



Chapter 17

Messages, content and creative approaches

The message an organisation conveys through its marketing communications is critical. This means considering what organisations say and how they say it. However, in an age of interaction, individual consumers can also create and share content with others. In both cases, ensuring that the right balance of information and emotions is achieved and that the presentation of the message is appropriate for the target audience represents a critical part of the creative process for agencies, clients and individuals.

Aims and learning objectives

The aim of this chapter is to consider some of the ways in which advertising and promotional messages can be created by focusing on some of the principal aspects of message construction, presentation and user-generated-content.

The learning objectives of this chapter are to:

1. show how messages can be constructed to account for the context in which they are to be received;
2. examine the importance and characteristics of using source credibility;
3. explore the advantages and disadvantages of using spokespersons in message presentation;
4. discuss the impact of user-generated-content;
5. examine ideas concerning message framing;
6. consider how advertising messages might be best presented;
7. examine the use of emotions and feelings in advertising messages;
8. indicate how informational and transformational motives can be used as tactical tools in an advertising plan.

For an applied interpretation see Poonam V. Kumar and Prasad Narasimhan's MiniCase entitled *The Apache motorcycle advertising campaign in India* at the end of this chapter.

Introduction

Whether advertising converts people into becoming brand-loyal customers or acts as a defensive shield to reassure current buyers, and whether central or peripheral cues are required, there still remains the decision about the nature and form of the message to be conveyed: the creative strategy. In practice, the generation of suitable messages is derived from the creative brief. For the sake of discussion and analysis, four elements will be considered. First, considerable attention is given to the source of a message and issues relating to source credibility. This is followed by a consideration of the *balance*, *structure* and *presentation* of the message itself to the target audience.

Message source

Messages are perceived in many different ways and are influenced by a variety of factors. However, a critical determinant concerns the credibility that is attributed to the source of the message itself. Kelman (1961) believed that the source of a message has three particular characteristics. These are: the level of perceived credibility as seen in terms of perceived objectivity and expertise; the degree to which the source is regarded as attractive and message recipients are motivated to develop a similar association or position; and the degree of power that the source is believed to possess. This is manifest in the ability of the source to reward or punish message receivers. The two former characteristics are evident in various forms of marketing communications, but the latter is directly observable in personal selling situations, and perhaps in the use of sales promotions.

The source of a message has three particular characteristics.

Following this work on source characteristics three key components of source credibility can be distinguished:

- What is the level of perceived expertise (how much relevant knowledge the source is thought to hold)?
- What are the personal motives the source is believed to possess (what is the reason for the source to be involved)?
- What degree of trust can be placed in what the source says or does on behalf of the endorsement?

No matter what the level of expertise, if the level of trust is questionable, credibility will be adversely affected.

Establishing credibility

Credibility can be established in a number of ways. One simple approach is to list or display the key attributes of the organisation or the product and then signal trustworthiness through the use of third-party endorsements and the comments of satisfied users.

A more complex approach is to use referrals, suggestions and association. Trustworthiness and expertise are the two principal elements of source credibility. One way of developing trust is to use spokespersons to speak on behalf of the sponsor of an advertisement and in effect, provide a testimonial for the product in question. Credibility, therefore, can be established by the initiator of the advertisement or by a spokesperson used by the initiator to convey the message.

Credibility can be established by the initiator of the advertisement or by a spokesperson.

Effectively, consumers trade off the validity of claims made by brands against the perceived trustworthiness (and expertise) of the individuals or organisations who deliver the message. The result is that a claim may have reduced impact if either of these two components is doubtful or not capable of verification but, if repeated enough times, will enable audiences to accept that the products are very effective and of sufficiently high performance for them to try.

Credibility established by the initiator

The credibility of the organisation initiating the communication process is important. An organisation should seek to enhance its reputation with its various stakeholders at every opportunity. However, organisational credibility is derived from the image, which in turn is a composite of many perceptions. Past decisions, current strategy and performance indicators, the level of perceived service and the type of performance network members (e.g. high-quality retail outlets) all influence the perception of an organisation and the level of credibility that follows.

One very important factor that influences credibility is branding. Private and family brands in particular allow initiators to develop and launch new products more easily than those who do not have such brand strength. Brand extensions (such as Mars ice-cream) have been launched with the credibility of the product firmly grounded in the strength of the parent brand name (Mars). Consumers recognise the name and make associations that enable them to lower the perceived risk and in doing so provide a platform to try the new product.

The need to establish high levels of credibility also allows organisations to divert advertising spend away from a focus on brands to one that focuses on the organisation. Corporate advertising seeks to adjust organisation image and to build reputation.

ViewPoint 17.1

Max Factor use a source of credibility

Max Factor claims that its products are so good that they are used by the experts in their industry: 'The make-up of make-up artists'. Many of its recent campaigns feature expert make-up artists who work on blockbuster Hollywood movies. However, many of these experts are not known by the general public. The development of 'trustworthiness' therefore relies on the film credential.

As with all use of spokespersons, Max Factor needs to ensure that when using experts their target audiences perceive the messages to be genuinely believable. In this case, Max Factor uses these experts because they are perceived to be objective and independent simply because their job gives them freedom of choice with regard to the products they use.

Potential new customers seeing these advertisements are challenged on the grounds that if the brand is good enough for these experts then it should be good enough for them. If a viewer is already a Max Factor customer, then product experience will contribute to a support argument and these advertising messages are used to reinforce previous brand choice decisions. Either way these Max Factor advertisements are extremely powerful.

Question

To what extent does the use of experts evade focus on product attributes and quality?

Task

Using various magazine ads for fragrances and cosmetics, make a list of the different ways source credibility is established.

Credibility established by a spokesperson

People who deliver the message are often regarded as the source, when in reality they are only the messenger. These people carry the message and represent the true source or initiator of the message (e.g. manufacturer or retailer). Consequently, the testimonial they transmit must be credible. There are four main types of spokesperson: the expert, the celebrity, the chief executive officer and the consumer.

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The expert has been used many times and was particularly popular when television advertising first established itself in the 1950s and 1960s. Experts are quickly recognisable because they either wear white coats and round glasses or dress and act like ‘mad professors’. Through the use of symbolism, stereotypes and identification, these characters (and indeed others) can be established very quickly in the minds of receivers and a frame of reference generated that does not question the authenticity of the message being transmitted by such a person. Experts can also be users of products, for example professional photographers endorsing cameras, secretaries endorsing word processors and professional golfers endorsing golf equipment.

Entertainment and sporting celebrities are being used increasingly, not only to provide credibility for a range of high-involvement (e.g. David Beckham for Vodafone and Linda Barker for DFS) and low-involvement decisions (e.g. Jamie Oliver for Sainsbury’s) but also to grab the attention of people in markets where motivation to decide between competitive products may be low. The celebrity enables the message to stand out among the clutter and noise that typify many markets. It is also hoped that the celebrity and/or the voice-over will become a peripheral cue in the decision-making process: Joanna Lumley for Privilege car insurance, Alan Hansen for Morrison’s and as shown at Exhibit 17.1, Nicole Kidman for Chanel No. 5.



Exhibit 17.1

Nicole Kidman endorsing Chanel No 5
Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives.

Consideration needs to be given to the longer-term relationship between the celebrity and the brand.

There are some potential problems that advertisers need to be aware of when considering the use of celebrities. First, does the celebrity fit the image of the brand and will the celebrity be acceptable to the target audience? Consideration also needs to be given to the longer-term relationship between the celebrity and the brand. Should the lifestyle of the celebrity change, what impact will this change have on the target audience and their attitude towards the brand?

