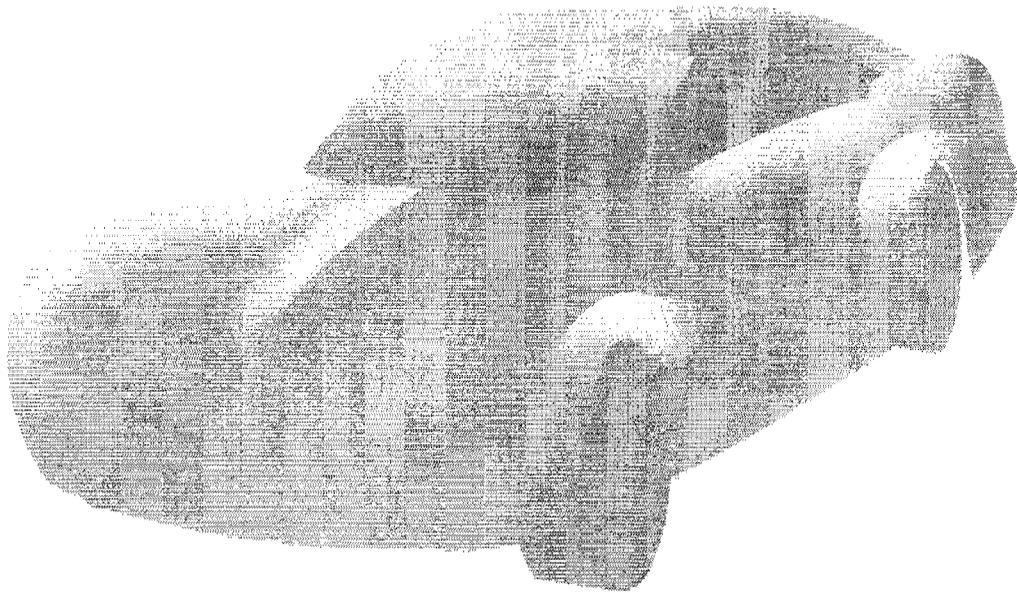


Designing a Dream



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Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Dr. Thomas Baird", is written over a horizontal line.

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ABSTRACT

For my Honors project, I designed a car, three print advertisements, and a website focused at college-aged individuals, the target audience. I first did research on the three themes I planned to use in the print advertisements: emotion, sex, and humor. During the research, I organized two focus groups of college-aged individuals in order to discover what they wanted in a vehicle. I then reviewed the input from the focus groups and designed a car that would satisfy the majority of the target audience. After the vehicle was created, I began creating the print advertisements using the three themes mentioned above. Dr. Tom Baird, my advisor, showed the advertisements to his marketing classes in order to find out whether the ads were effective for the intended target audience. The website was created after everything else in order to incorporate the car, advertisements, and sketches in it.

RATIONALE OF THE PROJECT

The creative part of my Honors thesis consisted of designing a car, three print advertisements, and a website. The purpose of these items was to promote a new car I designed based on college students' input during two focus groups. I chose to do this project because I have a great interest in cars. My major is marketing, and I hope to make advertisements for cars in my career. Thus, I decided this thesis would be a good learning experience.

The two focus groups were a sample of college-aged students. I chose to do two focus groups because I felt this would give a representative sample of individuals in this age group. One focus group would not have been a big enough sample. Since it was difficult to attain enough people to participate in two small focus groups, it would have been nearly impossible to get more individuals to make a third group.

I designed the car according to the input I received from the focus groups. Most of the individuals liked cars that were curvy. This is why I emphasized the front and rear fenders by making them flare out. The unique flares was also a way to help distinguish the car amongst countless other sports cars already in the industry. Focus group members, especially males, expressed interest in performance cars. Since performance cars are usually coupes, the car I created is a coupe. In order to achieve better gas mileage, the car is rather small and lightweight. In size, it would be slightly bigger than a Mazda Miata.

