

ads--behind the scenes

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An important concept to understand before going into the nitty gritty details of television advertising is that a network's "product" is not actually the shows, but the viewers: networks "sell" viewers to advertisers.

Advertising agencies help businesses put together a marketing strategy. These strategies range in sophistication from simple to complex (a series of different commercials with multiple target audiences).

"Most advertisers target the group between the ages of 18 and 49"

As part of the strategy, they decide what demographic group the commercial will be geared toward. These groups are determined by the advertisers and not the network. Generally though, age groups can be divided in the following ways:

- 18-34
- 18-49
- 35-54
- 55+

Most advertisers target the group between the ages of 18 and 49. They feel that these people are less set in their ways than older folks and are thus more likely to switch to different products and services.

Related article: [the ratings game](#)

In addition to ratings and demographics, advertisers pick commercial spots based on psycho-graphics. For example, if a network decides to air a mother's day special, advertisers whose target audience is mothers might decide to air commercials during that program. Although the program's ratings might not be as high, advertisers are assured that the demographic composition of the audience is closer to what they want.

Which advertisers are targeting you? Click on your favorite show to find out.

- the Late Show with David Letterman
- the Jerry Springer Show
- Friends

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As far as purchasing goes, advertisers buy commercial positions on a cost per (ratings) point (CPP) or cost per thousand (CPT) basis. Basically, that means that advertisers pay either by the percentage of the total audience tuned in to a particular program, or by the number of people, expressed in thousands, tuned in to the show.

Networks sometimes cancel shows mid-season due to horrible ratings. Rather than repaying advertisers in cash, they agree to run extra commercials during other programs to make up the difference in ratings (remember...the advertisers bought based on a ratings guarantee). These are called "makegoods." If a show does poorly but is not cancelled, the networks are still obligated to make up the ratings differences in extra commercial spots for advertisers.

At the same time, sponsors can pull advertisements. In the event of an airplane crash for example, all ads for airline companies are pulled. Most of the time though, ads are pulled because the sponsor just doesn't have enough money. In that case, networks make up some of the money by increasing the cost of commercials that have already aired.

sources:

- INTERVIEW: Chris Pelletier, KITV Sales

Courtland Bovee and William Arens. Contemporary Advertising.

image is everything

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brand parity means that two competing brands have a product that is very similar, if not the

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same. In order to get around this, advertisers need to sell more than the product; they need to sell an image. By doing this, advertisers get people to buy not only their product, but also the lifestyle that it represents.

**"All people need to do to buy an identity is to buy the product."
Carol Moog, Are they Selling her Lips?**

**RELATED LINK:
AdAge critique of Sprite's Image is Nothing campaign.**

The recent **gap** advertisements illustrate this concept very well. Check out the latest khakis ads which, according to Gap, "reinvent khakis with action and attitude." The "Khakis Swing" spot was featured as one of Adweek's best spots of April '98. The publication said about the spot, "the energy is electric and it's hard not to watch the dancers swing to the music...Care to dance?" By featuring a bunch of young, good looking, energetic hipsters, Gap is associating their khakis with energy and trendiness. Essentially, Gap is saying "buy khakis and **you'll** swing too."

Pepsi uses a similar tactic with its

generation next campaign. The campaign is an updated version of the **Pepsi Generation** campaign, "one of the most high-powered and effective advertising campaigns in recent television history," (Moog. 15). It targets members of the post-baby boom generation. The ads for Pepsi's pop culture contest feature trendy young party goers clad in vinyl and leopard print clothing dancing and playing pool. Other ads in the generation next campaign feature celebrities like the Spice Girls. The loud, hip, pleasure-seeking attitude conveyed by the ads tells viewers that by drinking Pepsi, they too can be young and have fun.

sources:

- Leslie Savan. The Sponsored Life.
- Carol Moog, PhD. Are they Selling Her Lips? Advertising and Identity.

- Courtland Bovee and William Arens. Contemporary Advertising.
- Advertising Age

techniques

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Being an adman isn't easy. Advertisers need to capture--and keep--an audience's attention, while successfully delivering a message in 30 seconds or less. (15 second ads are common, and Master Lock just released a 1 second ad.)

"Distraction increases the effectiveness of a weak message."

In addition, a good ad must compete with other flashy ads on television and, most importantly, get the viewer to remember that product being advertised (studies show that most viewers cannot recall the product being promoted in the most recent ad they saw, even when the ad aired within the last 5 minutes).

Here's how it's done:

classical music

Classical music lends, well, class to products. It's used frequently in commercials for expensive cars, perfume and fine wine.

Advertising techniques part II.

The classical-style music in the black-and-white diamond engagement ring commercial evokes a very strong emotional response even though the music is not "authentic." It's actually a contemporary piece modeled after the music of baroque composers like Antonio Vivaldi. Classical music and opera are also used with contrasting products such as jeans or sneakers.

mtv-style ads

MTV (music television) reaches one of advertisers' most coveted demographic groups, 18 to 34 year olds. As a result, many ads attempt to imitate MTV's trademark style of quick cuts, creative camera angles and eye-catching visuals in order to attract and keep the attention of a younger audience.

distraction

Studies show that "distraction increases the effectiveness of a weak message" (Pratkanis, Aronson. 142) because it decreases a viewer's ability to counter the argument made in the ad. Other techniques used to distract viewers include songs, irrelevant pictures and offbeat characters.

black and white

Advertisers often use black and white to evoke the past, making the product or idea seem classic and timeless. The technique is also used for dramatic effect. Nike commercials, specifically the "if you let me play" ad, often take advantage of this.

sources:

- Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson. Age of Propaganda.
- Courtland L. Bovee and William F. Arens. Contemporary Advertising.

techniques, part II

guilt

"When we feel guilty, we typically pay little attention to the cogency of an argument...Instead, our thoughts and actions are directed to removing the feeling of guilt." (Pratkanis, Aronson. 178.)