ViewPoint 17.2 Kate Moss: winner or loser?

The sparkling career of superstar model Kate Moss was brought to an abrupt halt in 2005 when pictures of her were published in a national newspaper allegedly showing her taking drugs. This was followed shortly by another newspaper that published other lurid stories about her private life. The impact of the widespread publicity was devastating. First, H&M, at that time Europe's largest clothing chain, cancelled her £500,000 contract to be the brand's 'face'. After initially tolerating the tabloid attack the company decided that because of the close association with a charity dedicated to the prevention of drug abuse, the contract had to be cancelled. Consequently months of work and a £1 million advertising campaign, scheduled to be featured in glossy magazines, were abandoned.



Exhibit 17.2

Supermodel Kate Moss has been used to the face of a number of brands during her career, stretching from the 1990s (left) to the current day (right)
Jim Smeal/Wire Image/Getty Images; Leon Neal/AFP/Getty Images.

Her contracts with the French fashion house Chanel, for whom she had been the face of Coco Mademoiselle perfume for four years, Rimmel and Burberry were all terminated.

However, her career was resurrected in 2006 when she first secured a lucrative contract to front a new campaign as the 'face' of Calvin Klein. This was followed by the announcement that she was to work with Topshop, not as a model and not as a conventional endorser. Her role was to be the designer for a new collection to be sold in all 309 branches of the High Street chain. This represented a significant shift for the superstar, from brand endorser to brand architect.

When the first collections went on sale there was a frenzy of activity. Some shoppers queued for eight hours to get first sight of the brand, the media gave the brand a mass of free publicity as they reported the opening event and Topshop themselves benefited through positive communications and sales and profits even though they had to limit individuals to buying just five items. This was to prevent exploitation of the Moss brand through sales on eBay.

Topshop appear to have struck gold with Kate Moss, and Moss herself has done nicely. As Armstrong (2006) commented, her earnings have been rumoured to have quadrupled since the allegations in 2005.

Sources: Various including Alleyne (2005), Anon. (2006), Armstrong (2006) and Rushton (2007).

Question

Consider the view that the use of celebrities who have a controversial and high media profile is potentially damaging for a brand in the long run.

Task

Think of three brands and find out who is used to endorse them.

The second problem concerns the impact that the celebrity makes relative to the brand. There is a danger that those receiving the message remember the celebrity but not the brand that is the focus of the advertising spend. The *celebrity* becomes the hero, rather than the product being advertised. Loveless (2007) reports on the financial services company First Plus who used celebrity mathematician Carol Vorderman to endorse their loan products. Some saw a discontinuity between this celebrity's values, and the possibility that the company she was endorsing might make some people worse off was highlighted. In these situations the endorser can overshadow the product to the extent that consumers might have trouble recalling the brand.

Some CEOs have relished the chance to sell their own products and there have been some notable business people who have 'fronted' their organisation. Richard Branson used to promote Virgin Financial products and Victor Kiam 'so liked the razor that he bought the company' (Remington). Here, the CEO openly promotes his company. This form of testimonial is popular when the image of the CEO is positive and the photogenic and on-screen characteristics provide for enhanced credibility. Until recently, Bernard Matthews has established authenticity and trustworthiness with his personal promotion of Norfolk Turkey Roasts.

When using consumers as the spokesperson to endorse products, the audience is being asked to identify with a 'typical consumer'. The identification of similar lifestyles, interests and opinions allows for better reception and understanding of the message. Consumers are often depicted testing similar products, such as margarine and butter. The Pepsi Challenge required consumers to select Pepsi from Coca-Cola through blind taste tests. By showing someone using the product, someone who is similar to the receiver, the source is perceived as credible and the potential for successful persuasion is considerably enhanced.

Sleeper effects

When the receiver's position is favourable to the message, a moderate level of credibility may be more appropriate.

The assumption so far has been that high credibility enhances the probability of persuasion and successful communication. This is true when the receiver's initial position is opposite to that contained in the message. When the receiver's position is favourable to the message, a moderate level of credibility may be more appropriate.

Whether source credibility is high, medium or low is of little consequence, according to some researchers (Hannah and Sternthal, 1984). The impact of the source is believed to dissipate after approximately six weeks and only the content of the message is thought to dominate the receiver's attention. This sleeper effect (Hovland *et al.*, 1949) has not been proved empirically, but the implication is that the persuasiveness of a message can increase over time. Furthermore, advertisers using highly credible sources need to repeat the message on a regular basis, in order that the required level of effectiveness and persuasion be maintained (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1991).

User-generated-content (UGC)

Before considering ways in which messages are designed, framed and presented for target audiences it is important to consider that today, many messages are developed and communicated by individuals. These are used to communicate with organisations of all types and sizes but they are also shared with peers, family, friends and others in communities such as social networks and specialist interest online communities (e.g. reunion and family history sites). What is interesting is that although people understand the rules and norms associated with communicating across peer groups and social networks, organisations have yet to be entirely successful. To date, they do not appear to be able to communicate as freely or with as much credibility and authority as individuals regularly do within these new environments. One of the reasons for this is the democratisation of the media and the language codes that have emerged. A simple example is SMS texting. Used by millions everyday to great effect, mobile communications and text messaging have yet to become as commercially prominent.

In December 2006, *Time* named 'you' (the consumer) as its Person of the Year and in January 2007 *Advertising Age* followed suit when it named 'the consumer' as its Advertising Agency of the Year. Simms (2007a) reports that both awards were made on the basis that consumers were regarded as responsible for making and generating more engaging brand communications than any one agency, during the previous year. It has to be said that most of this content was online but this is changing as the offline world becomes a target for content generation. See Viewpoint 17.3 for an example of how brands are trying to generate UGC offline.

ViewPoint 17.3 YouTo content

Deliberately inviting customers to create content is now quite commonplace. For example, Cadbury have run an offline campaign 'how do you eat yours?' about their creme eggs, for a few years. However, in 2007 it went online as they invited customers to send in videos along the same theme and to post them on its 'Gootube' site.

Doritos, Chevrolet and the NFL offered consumers prizes in order to attract ads for use at the 2007 SuperBowl. Those sent in to Doritos highlighted some very varied uses of the brand. These ranged from a

middle-aged man who dances for 30 seconds clutching three bags of Doritos, to the a video of a young man who films his naked girlfriend writhing in a bath of crisps.

Unilever (US) held a competition that invited women to create their own 30-second ad to launch the Dove Cream Oil Body Wash Collection. The best ad was said to capture the 'essence of the products and its philosophy'. More than 700 entries were received and the winning entry was premiered in an ad break during the Oscars.

Source: Simms (2007a).

Question

Are there areas or subjects where user-generated-content might not be helpful?

Task

If some of your friends offered to create online content for you, which three topics would you request?

UGC can appear in many ways and in a variety of formats. The original format for UGC can be seen in letters to newspapers. The letter becomes part of the content of the newspaper and sits alongside the editorial and journalist written copy. More recently however, digitisation has enabled faster, more immediate posting opportunities for UGC.

Email enables viewers to interact with television and radio programmes, with presenters encouraging audiences to write and tell them 'what you think' about a topic. Discussion boards and online forums can only work through consumer participation and user-generated-content. One of the common and developing forms of UGC is blogging. Here individuals, sometimes in the name of organisations but more often as independent consumers, post information about topics of personal interest. Very often these people develop opinion leader status and are used by organisations to feed information about the launch of new brands, to educate opinion followers or to reposition brands.