The three print advertisements (Appendix A) I created for my thesis were focused on three main themes: emotion, sex, and humor. I chose to do these three themes because they are the three major themes used in advertising today. I made one

advertisement for each of these themes in order to find out which theme was most effective. This was determined by showing the advertisements to Dr. Baird's, my thesis advisor, marketing classes. They viewed the advertisements and were asked several questions over each ad (Appendix B). The questions were designed to discover which advertisement was most effective and which ad was least effective.

The emotional advertisement was created to make the viewer feel individualistic. I chose to focus on individualism because this emotion fits well with the college-aged group. An advertisement focusing on nostalgia or the sense of belonging would probably not have had the same effect on young adults as it would on an older audience.

I tried to think of a slogan that would make someone feel individualistic. This is when I thought of the old saying, "March to the beat of a different drum." I decided to change the saying so it was more modern and it applied to a car. Thus, the slogan "Drive to your own beat..." emerged.

As far as the design elements, I wanted the ad to be simple and colorful. Therefore, the ad has a black background with the car, the slogan, and the picture of a sound wave above the car. The sound wave was used because it applied to the slogan. After experimenting with several other colors, I decided green looked the best because it made the ad look vibrant.

The sexy advertisement was created to appeal to viewers by using colors and sexual imagery. The advertisement is completely black and white except for the car, the model's dress, and the model's lips—all of which are red. I decided to do this to emphasize these three things in the ad. The color red was also utilized because it is the color associated with love and/or passion. The picture of the woman in the ad was used

because she is attractive, yet not too sexual. She is simply looking over her shoulder at the car, which also draws the viewer's attention to it.

The slogan "Mojo on the GO..." was created to appeal to the target audience. The recent *Austin Power* movies made the word "mojo" popular among young adults. In those movies, the word was used to basically describe "sex appeal." Thus, most of those in the target market will understand the slogan and the message of the advertisement.

The humor advertisement was created to draw attention to the advertisement through the use of outrageous imagery. Due to rising gas prices, I thought it would be humorous to depict gas pumps with large mouths and ferocious looking teeth. The slogan below the gas pumps asks, "Gas Problems?", which is also meant to be humorous.

The car at the bottom of the advertisement is yellow. Yellow is usually associated with happiness and light-heartedness, hence why it is used. Since the ad was focused around gas, I decided to include the car's gas mileage. This also provided an answer to the viewer's "gas problems."

The website's purpose was to be used as another promotional tool for the car (see CD in binder). I learned how to make a website this semester, so I decided it would be fun and another learning experience to make one for this thesis. The website is meant to be fun and interactive. Hence, the first page tells users to "turn on the lights" via a light switch. Once this button is clicked, it directs users to the car's home page. Here, users can see the new car, which received the name Muse, in a garage setting. I thought it was best to go with this setting because I wanted users to be able to click on different areas in the virtual garage to direct them to the various areas including "The Muse,"

“Advertisements,” and “Concepts.” I also hoped it would make users feel that the car would look good in their garage as well.

The car was named Muse because of the emblem I created to go along with the car. I decided the car’s name should begin with the same letter as my first name, M. This limited the name of the car down to any names that started with the letter M. Since I have an interest in mythology, I used the name of the Muses from ancient Greek mythology. The Muses were the goddesses of the arts and sciences (Encyclopedia Mythica 2005). The word muse also means a source of inspiration (Dictionary.com 2005). Therefore, I thought this would be the perfect name for the car.

“The Muse” page allows users to change the Muse to the color of their choice. I decided to go with these colors because they are all vibrant colors. I also decided to give them unique names such as “Go! Green” and “Snowcone Blue” because this car is targeted to college-aged people.

The specifications for the car are also listed on this page. Using Honda.com as a guideline, I listed the basic specifications listed for most cars (Honda.com 2005). Some unique features on this car include the On-Demand four-cylinder engine. Currently this option is only on eight-cylinder engines, but I thought it might be possible to achieve this after further research. This car also provides an optional four-wheel drive model.