"When we feel guilty we typically pay little attention to the cogency of an argument."

Appealing to viewers' guilt is a technique commonly used by advertisers promoting ideas or soliciting donations for a social cause. After successfully making a viewer feel guilty, these ads almost always provide them with a way of getting rid of the guilt, whether it be by removing firearms from their homes, talking to their kids about drugs or foregoing their daily cup of coffee and donating the money to a children's aid fund.

Check out the [Cease Fire deconstruction](#) for a good example of such an ad.

fear

Ads that try to scare viewers into action work in a similar way. Usually, they begin by presenting a situation that viewers find scary or distasteful and then suggest a simple, effective way of preventing such a situation.

The ad successfully played on people's fear of nuclear war and helped get Johnson elected.

Public service announcements are particularly effective at this. Many take advantage of gory visuals in order to scare us into not smoking, not drinking and not doing drugs.

Political advertisements also use this technique. A 1964 spot for candidate Lyndon Johnson showed clips young girl plucking the petals from a daisy interspersed with clips of a mushroom cloud. Although it aired only once, the ad successfully played on people's fears of nuclear war and helped get Johnson elected.

Social groups are often a source of pride and identity.

warm fuzzies

Another selling technique is making us (the viewers) feel good about ourselves, good about humanity and good about the world.

A critically acclaimed commercial for DuPont did just that. The ad featured Bill Demby, a Vietnam veteran who lost both legs in the war and now has prosthetic legs made with DuPont plastic. The ad shows Bill walking up to an inner city basketball court and shooting hoops with guys who at first seem a little hesitant. Bill makes a basket and the DuPont slogan appears: "Better things for better living."

Coca-Cola claimed to unite the world in a 1971 advertisement that featured young people from 30 countries standing on a hilltop singing "I'd like to buy the world a Coke" in their respective languages. In 1990, Coca-Cola did a followup to the hilltop ad, this time featuring the original singers and their families. Both Coke ads make viewers feel that despite our differences, we can all get along thanks to Coca-Cola.

us vs. them

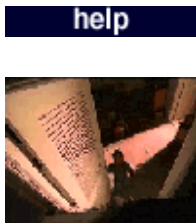
Grouping people is another tactic used by advertisers. Social groups are often a source of pride and identity. By putting down another group or flattering the targeted group, advertisers can get people to buy products that help define them as being, for example, a yuppie or a member of generation x.

sources:

- Leslie Savan. The Sponsored Life.
- Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson. Age of Propaganda.

- Courtland L. Bovee and William F. Arens. Contemporary Advertising.
- Carol Moog. Are They Selling Her Lips?

deconstruction: "Closet"



The PSA (Public Service Announcement) to the left was produced by an advertising agency in New York for Cease Fire. The organization's mission is to educate the public about the dangers of firearms and promote handgun free homes and families.

"Closet" movie (2.8 megs)

"Closet" appears here with permission of Cease Fire.

The plot of the PSA is as follows:

A child opens a closet door and looks at the top shelf. He drags a chair to the front of the closet and stacks books and boxes on the seat. He climbs up and reaches for a gun on the top shelf.

MICHAEL DOUGLAS (voice over):

If you think your kids aren't old enough to find your handgun, think again.

The child turns the gun around, pointing it at his face. We hear a SHOT and we see a graphic with the following statistic: "10 children are killed by a handgun every day." The Cease Fire logo and web page address appear.

Here's what Cease Fire said about the PSA:

"As with the issues of smoking and drunk driving, the issue of firearms and children

needs to 'wake up' the consumer -- hopefully parents -- to the dangers handguns in the home pose to children. Our hope is that they will then take action to remove firearms from their own homes...We believed that it was necessary to produce a very direct and compelling set of PSAs which would deliver a more direct impact to the viewer."

"Closet" is effective for a number of reasons.

The childlike **music** contrasts sharply with the seriousness of issue, thus highlighting its importance. It also emphasizes the fact that the victim of the accidental shooting is a child. When the music begins, it's tinkly and rather stark. As the plot progresses however, the strings and voices are added. This creates a sense of foreboding and effectively leads up to the gunshot sound effect.

The dramatic **lighting** also serves to set the tone of the piece. The room is dark, except for a sliver of light coming from the open door. The closet is in darkness also and when the child reaches for the gun, we can barely see it.

"We used different types of lighting and music in these PSAs to emphasize their dramatic subject matter, but also to signify that so many times those tragedies occur in very ordinary, everyday settings."

Because the target audience of the piece is parents, appealing to their **guilt** is an especially effective technique. The child's death is a direct result of the parent owning a gun. In order to rid themselves of this feeling, parents must "take action to remove firearms

from their homes," as CeaseFire hopes they will.

sources:

- EMAIL INTERVIEW: Elizabeth Schmidt. Executive Director, Cease Fire.
- Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson. Age of Propaganda.

lights, camera, action!

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**A can of
Splash!**

splash! is a new kind of soda with a universal appeal. Use our video and sound clips to make an ad of your own. There are six different ads you could come up with, so feel free to experiment with the different ad elements.

The first step is to decide what kind of visuals you want in the ad.

the video track

- Lazy Sunday -- Sepia**
Calm, peaceful footage, slow dissolves. In brown tones.
- Lazy Sunday -- Color**
Same as above, but in color.
- GenerationX/MTV**
Quick cuts, creative shots, lots of movement. In color.

continue

If you don't want to create an ad, you can skip directly to a behind-the-scenes look at the two

ads we created to promote Splash!

- "No Time Like Now"
 - "Splash into Life"
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