Email enables viewers to interact with television and radio programmes.

Social networks thrive on the shared views, opinions and beliefs, often brand-related, of networked friends. YouTube and Flickr provide opportunities for consumers to share video and photos respectively, with all material posted by users. Users post their content and respond to the work of others, often by rating the quality or entertainment value of content posted by others.

Muñiz and Schau (2007) refer to what they call vigilante marketing. In these circumstances, consumers create self-generated advertising content to promote brands with which they have a strong affiliation. They refer to a brand community site based on the Apple Newton. This was an early PDA launched in 1993 and discontinued by Apple in 1998 as Palm Pilot undercut on price and exceeded the Newton on quality, size and overall value. Many users at the time blamed Apple for poor communications and not explaining the Newton accurately enough to attract more customers. Roughly 3–4,000 Newton users still participate in online forums. They create what the authors label as brand artefacts, some of which closely resemble ads, all for a brand that ceased production nearly a decade earlier. Their actions serve to maintain a brand that has a special meaning for them.

Marketers should use the increasing occurrence of UGC as an opportunity to listen to and observe consumers and to find out what meanings they attribute to a brand. Some companies invite consumers to offer content (ads). According to Bosman (2006) cited by Muñiz and Schau (2007), Mastercard created a web site called www.priceless.com and invited customers to submit copy for two television ads they were running in the Priceless campaign.

Message framing

Message framing works on the hedonic principles of our motivation to seek happiness and to avoid pain.

The vast majority of messages are generated professionally, not by users, and there various strategies and tactics that are used to develop effective messages. One of these is message framing, which has long been used as a strategy to present brand messages. However, as Tsai (2007) indicates it is controversial and empirically unproven. Message framing works on the hedonic principles of our motivation to seek happiness and to avoid pain. So messages can be framed to either focus a recipient's attention to positive outcomes (happiness) or take them away from the possible negative outcomes (pain). For example, a positively framed message might be a yoghurt that is presented as 'contains real fruit' or a car as 'a stylish design'. Conversely messages could be presented as 'contains only 5 per cent fat' and 'low carbon emissions', these are regarded as negatively framed.

Many practitioners work on the basis that positive are better than negative messages whereas others believe negative framing promotes deeper thinking and consideration. However, there is little empirical evidence to support any of these views. Therefore, in an attempt to understand when it is better to use positive or negative framing Tsai argues that it is necessary to develop a holistic understanding of the target audience. This involves considering three factors: self-construal; consumer involvement; and product knowledge. These are explained at Table 17.1.

Tsai believes that these three factors moderate an individual's response when they are exposed to positively or negatively framed brand messages. In turn these influence the three main dimensions of a brand's communication. These are generally accepted by researchers such as Mackenzie and Lutz (1989) and Lafferty *et al.* (2002) to be attitude to the ad, attitude to the brand and purchase intention (see Chapter 8 for a consideration of these dimensions). Tsai develops a conceptual model to demonstrate this through which he argues brand communication persuasiveness is moderated by these three factors.

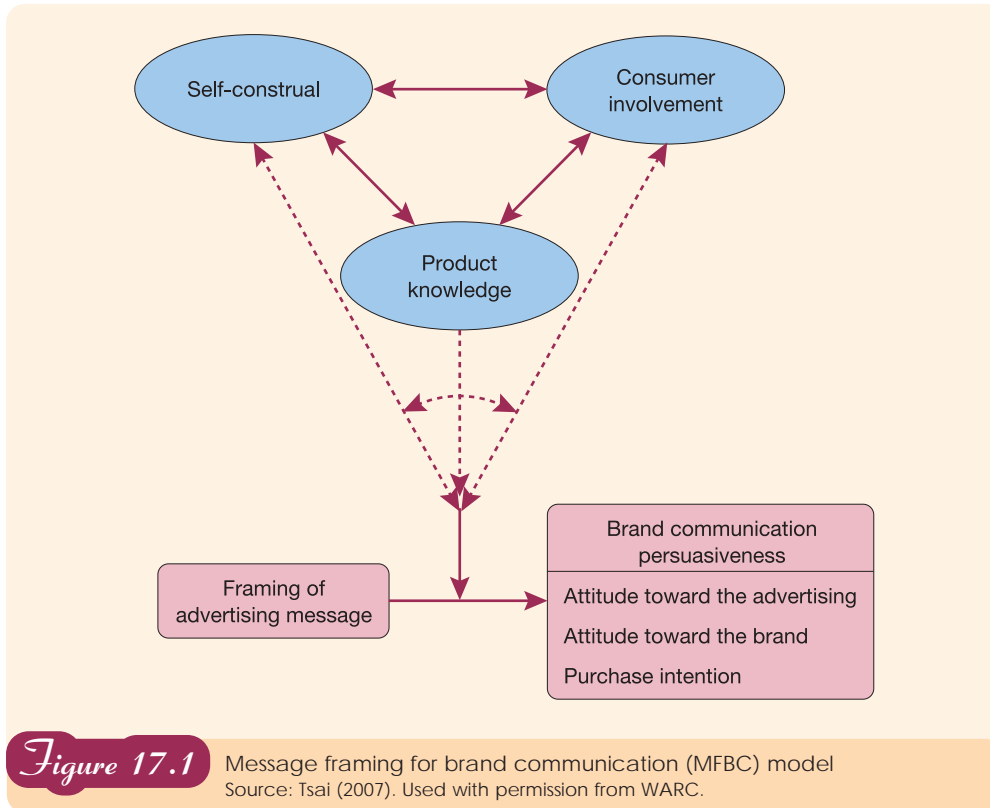
His research concludes that positive message framing should be used when the following exists:

Independent self-construal × low consumer involvement × low product knowledge

Table 17.1 Factors associated with message framing

| Factor | | Explanation |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--|
| Self construal | Independent | Individuals (the self) seek to distinguish themselves from others. These individuals respond best to positive framing. |
| | Interdependent | Individuals (the self) try not to distinguish themselves from others. These individuals respond best to negative framing. |
| Consumer involvement | High involvement | Refers to the extent to which personal relevance and perceived risk influences decision-making within a product category. When high, negative framing is preferred; when low, positive framing is preferred. |
| | Low involvement | |
| Product knowledge | High | Product knowledge consists of two elements: behavioural (usage) experience and mental (search, exposure and information). Message framing is more suitable where product knowledge is low. |
| | Low | |

Source: Based on Tsai (2007).



Negative framing should be used when:

Interdependent self-construal × high consumer involvement × low product knowledge

While message framing may provide a strategic approach to the way in which messages should be presented, it is also necessary to consider how the detail of a message should be included in order to maximise effectiveness. Consideration is now given to the balance of information and emotion in a message, the structure in terms of how an argument should be presented and the actual appeal, whether it be based on information or emotion.

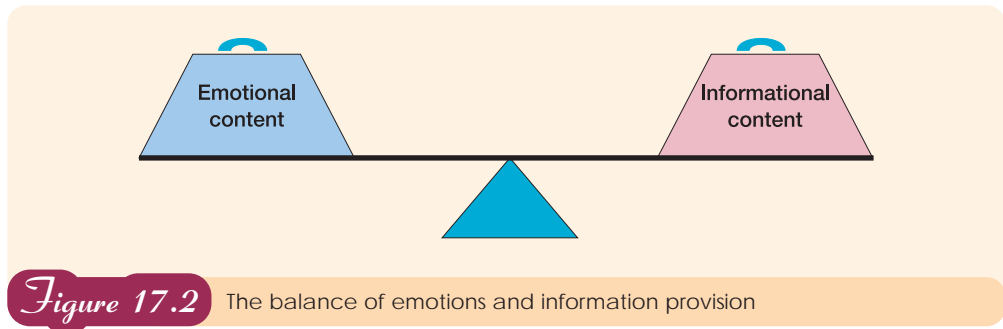
Message balance

It is evident from previous discussions that the effectiveness of any single message is dependent on a variety of issues. From a receiver's perspective, two elements appear to be significant: first, the amount and quality of the information that is communicated and, second, the overall judgement that each individual makes about the way a message is communicated.