“Advertisements” directs users to a webpage with the three different advertisements displayed. Each of the advertisements could be viewed more closely by clicking on the corresponding ad. I thought this section would be good for users because they could easily go online to see all of the current advertisements for the car.

“Concepts & Sketches” is a fun section for users to browse through. They can see the concept drawings for the car along with sketches of an advertisement. I thought this section was a good idea because as new concepts or sketches were created, they could be added to this page that way interested individuals could see other car ideas the company had in mind. This would provide reason for users to come back and visit the site periodically.

RESEARCH ON ADVERTISING

Sex in Advertising

One of the most popular forms of advertising is the use of sexual content. This content could be as innocent as attractive looking models or as racy as provocative gestures and sexual innuendos. Why does sex sell, though?

A recent study performed by MediaAnalyzer Software & Research examined the effectiveness of advertisements with sexual themes on 200 men and 200 women. The effectiveness of the ad was determined by four different categories including brand recall, purchase intent, and how well the participants liked the advertisement as well as the product in the ad. A total of ten ads were used—five sexual and five nonsexual (Nudd 2005).

The results of the research showed that men have a tendency to focus on the sexual components of the ads. The majority of the men tested admitted that sexual ads catch their attention, and a slightly smaller percentage actually liked these ads. However, the sexual content in the ads appear to draw their attention away from the brand and products, since only one out of every ten men were able to recall them correctly (Nudd 2005).

The study showed that less than ten percent of the women liked sexual advertisements, although almost thirty percent admitted it caught their attention. When viewing the ads, the women usually avoided the sexual elements. Surprisingly, the women had a very similar rating as the men when it came to recalling the correct brand and product. MediaAnalyzer believed this might be due to a “general numbing effect that sexual stimuli has on the brain” (Nudd 2005).

The use of sex in advertising can also lead to positive associations.

Advertisements with attractive people in attractive settings cause consumers to create a positive association with the brand (Moriarty p. 111). Positive associations are good for a brand because it could possibly lead to a purchase or repeat purchase.

Overall, sex in advertising has its pros and cons. Sex grabs attention and creates positive associations with a brand, but it may also draw attention away from a brand and cause consumers to forget the brand it was promoting.

Humor in Advertising

The use of humor in advertising is another popular form of advertising. Humor in advertising may or may not focus on the product, but some experts believe it is important that it should focus on the target audience (Costley, Koslow, and Galloway 2002).

The reason the use of humor in advertising is popular is that it creates strong memory with a brand (Moriarty p. 111). Consumers tend to remember humor, which will allow them to remember the brand as well. However, if the humor is too strong, it will overpower the brand name or product making it more difficult for consumers to remember them.

Humor can have several different effects in advertising. Many studies have shown that humor is an effective way to attract attention. Humor that focuses on the product in the ad tends to be more effective than humor that does not focus on the product (Weinberger and Gulas 2001).

On the other hand, there are mixed results showing that humor may or may not help people comprehend an advertisement. This may be due to the different measures of

comprehension used in the various studies, the various forms of humor used in each of the studies, and/or the product being promoted in the ad (Weinberger and Gulas 2001).

Humor could also possibly be used for persuasion. However, there are mixed results on this topic as well. Some studies show that humor has a positive effect on persuasion; some studies show a neutral effect; a few other studies show that humor has a negative effect on persuasion. Ultimately, Weinberger and Gulas determined that humor does positively effect persuasion, but no more than a non-humorous advertisement (Weinberger and Gulas 2001).

One of the other effects humor can have an effect on is the likeability of the source of the ad. For the most part, studies have shown that humor in advertisements increases the likeability of the product or brand in the advertisement (Weinberger and Gulas 2001).

Humor in advertising, for the most part, has a positive effect. It attracts attention, can create a strong brand memory, can be persuasive, and increases the likeability of the source of the advertisement.

Emotion in Advertising

Emotion is another form of advertising used in today's ads. There are many different emotions that can be focused on including the sense of belonging (i.e. family, friends, etc.), feeling unique or individualistic, and nostalgia just to name a few.

