to all advertisements regardless of structure. What follows is a list of topics which relate to television advertisements overall and the concept of advertising effectiveness.

**Gimmicks/Entertainment**

Because television is such a highly entertainment-oriented
medium, the temptation exists to produce advertisements that are equally as entertaining. This temptation should be strongly resisted. No correlation has yet been found between entertainment value and sales results. All of the technical possibilities television offers are equally enticing, but an extra trick shot here or a special effect there does little to boost sales. The viewer may enjoy the ad, but will he buy the product?

While advertisers should avoid entertainment for entertainment's sake, there is nothing wrong with an advertisement that is somewhat entertaining provided that the entertainment is commercially functional. The real danger lies in the overuse of gimmickry or overemphasis on entertainment so that the sales message is unclear.

**Humor**

Humor can be an effective addition to an advertisement provided that the following restrictions are held into account:

1. The humor must not get in the way of the message.
2. The humor must be functional to the sale of the product.
3. The humor must help to make the sales point, not obscure it.
4. The humor must be compatible with the nature of the product.
Very few supposedly humorous commercials are funny. Real humor is exceedingly difficult to apply to sales messages. Also, many commercials that purport to be humorous cease to be so after the viewer has seen them for the second or third time. Perhaps the wisest approach is to make the situation or character funny or amusing in a warm and engaging style. This more subtle and sedate humor will probably be more enduring.

Music

Music can be used in advertisements in order to reinforce the sales message. Music in advertisements is most often used in one of two ways. The first way involves the use of songs or musical backgrounds. In this case, the music serves as emotional shorthand to evoke a mood. The use of a known song can enlist the good feelings that a viewer already has for that song. For example, GTE Corporation's long distance service, Sprint, was advertised using the popular Stevie Wonder song, "I Just Called To Say I Love You," followed by a toll-free telephone number for inquiries. Within three days, calls to Sprint's telemarketing department generated more immediate impact than anything else that had been done for Sprint (agency: J. Walter Thompson).

Music seems to have a unique pull on human emotions whereby certain melodies become inextricably linked with
feelings. It is an easy way to bring existing good feelings to a commercial. The problem again is that people may remember the music, but forget the product. The song further loses its effectiveness if it has nothing to do with the selling idea.

A relatively recent trend has been to use a popular song and create slightly different lyrics specifically for a particular product. These parody lyrics are often useful, but they can backfire. The viewer may become upset if the words are changed to a song of which he is particularly fond.

Another form of music used in advertising is the jingle. Jingles can serve to increase the memorability of the advertisement. Furthermore, a catchy jingle may be remembered long after the advertisement stops running. It is advisable to include the brand name in the jingle as often as possible. This will insure that the viewer will remember the jingle as well as the product.

Sex

Much has been said in the advertising world about the use of sex in advertisements. The consensus seems to be that sex is appropriate if it is relevant to the product. In the sense that people like to look at people, sexy commercials are effective and in many cases they move the product. However, blatant sexual
advertising can do little more than offend.

Regarding the use of sex, advertisers should remember that a growing number of women have been entering the workforce and are becoming increasingly more aware of sexism in the marketplace. Sex should be used judiciously in advertisements as the sexy ad may offend or alienate the viewer.

Charm

Charming is a word that one would probably not be inclined to associate with advertising. Advertisers seem to be so preoccupied with creating commercials that are different, new, forceful, and grand, they forget the subtle approach. Why not show simple scenes with simple people saying just what one is not supposed to say in an advertisement? Why not show two country men, one who remains silent, and the other who asks you to please buy their wine coolers? Frank Bartles and Ed Jaymes are not pushy, and yet these commercials have been enormously effective. The key is in their manner and the proper personality fit.22

Radio is the second type of broadcast media. Radio represents only 6% of total advertising in the United States. Furthermore, there has been minimal research to study the efficacy of radio commercials.23 Hence, no one really seems to
know what works. There are, however, various practitioners who offer suggestions concerning how to effectively advertise on the radio. The credibility of these sources lies in their practical experiences and professional insight.

Before analyzing the actual advertisement, it is helpful to understand something about both the radio listener and the nature of the medium. First, the radio listener is very unlike the television viewer. The radio listener might be anywhere and his attention is very divided. Today's radio listener is nothing like the listener in the early days of radio whose eyes were transfixed on the radio, mesmerized by the program content. Today, the radio listener probably is listening to the radio while engaging in some other activity. The radio is used in many cases to provide background noise or music. The encouraging news is that nearly 95% of the population, twelve years and over, listens to some radio broadcasting each day. In fact, from early morning to the start of prime evening time, more people listen to the radio than watch television.24

Radio has been referred to as the most visual of all media. The imagination of the audience works more effectively in radio advertising than in any other medium. The advertisement can stimulate the listener to imagine character situations and whole
worlds that cannot be duplicated in television. The listener can project himself into another world through imagination.