This suggests that the style of a message should reflect a balance between the need for information and the need for pleasure or enjoyment in consuming the message. Figure 17.2 describes the two main forms of appeal. Messages can be product-oriented and rational or customer-oriented and based on feelings and emotions.

It is clear that when dealing with high-involvement decisions, where persuasion occurs through a central processing route, the emphasis of the message should be on the information content, in

Where persuasion occurs through a central processing route, the emphasis of the message should be on the information content.



particular the key attributes and the associated benefits. This style is often factual and product-oriented. If the product evokes low-involvement decision-making, then the message should concentrate on the images that are created within the mind of the message recipient. This style seeks to elicit an emotional response from receivers. Obviously, there are many situations where both rational and emotional messages are needed by buyers in order to make purchasing decisions.

ViewPoint 17.4 Hair-raising messages

Salon brands of haircare products, such as Toni & Guy, Paul Mitchell, Fudge and Tigi, are distributed through hair salons and use the credibility that consumers bestow upon their 'regular' hairdressers as an important means to judge salon brands. Consumers delegate decision responsibilities to their professional.

Decisions about salon brands are made as a result of interpreting both rational and emotional messages. Rational messages are driven by the superior quality of the product, the strength of the relationship held with their hairdresser and the diagnosis that hairdressers provide. Emotional messages are derived from the packaging, the quality of the relationship with the hairdresser and the imagery associated with the relative exclusivity that salon brands afford. Younger buyers perceive increased 'shower cred' and older customers perceive indulgence and a treat factor.

Question

To what extent is a visit to a hair salon a low or high involvement decision? Why?

Task

Select three salon brands, consider their promotional materials (e.g. ads, packaging, salon design) and determine their message balance.

Message structure

An important part of any message strategy is a consideration of the best way of communicating the key points or core message. This needs to be accomplished carefully to avoid encouraging objections and opposing points of view. The following are regarded as some of the important structural features that can shape the pattern of a message.

Conclusion drawing

Should the message draw a firm conclusion for the audience or should people be allowed to draw their own conclusions from the content? Explicit conclusions are more easily understood

and stand a better chance of being effective (Kardes, 1988). However, it is the nature of the issue, the particular situation and the composition of the target audience that influence the effectiveness of conclusion drawing (Hovland and Mandell, 1952). Whether or not a conclusion should be drawn for the receiver depends upon the following:

1. *The complexity of the issue*

Healthcare products, central heating systems and personal finance services, for example, can be complex, and for some members of the target audience their cognitive ability, experience and motivation may not be sufficient for them to draw their own conclusions. The complexity of the product requires that messages must draw conclusions for them. It should also be remembered that even highly informed and motivated audiences may require assistance if the product or issue is relatively new.

The complexity of the product requires that messages must draw conclusions for them.

2. *The level of education possessed by the receiver*

Better-educated audiences prefer to draw their own conclusions, whereas less-well-educated audiences may need the conclusion drawn for them because they may not be able to make the inference from the message.

3. *Whether immediate action is required*

If urgent action is required by the receiver, then a conclusion should be drawn very clearly. Political parties can be observed to use this strategy immediately before an election.

4. *The level of involvement*

High involvement usually means that receivers prefer to make up their own minds and may reject or resent any attempt to have the conclusion drawn for them (Arora, 1985).

ViewPoint 17.5

A Sure conclusion

The deodorant brand Sure used screen icons Steve McQueen, Elvis and James Dean to promote its Crystal for Men range. The message was that this simple antiperspirant product minimises the white marks on clothes and to convey this it used doctored pictures of the celebrities showing white stains on their clothes.

The message drew a conclusion for the audience whose low involvement required a clear one-sided message: white stains are bad, so use this product and you will avoid such problems.

Question

Discuss the view that as people generally process ads in a passive mode, only a one-sided message is necessary to be effective.

Task

Using brands that you like, what conclusions do they draw in the advertising?

One- and two-sided messages

This concerns how the case for an issue is presented. One approach is to present the case for and against an issue – a two-sided message. Alternatively just the case in favour of an issue can be presented – a one-sided message. Research indicates that one-sided messages are more effective when receivers favour the opinion offered in the message and when the receivers are less well-educated.

Two-sided messages, where both the good and the bad points of an issue are presented, are more effective when the receiver's initial opinion is opposite to that presented in the message and when they are well-educated. Credibility is improved by understanding the audience's position and then fashioning the presentation of the message. Faison (1961) found that

Two-sided messages tend to produce more positive perceptions of a source than one-sided messages.

two-sided messages tend to produce more positive perceptions of a source than one-sided messages.

Order of presentation

Further questions regarding the development of message strategy concern the order in which important points are presented. Messages that present the strongest points at the beginning use what is referred to as the *primacy* effect. The decision to place the main points at the beginning depends on whether the audience has a low or high level of involvement. A low level may require an attention-getting message component at the beginning. Similarly, if the target has an opinion opposite to that contained in the message, a weak point may lead to a high level of counter-argument.

A decision to place the strongest points at the end of the message assumes that the *recency* effect will bring about greater levels of persuasion. This is appropriate when the receiver agrees with the position adopted by the source or has a high positive level of involvement.

The order of argument presentation is more relevant in personal selling than in television advertisements.

The order of argument presentation is more relevant in personal selling than in television advertisements. However, as learning through television is largely passive, because involvement is low and interest minimal, the presentation of key selling points at the beginning and at the end of the message will enhance message reception and recall.

Message appeal

The presentation of a message requires that an appeal be made to the target audience. The appeal is important, because unless the execution of the message appeal (the creative) is appropriate to the target audience's perception and expectations, the chances of successful communication are reduced.

There are two main factors associated with the presentation. Is the message to be dominated by the need to transmit product-oriented information or is there a need to transmit a message that appeals predominantly to the emotional senses of the receiver? The main choice of presentation style, therefore, concerns the degree of factual information transmitted in a message against the level of imagery thought necessary to make sufficient impact for the message to command attention and then be processed. There are numerous presentational or executional techniques, but the following are some of the more commonly used appeals.

Information-based appeals

Factual

Sometimes referred to as the 'hard sell', the dominant objective of these appeals is to provide, often detailed, information. This type of appeal is commonly associated with high-involvement decisions where receivers are sufficiently motivated and able to process information. Persuasion, according to the ELM, is undertaken through the central processing route. This means that ads should be rational and contain logically reasoned arguments and information in order that receivers are able to complete their decision-making processes.

Slice of life

As noted earlier, the establishment of credibility is vital if any message is to be accepted and processed. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is to present the message in such a way that the receiver can identify immediately with the scenario being presented. This process of creating similarity is used a great deal in advertising and is referred to as slice-of-life

advertising. For example, many washing powder advertisers use a routine that depicts two ordinary women (assumed to be similar to the target receiver), invariably in a kitchen or garden, discussing the poor results achieved by one of their washing powders. Following the advice of one of the women, the stubborn stains are seen to be overcome by the focus brand.