A recent study performed by Robert Heath and Pam Hyder took an in-depth look at the effects of emotions in advertising. Heath and Hyder tackled the idea that advertising, especially emotive advertising, is mostly ineffective. Some companies have come to this conclusion after polling consumers on what they believe. Heath and Hyder

point out that what consumers “believe” may not “represent the sum of truth about how advertising works” (Heath and Hyder 2005). They believe emotive advertising affects consumers, even though they may not realize it.

Alan Mitchell suggests that “humans are emotional before we’re rational. We feel before we think. Then we think about what we feel” (Mitchell 2005). He compares two different theories concerning emotion in advertising. First, he summarizes the views of Robert Heath, mentioned above. Heath believes that advertising affects consumers consciously, but, more importantly, subconsciously as well. The advertisement “is processed emotionally rather than rationally and remains there to influence our decisions later” (Mitchell 2005).

Mitchell then goes on to compare Heath’s views to Erik Du Plessis’s views. Du Plessis believes that emotion in advertising “draw[s] people in emotionally so that they pay attention” (Mitchell 2005). This contradicts the traditional belief that ads grab consumers’ attention, which then causes them to develop an emotion.

Emotion in advertising can also have a positive effect. Both views, Heath’s and Du Plessis’s, suggest that emotion in advertising creates positive effects. Either consumers do not consciously realize emotion in advertising is driving their purchase decisions, even though it is, or emotion in advertising creates attention by drawing consumers in emotionally.

FOCUS GROUPS

For my primary research, I conducted two focus groups. The first focus group consisted of five people total, three males and two females, all ranging from the ages of 19 to 24. Each of the participants in this group attended Ball State University, and their majors included history, graphic arts management, marketing, and accounting.

In the first focus group, four out of five of the participants said gas was one of the most important features of a car. When I asked them what methods they would be open to for better gas mileage, most seemed hesitant on alternative fuels such as battery-powered cars. One stated, "I think the technology is too new to want to buy something like that."

A couple of respondents also mentioned unique design and a good audio system as other important features. One group member even mentioned that the audio system should include satellite radio ability.

Another feature members liked included four-wheel drive. With the winter months in Indiana, drivers need a car that can get around in all types of weather. One member said, "If I had a [long] commute to work, I'd definitely look for something [with] four-wheel drive."

Several of the members also mentioned wanting a car that was curvy and streamlined. They seemed to dislike boxy-style cars, especially the Scion xB. The PT Cruiser also ranked unfavorably with most of the group members.

The second group included four participants, one male and three females, with ages ranging from 18 to 22. On this occasion, three participants attended Ball State—a

marketing major, a nursing major, and a special-education major—and the other participant was an electrician's apprentice.

The female members in the second focus group agreed that gas mileage was one of the most important factors on today's cars. However, the male in this group wanted performance before anything else in a car. Another feature focus group members seemed to be interested in was four-wheel drive, especially for winter months.

Members in the second group also mentioned that new and exciting colors helped draw their attention to a car. One group member said, "Sometimes you get sick of seeing the same colors."

Some interesting information discovered among the participants was that three out of four of the males were interested in power and performance. As for women, four out of five of the women mentioned they liked SUVs for different reasons. Most of the females liked SUVs because they provide four-wheel drive, which allows it to get around easier in the snow. Some females liked the fact that SUVs allow drivers to sit up higher than in a car.

Almost all of the participants said that gas mileage was a major concern, presumably due to rising gas prices. However, gas mileage does not go along with power nor larger vehicles such as SUVs. Usually the more power a car has, the worse the car's gas mileage. SUVs also get bad gas mileage since they are bigger and weigh more than other vehicles.

FEEDBACK ON THE ADVERTISEMENTS

After the advertisements were created, Dr. Baird agreed to show them in two of his marketing classes. There were a total of 74 students (42 males and 32 females) who viewed the ads and took a short survey. The survey was presented to the class by PowerPoint presentation, which was conducted by Dr. Baird and myself. See Appendix B for the survey questions.