Another characteristic of radio is that it is a very selective medium. With so many radio stations and so many types of stations, advertisers can be more certain of the characteristics of the audience the advertisements are reaching. Much of what was covered under television is equally applicable to radio advertising. There are, however, a few special consideration.

Music

As with television, the music used in radio advertisements must be carefully selected, but with radio there is an additional point to be made. Most radio programming is musical programming; therefore, it is extremely easy for the radio listener to hear a musical radio advertisement and never realize that regular programming has been interrupted. Particularly if the radio is serving as background music, such a radio advertisement may never capture the attention of the listener.

Voice

The voice is crucial in the development of a radio advertisement as it guides the listener's imagination to create the desired atmosphere or picture. If the voice is perceived as being displeasing, inappropriate, or unreliable, the listener will be
lost. Even the seemingly insignificant subtleties of pitch, tone and inflection can have an enormous bearing upon the effectiveness of the advertisement.

**Sound Effects**

The sound effects in the radio advertisement can be necessary tools in stimulating the listener's imagination. Without the accompaniment of visuals, the advertiser must be certain that the sound effect is identifiable. The listener must be able to recognize the sound. Even if the listener only has to pause briefly to determine what the sound was supposed to indicate, the listener may miss the sales message. Too, the passive mind of the radio listener probably would not be interested enough to try to determine what the sound meant. Confusion, no matter how slight, must be avoided.

As mentioned, various advertising practitioners offer suggestions about how to use radio for advertising and how to create more effective radio advertisements. The following list of tips represents the synthesis of several independent lists.

1. **Stretch the listener's imagination**
   
   Use the virtually limitless combinations of voices and sounds to evoke pictures that can only be imagined.
2. Listen for a memorable sound

Look for a sound that will make the advertisement stand out. Use a distinctive voice or a memorable jingle that the listener can associate with the product.

3. Present one idea

Present that idea directly and clearly.

4. Select the audience quickly.

It pays to flag the target audience at the beginning of the spot before the listener can switch stations or simply stop listening.

5. Mention the brand name and the promise early.

This approach results in higher awareness.

6. Identify the brand name often

This serves to implant the brand name in the listener's mind.

7. Capitalize on events

Exploit the flexibility of radio and tie the sales message into current fashions, events, etc.

8. Use radio to reach teenagers

Teenagers typically do not watch much television, but they do listen to the radio. Media
experts claim that radio is the best way to reach teens. 26

9. Have enough commercials in the pool

Because radio is such a high frequency medium, it is necessary to have more commercials for a radio campaign than are suggested for a television campaign.

10. Use imagery transfer

In some cases, the modified audio version of a television commercial can be used for the radio advertisement. The listeners may be reminded of the television commercial and be able to “see” it. In rare instances, the exact same audio can be used for television and radio.

11. Intrude to get attention

Because radio is used primarily as a background medium, the advertisement must break through the mental barrier which puts radio in the background.

A good deal of discussion regarding any type of medium-specific advertising must include a review of some basics of advertising. Many of the questions dealing with how to make broadcast advertising more effective can be answered through the application of the principles of advertising. Equipped with this
basic understanding, The next logical step is to study the specific medium and how advertising can be made effective within the confines of that medium. Broadcast media advertising simply is a specified adaptation of advertising.

A final note concerning what exactly can be concluded from this thesis deals with the nature of advertising. There has been considerable debate over the classification of advertising as an art versus a science. Actually, advertising is a combination of the two.

Advertising is an art in that it involves creativity and skill in execution. However, art is an end in itself, whereas art in advertising is a means to an end— that end being consumer action.

Advertising has been called a science by those who suppose it to be a branch of knowledge requiring systematic study and method. In fact, this thesis may seem to support this ideology. On the contrary, the basic decisions in advertising are judgmental. Studies of advertising and how to improve the effectiveness of advertisements are based upon suggestions and experience. While this does not constitute a science, certainly much can be learned from these suggestions.
endnotes


3 Ibid., 48.


6 Ibid., 205.


8 Ibid., 2.

9 Schultz, 2.

10 Book, 11.


13. Ibid., 105.


15. Ibid., 24.

16. Ibid., 25.


20. Ibid., 215.


23. Ogilvy, 113.


25. Maas, 42.

26. Ibid., 43.
bibliography