Creating similarity is used a great deal in advertising and is referred to as slice-of-life advertising.

On successful decoding of this message the overall effect of this appeal is for the receiver to conclude the following: that person is like me; I have had the same problem as that person; they are satisfied using brand X, therefore I, too, will use brand X. This technique is simple, well-liked and successful, despite its sexist overtones. It is also interesting to note that a number of surveys have found that a majority of women feel that advertisers use inappropriate stereotyping to portray female roles, these being predominantly housewife and mother roles.

Demonstration

A similar technique is to present the problem to the audience as a demonstration. The focus brand is depicted as instrumental in the resolution of a problem. Headache remedies, floor cleaners and tyre commercials have traditionally demonstrated the pain, the dirt and the danger respectively, and then shown how the focus brand relieves the pain (Panadol), removes the stubborn dirt (Flash or Cillit Bang) or stops in the wet on a coin (or the edge of a rooftop – Continental tyres). Whether the execution is believable is a function of the credibility and the degree of life-like dialogue or copy that is used.

Comparative advertising

Comparative advertising is a popular means of positioning brands. Messages are based on the comparison of a brand with either a main competitor brand or all competing brands, with the aim of establishing and maintaining superiority (see Exhibit 17.3). The comparison may centre on one or two key attributes and can be a good way of entering new markets. Entrants keen to establish a presence in a market have little to lose by comparing themselves with market leaders. However, market leaders have a great deal to lose and little to gain by comparing themselves with minor competitors (see Viewpoint 17.6).

ViewPoint 17.6 Comparative bunnies

Duracell has established itself as the leading battery manufacturer in many markets, including the United Kingdom. Its advertising messages are information-based and use the strength and longevity of its batteries as the key attribute upon which it wants to be evaluated. Independent tests verify the Duracell attribute claims and prevent any counter-claim by competitors. Its positioning, with regard to ordinary zinc carbon batteries, is emphasised through the use of the strapline 'Duracell . . . lasts longer, much longer'.

One of the interesting aspects of Duracell's approach is its use of pink bunnies to symbolise the attribute. From a consumer perspective, batteries evoke little enthusiasm or engagement, yet the use of the bunnies as peripheral cues (see Chapter 7) enables consumers to connect with the Duracell brand, provides stand-out in the category and enables consumers to remember the key brand messages.

Question

Appraise the view that the use of comparative advertising should be encouraged as it provides consumers with a more balanced view of a brand.

Task

Visit an online comparison site (e.g. Kelkoo) and determine the extent to which the information provided is of practical assistance to consumers.

**Exhibit 17.3**

Duracell using comparative messages.
Duracell 'Mountain' ad image © Duracell 2006. Used with permission.

Emotions- and feelings-based appeals

Appeals based on logic and reason are necessary in particular situations, especially where there is high involvement. However, as products become similar and as consumers become more aware of what is available in the category, so the need to differentiate becomes more important. Increasing numbers of advertisers are using messages that seek to appeal to the target's emotions and feelings, a 'soft sell'. Cars, toothpaste, toilet tissue and mineral water often use emotion-based messages to differentiate their products' position.

There are a number of appeals that can be used to elicit an emotional response from an individual receiver. Of the many techniques available, the main ones that can be observed to be used most are fear, humour, animation, sex, music and fantasy and surrealism.

Fear

Fear is used in one of two ways. The first type demonstrates the negative aspects or physical dangers associated with a particular behaviour or improper product usage. Drink driving, life

assurance and toothpaste advertising typify this form of appeal. For example, Scottish Widows, a financial services brand belonging to Lloyds TSB has used a lady dressed in a black cape to symbolise the 'Widow'. The 'Widow' has become synonymous with the brand – even taking on iconic status – especially as research shows that four out of five people can link the image with the company.

The second approach is the threat of social rejection or disapproval if the brand is not used. This type of fear is used frequently in advertisements for such products as anti-dandruff shampoos and deodorants and is used to support consumers' needs for social acceptance and approval.

Fear appeals need to be constrained, if only to avoid being categorised as outrageous and socially unacceptable. There is a great deal of evidence that fear can facilitate attention and interest in a message and even motivate an individual to take a particular course of action: for example to stop smoking. Fear appeals are persuasive, according to Schiffman and Kanuk (1991), when low to moderate levels of fear are induced. Ray and Wilkie (1970), however, show that should the level of fear rise too much, inhibiting effects may prevent the desired action occurring. This inhibition is caused by the individual choosing to screen out, through perceptive selection, messages that conflict with current behaviour. The outcome may be that individuals deny the existence of a problem, claim there is no proof or say that it will not happen to them.

Fear appeals need to be constrained, if only to avoid being categorised as outrageous and socially unacceptable.

Humour

If receivers are in a positive mood they are more likely to process advertising messages with little cognitive elaboration (Batra and Stayman, 1990). The use of humour as an emotional appeal is attractive because it can attract attention, stimulate interest and foster a positive mood. This can occur because there is less effort involved with peripheral rather than central cognitive processing, and this helps to mood protect. In other words, the positive mood state is more likely to be maintained if cognitive effort is avoided. Both Yellow Pages and 118 118 have used humour to help convey the essence of their brand and to help differentiate it from the competition.

The use of humour as an emotional appeal is attractive because it can attract attention, stimulate interest and foster a positive mood.

Zhang and Zinkhan (2006) found that humour is more effective when there is low rather than high involvement. They also consider whether the media used also influences the influence of humour. For example, television and radio demand less effort to process messages compared with print work. The choice of media used to deliver humorous content can therefore be critical.

It is also argued that humour is effective because argument quality is likely to be high. That is, the level of counter-argument can be substantially reduced. Arguments against the use of humour concern distraction from the focus brand, so that while attention is drawn, the message itself is lost. With the move to global branding and standardisation of advertising messages, humour does not travel well. While the level and type of humour are difficult to gauge in the context of the processing abilities of a domestic target audience, cultural differences seriously impede the transfer of jokes around the world.

Visual humour such as that generated by Catherine Tate, Little Britain and the older lavatorial humour that made Benny Hill so popular, is according to Archer (1994) more universally acceptable than word-based humour. This is partly because word-based humour can get lost in translation, without local references to provide the clues in order to decipher the joke. Humour, therefore, is a potentially powerful yet dangerous form of appeal. Haas (1997) reports that UK advertising executives have significantly higher confidence in the use of humour than their US counterparts, but concludes that 'humour is a vague concept and [. . .] its perception is influenced by many factors' (p. 15). These factors shape the context in which messages are perceived and the humour conveyed.

Animation

Animation techniques have advanced considerably in recent years, with children as the prime target audience. However, animation has been successfully used in many adult-targeted advertisements, such as those by Schweppes, Compaq, Tetley Tea, Direct Line Insurance and British Gas. The main reason for using animation is that potentially boring and low-interest/involvement products can be made visually interesting and provide a means of gaining attention. A further reason for the use of animation is that it is easier to convey complex products in a way that does not patronise the viewer.

Sex

Sexual innuendo and the use of sex as a means of promoting products and services are both common and controversial. Using sex as an appeal in messages is excellent for gaining the attention of buyers. Research shows, however, that it often achieves little else, particularly when the product is unrelated. Therefore, sex appeals normally work well for products such as perfume, clothing and jewellery but provide for poor effectiveness when the product is unrelated, such as cars, photocopiers and furniture. Häagen Dazs premium ice-cream entered the UK market using pleasure as central to the message appeal. This approach was novel to the product class and the direct, natural relationship between the product and the theme contributed to the campaign's success.