Analysis of the Results

Emotional Advertisement – “Drive to your own beat...”

(See Appendix A.1)

This advertisement successfully achieved its goal with 61.9% of males and 75.0% of females indicating the advertisement made them feel individualistic. The advertisement also attracts attention with 64.3% males and 59.4% of females saying it would catch their attention in a magazine. However, only 19.0% of males and 31.3% of females say they want to learn more about this vehicle after viewing this advertisement.

In order to solve the problem of enticing people to learn more about the vehicle, I believe adding something about the vehicle the target audience may be interested in, such as mentioning something about the sound system of the car since this would also compliment the ad, would help.

Sexy Advertisement – “Mojo on the GO...”

(See Appendix A.2)

This advertisement achieved its goal of appearing sexy with 81.0% of males and 78.1% of women believing it was sexy. This ad attracts less attention than the emotional ad with only 54.8% of males and 50.0% of females admitting it would attract their

attention in a magazine. This ad also performs poorly when it comes to viewers wanting to learn more about the vehicle. Only 16.7% of males and 15.6% of females say they would like to learn more about the vehicle after viewing this ad.

Once again, the major problem with this ad is convincing the target audience to learn more about this vehicle. I still believe adding more information about the car in the ad would help with this problem. For this ad, I would suggest mentioning the car's engine performance.

Humor Advertisement – “Gas Problems?”

(See Appendix A.3)

Even though this advertisement rated higher than the other ads in the humor category, with 45.2% of males and 37.5% of females believing it was humorous, it wasn't the highest ranked category. Many more viewers believed the ad made them feel individualistic, with 69.0% of males and 71.9% of females agreeing to this statement. This advertisement attracted the attention of 64.3% of males and 65.6% of females, the most of all the ads. On top of that, this ad made the majority of the viewers, 61.9% males and 50.0% of females, want to learn more about this vehicle.

Although this data sounds promising, it may be slightly biased. This ad was the only ad that had information about the car. In this ad, the car boasted good gas mileage, which is a concern for most people due to fluctuating gas prices. However, this also supports my belief that adding information about the vehicle that the target audience is interested in would increase the number of individuals wanting to learn more about the vehicle.

Most Effective and Least Effective

In order to discover any significant differences between males and females in these categories, the chi-square test was used on the test results (See Table 1). According to the test results, both males and females felt the humor ad was the most effective. However, there is a significant difference when it comes to the least effective advertisement. The majority of men felt that the emotion advertisement was the least effective, while the majority of women were equally split between the sexy and emotional ads.