Using sex as an appeal in messages is excellent for gaining the attention of buyers.

The use of sex in advertising messages is mainly restricted to getting the attention of the audience and, in some circumstances, sustaining interest. It can be used openly, as in various lingerie, fragrance and perfume advertisements, such as WonderBra and Escape; sensually, as in the Häagen Dazs and Cointreau campaigns; and humorously in the Locketts brand.

Music

Music can provide continuity between a series of advertisements and can also be a good peripheral cue. A jingle, melody or tune, if repeated sufficiently, can become associated with the advertisement. Processing and attitudes towards the advertisement may be directly influenced by the music. Music has the potential to gain attention and assist product differentiation. Braithwaite and Ware (1997) found that music in advertising messages is used primarily either to create a mood or to send a branded message. In addition, music can also be used to signal a lifestyle and so communicate a brand identity through the style of music used.

Processing and attitudes towards the advertisement may be directly influenced by the music.

Many advertisements for cars use music, partly because it is difficult to find a point of differentiation (*Independent*, 18 October 1996), and music is able to draw attention, generate mood and express brand personality (e.g. BMW, Nissan Micra, Peugeot, Renault).

Some luxury and executive cars are advertised using commanding background music to create an aura of power, prestige and affluence, which is combined with strong visual images in order that an association be made between the car and the environment in which it is positioned. There is a contextual juxtaposition between the car and the environment presented. Readers may notice a semblance of classical conditioning, where the music acts as an unconditioned stimulus. Foxall and Goldsmith (1994) suggest that the stimulus elicits the unconditioned emotional responses that may lead to the purchase of the advertised product.

When David Cameron spoke at the Conservative Party conference in October 2006 he walked onto the stage accompanied by the rock music 'All these things I have done' by The Killers. He then proceeded to set out the new values held by the party and to urge them forward with purpose (WNIM, 2007). Music was used contextually, to suggest change and manage expectations.

Fantasy and surrealism

The use of fantasy and surrealism in advertising has grown partly as a result of the increased clutter and legal constraints imposed on some product classes. By using fantasy appeals, associations with certain images and symbols allow the advertiser to focus attention on the product. The receiver can engage in the distraction offered and become involved with the execution of the advertisement. If this is a rewarding experience it may be possible to affect the receiver's attitudes peripherally. Readers may notice that this links to the earlier discussion on 'liking the advertisement'.

By using fantasy appeals, associations with certain images and symbols allow the advertiser to focus attention on the product.

Finally, an interesting contribution to the discussion of message appeals has been made by Lannon (1992). She reports that consumers' expectations of advertisements can be interpreted on the one hand as either literal or stylish and on the other as serious or entertaining, according to the tone of voice. This approach vindicates the view that consumers are active problem-solvers and willing and able to decode increasingly complex messages. They can become involved with the execution of the advertisement and the product attributes. The degree of involvement (she argues implicitly) is a function of the motivation each individual has at any one moment when exposed to a particular message.

Advertisers can challenge individuals by presenting questions and visual stimuli that demand attention and cognitive response. Guinness challenged consumers to decode a series of advertisements that were unlike all previous Guinness advertisements and, indeed, all messages in the product class. The celebrity chosen was dressed completely in black, which contrasted with his blond hair, and he was shown in various time periods, past and future, and environments that receivers did not expect. He was intended to represent the personification of the drink and symbolised the individual nature of the product. Audiences were puzzled by the presentation and many rejected the challenge of interpretation. 'Surfer' and 'Bet on Black' are more recent Guinness campaigns that seek to convey the importance and necessity to wait (for the drink to be poured properly). To accomplish this, it portrays a variety of situations in which patience results in achievement.

When individuals respond positively to a challenge, the advertiser can either provide closure (an answer) or, through surreal appeals, leave the receivers to answer the questions themselves in the context in which they perceive the message. One way of achieving this challenging position is to use an appeal that cognitively disorients the receiver (Parker and Churchill, 1986). If receivers are led to ask the question 'What is going on here?' their involvement in the message is likely to be very high. Benetton consistently raises questions through its advertising. By presenting a series of messages that are socially disorienting, and for many disconcerting, Benetton continually presents a challenge that moves away from involving individuals into an approach where salience and 'standing out' predominates. This high-risk strategy, with a risk of rejection, has prevailed for a number of years.

The surrealist approach does not provide or allow for closure. The conformist approach, by contrast, does require closure in order to avoid any possible counter-arguing and message rejection. Parker and Churchill argue that, by leaving questions unanswered, receivers can become involved in both the product and the execution of the advertisement. Indeed, most advertisements contain a measure of rational and emotional elements. A blend of the two elements is necessary and the right mixture is dependent upon the perceived risk and motivation that the target audience has at any one particular moment.

The message appeal should be a balance of the informative and emotional dimensions. Furthermore, message quality is of paramount importance. Buzzell (1964) reported that, 'Advertising message quality is more important than the level of advertising expenditure' (p. 30).

The message appeal should be a balance of the informative and emotional dimensions.

Adams and Henderson Blair (1992) confirm that the weight of advertising is relatively unimportant, and that the quality of the appeal is the dominant factor. However, the correct

blend of informative and emotional elements in any appeal is paramount for persuasive effectiveness.

Copycat messaging

There are certain occasions where the appeal used by a follower brand can be judged to mimic that of the brand leader. The reasoning for adopting a copycat approach may be that the category has been revolutionised by the brand leader. For example, Magners revitalised the stagnant UK cider market by demonstrating its refreshment property through television and poster ads that showed the drink being poured over ice. Sales boomed to £17m in 2006 with the result that competitors are copycatting the approach. For example, Bulmers now claim their cider brand is 'Born for Ice' and a new brand, Maguires, has entered the market, also based on the over-ice proposition (Bowery, 2007).

Using a similar style of message can be used strategically, to diffuse the potency of the brand leader's marketing communications. Bowery refers to Matalan's use of four models that aped Marks & Spencer's iconic campaign based around Twiggy and three other models. Matalan did not reinforce their approach with a subsequent high-profile campaign but M&S have continued the message strategy to great effect.

Advertising tactics

The main creative elements of a message need to be brought together in order for an advertising plan to have substance. The processes used to develop message appeals need to be open but systematic.

The level of involvement and combination of the think/emotional dimensions that receivers bring to their decision-making processes are the core concepts to be considered when creating an advertising message. Rossiter and Percy (1997) have devised a deductive framework that involves the disaggregation of the emotional (feel) dimension to a greater degree than that proposed by Vaughn (1980) (see Chapter 16 for details). They claim that there are two broad types of motive that drive attitudes towards purchase behaviour. These are informational and transformational motives and are now considered in turn.

Informational motives

Individuals have a need for information to counter negative concerns about a purchase decision. These informational motives (see Table 17.2) are said to be negatively charged feelings. They can become positively charged, or the level of concern can be reduced considerably, by the acquisition of relevant information.

Transformational motives

Promises to enhance or to improve the user of a brand are referred to as transformational motives. These are related to the user's feelings and are capable of transforming a user's emotional state, hence they are positively charged. Three main transformational motives have been distinguished by Rossiter *et al.* (1991) (see Table 17.3). Various emotional states can be

Promises to enhance or to improve the user of a brand are referred to as transformational motives.

associated with each of these motives, and they should be used to portray an emotion that is appropriate to the needs of the target audience.

For example, Cancer Research UK changed the approach it used to communicate with donors. For a while, its campaigns used to

Table 17.2 Informational motives

| Motive | Possible emotional state |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Problem removal | Anger–relief |
| Problem avoidance | Fear–relaxation |
| Incomplete satisfaction | Disappointment–optimism |
| Mixed approach–avoidance | Guilt–peace of mind |
| Normal depletion | Mild annoyance–convenience |

Table 17.3 Transformational motives

| Motive | Possible emotional state |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sensory gratification | Dull–elated |
| Intellectual stimulation | Bored–excited |
| Social approval | Apprehensive–flattered |

convey messages about family loss and in that sense adopted a negative approach. The charity then adopted an ‘All Clear’ campaign. This conveyed messages about people diagnosed with cancer and their improved chances of recovery due to the benefits of the research. For many people this is low-involvement with transformational motives. This means that the use of an emotional-based claim in the message is important. The happy ending, based on people surviving, achieves this while the endline uses a voice-over that requests a donation so that the words ‘all clear’ can be heard by more people in the future.

One of the key communication objectives, identified earlier, is the need to create or improve levels of awareness regarding the product or organisation. This is achieved by determining whether awareness is required at the point of purchase or prior to purchase. Brand recognition (at the point of purchase) requires an emphasis upon visual stimuli, the package and the brand name, whereas brand recall (prior to purchase) requires an emphasis on a limited number of peripheral cues. These may be particular copy lines, the use of music or colours for continuity and attention-grabbing frequent use of the brand name in the context of the category need, or perhaps the use of strange or unexpected presentation formats.

ViewPoint 17.7 Messaging functional foods

Increasingly, food manufacturers are redeveloping foods so that they provide functional benefits. These products claim to improve a person’s health, by lowering their cholesterol level for example, or by improving their digestive systems, providing extra energy or even making people cleverer. Brands such as a Tropicana juice drink contain extra calcium to build bone health and strength. Kingsmill make Head Start, a bread that contains Omega-3, designed to improve brain health. The success of Actimel yoghurt drinks is based on its probiotic content that provides immunity and eases the digestive tract. These and many other products are based on scientific developments and are proving to be popular.

One of the problems facing functional food manufacturers is how best to communicate the benefits. By providing too much scientific information audiences become confused and switch off. Providing too little information about the benefits can result in the message not getting through. When Kellogg’s launched Rice Crispies Muddles, a probiotic for children the message failed to penetrate the market and the brand was altered to Rice Krispies Multigrain (Bashford, 2007).

There is an argument that in the future, specialist functional foods need to be targeted at specific niche, lifestyle segments, middle-agers with high cholesterol, and older women with brittle bones. These need to be coupled with simplified messages that convey particular health benefits.

Sources: Adapted from Bashford (2007); Simms (2007b).

Question

Should functional foods provide for transformational or informational messages?

Task

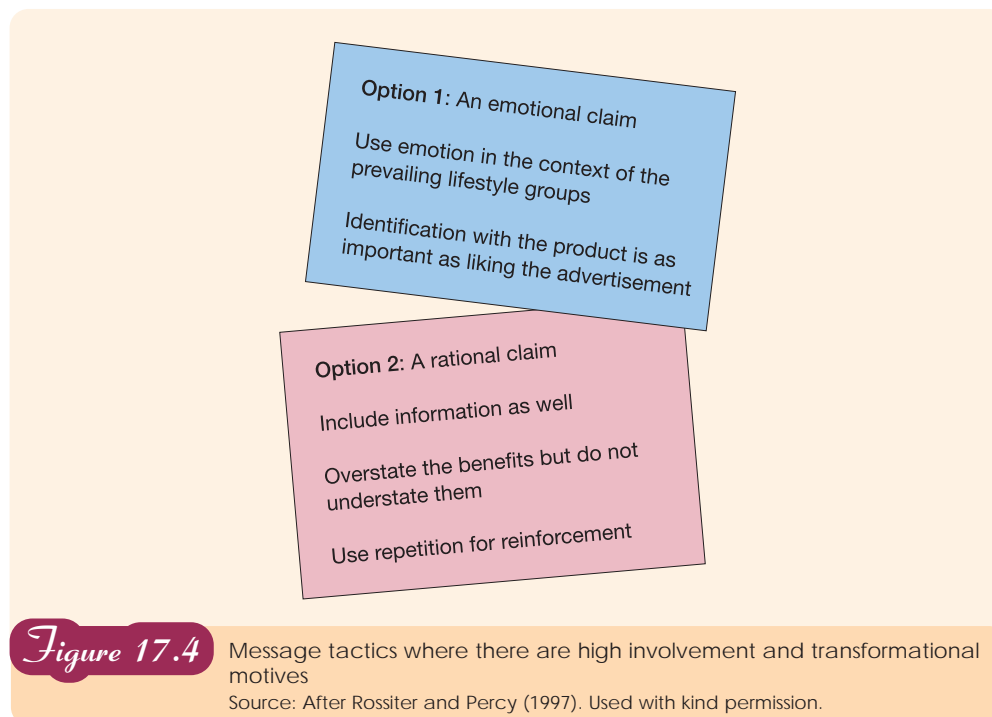
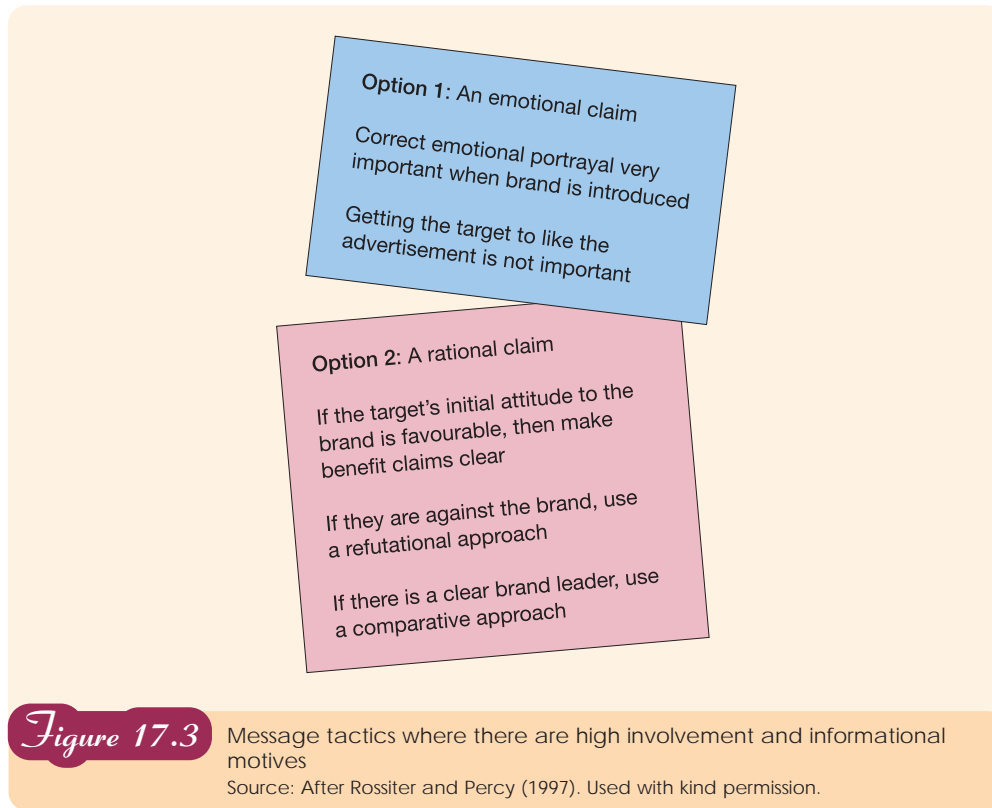
Select a grocery product of your choice, visit the web site and determine whether the overall message is informational or transformational. Justify your response.