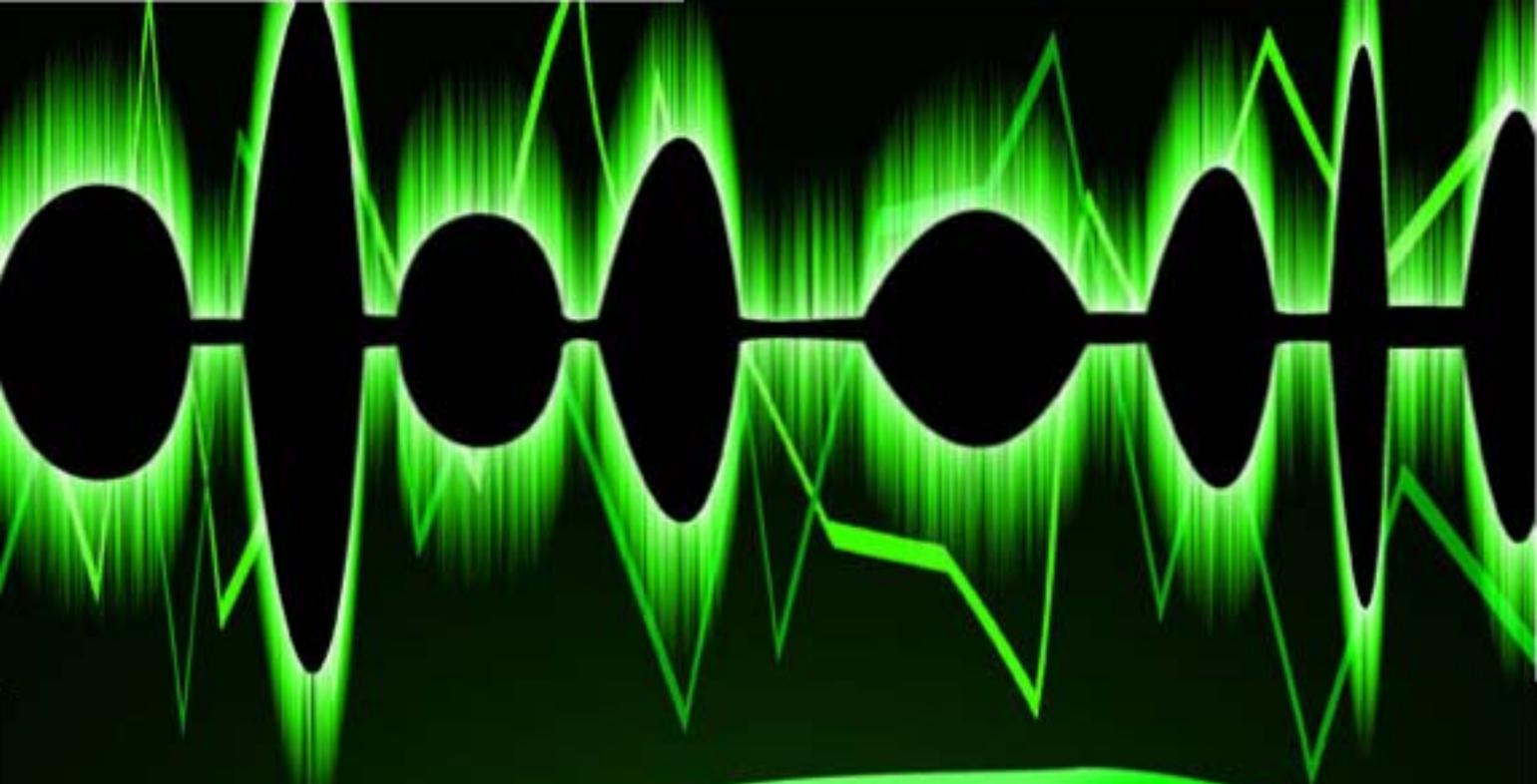
Table 1

	Most Effective					
	M	F		M	F	
Emotion	7	8	15	27	13	40
Sex	14	5	19	13	13	26
Humor	21	19	40	2	6	8
	42	32	74	42	32	74
	M	F		M	F	
Emotion	8.514	6.486		22.703	17.297	
Sex	10.784	8.216		14.757	11.243	
Humor	22.703	17.297		4.541	3.459	
Chi-square	0.208					

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the results from the focus groups, I believe the advertisements achieved their goals. The emotional advertisement made the majority of the target audience feel individualistic. The sexy advertisement appealed to the majority of the target audience. And even though the humor advertisement was only humorous to less than half the class, it did attract the most attention out of all the advertisements.

The project proved to be a learning experience every step of the way. By doing it, I have developed my skills in my major, marketing, and my minor, digital publishing, which was the ultimate purpose of doing this project.



*D*rive to your own beat...

Get in. 

Mojo on the GO ...



Get in.



Gas Problems?



We have
one
thing to say...

45 mpg.

Get in.



QUESTIONS PRESENTED TO DR. BAIRD'S MARKETING CLASSES

The survey asked the following five questions for each of the ads:

1. Does this ad convey the feeling of being unique or individualistic?
2. Does this ad look or seem sexy?
3. Is this ad funny or humorous?
4. Would this ad catch your attention in a magazine?
5. Do you want to learn more about this vehicle after seeing the ad?

After viewing all three ads, the students were asked which of the ads they thought were the most and least effective.

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