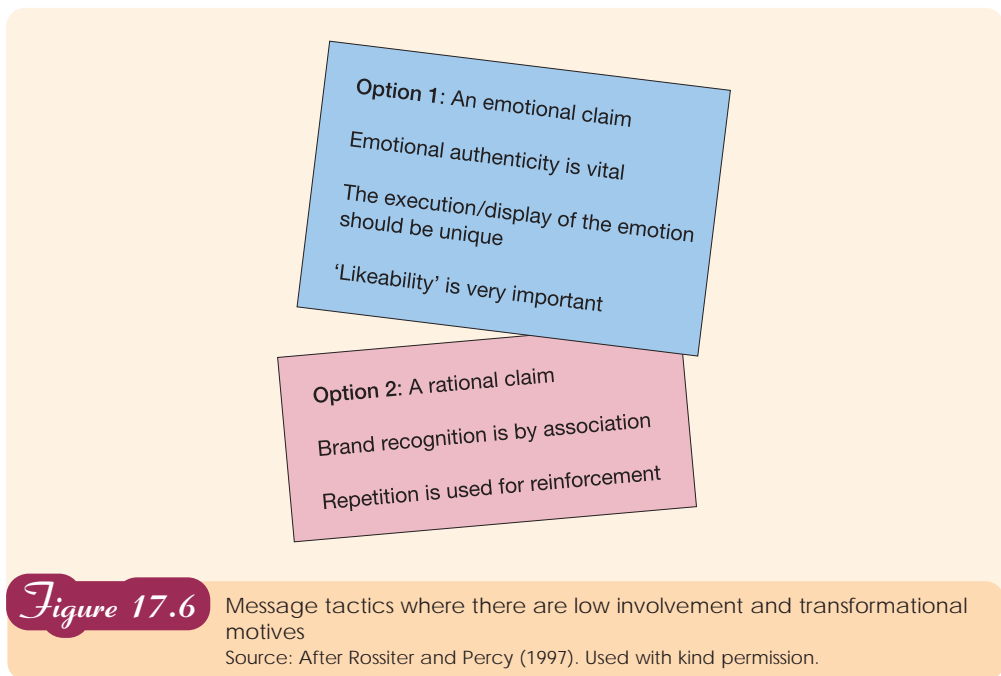
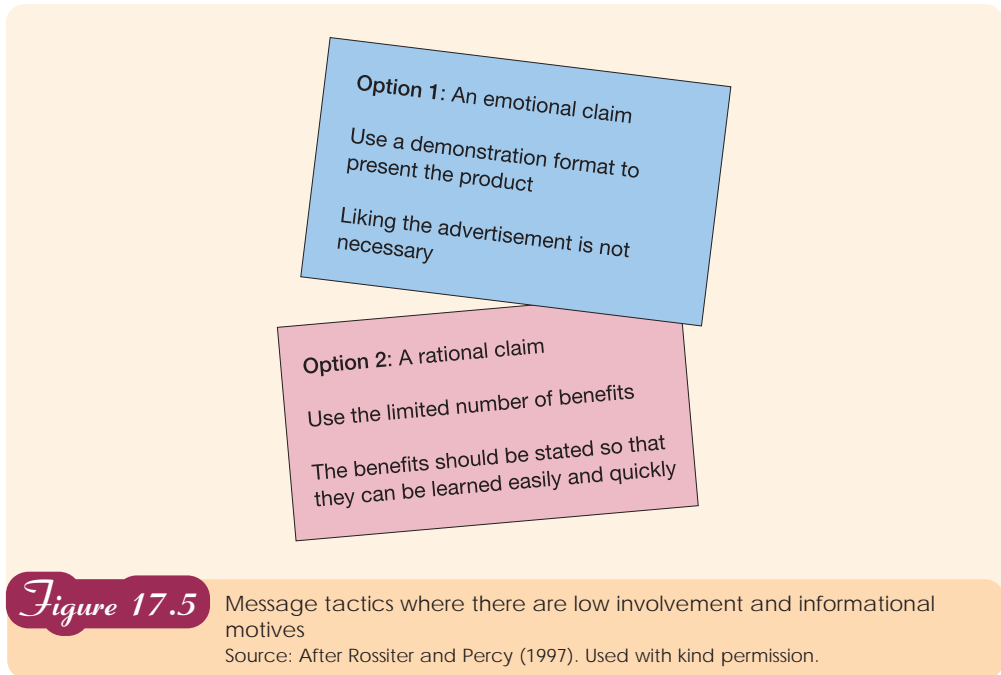


Exhibit 17.4

Functional foods, such as Actimel and Branston Baked Beans, need to communicate their key benefits clearly and in an unscientific manner
 Courtesy of Danone; Paul Mogford/Alamy.

Advertising tactics can be determined by the particular combination of involvement and motives that exist at a particular time within the target audience. If a high-involvement decision process is determined, with people using a central processing route, then the types of tactics shown in Figures 17.3 and 17.4 are recommended (Rossiter and Percy, 1997). If a





low-involvement decision process is determined, with the target audience using a peripheral processing route, then the types of tactics shown in Figures 17.5 and 17.6 are recommended.

The Rossiter–Percy approach provides for a range of advertising tactics that are oriented to the conditions that are determined by the interplay of the level of involvement and the type of dominant motivation. These conditions may only exist within a member of the target audience for a certain period. Consequently, they may change and the advertising tactics may also have to change to meet the new conditions. There are two main points that emerge from

the work of Rossiter and Percy. The first is that all messages should be designed to carry both rational, logical information and emotional stimuli, but in varying degrees and forms. Second, low-involvement conditions require the use of just one or two benefits in a message, whereas high-involvement conditions can sustain a number of different benefit claims. This is because persuasion through the central processing route is characterised by an evaluation of the alternatives within any one product category.

Summary

In order to help consolidate your understanding of messages and content, here are the key points summarised against each of the learning objectives:

1. Show how messages can be constructed to account for the context in which they are to be received.

Messages need to be developed based on the needs of the target audience and the environment in which they will consume the communication. Issues such as their level of knowledge about the brand, involvement and education affect the way messages are presented.

2. Examine the importance and characteristics of using source credibility.

Source credibility consists of three key elements: the level of perceived expertise; the personal motives for the source is believed to possess; and the degree of trust that can be placed in what the source says or does on behalf of the endorsement. Consumers trade off the validity of claims made by brands against the perceived trustworthiness (and expertise) of the individuals or organisations who deliver the message.

3. Explore the advantages and disadvantages of using spokespersons in message presentation.

The use of spokespersons can draw attention and publicity to a brand, but should they fail to provide credibility or contravene a society's norms then the brand may be harmed.

4. Discuss the impact of user-generated-content.

The use of user-generated-content is increasing as communication becomes more democratised and technology advances. Information is increasingly being shared by consumers and content created in many different ways, including blogs, discussion boards and social networks.

5. Examine ideas concerning message framing.

Message framing works on the hedonic principles of our motivation to seek happiness and to avoid pain. Messages can be framed to either focus attention on positive outcomes (happiness) or take them away from the possible negative outcomes (pain).

Three factors (self-construal, consumer involvement and product knowledge) moderate an individual's response when they are exposed to a positively or negatively framed brand message. In turn these influence the brand communication persuasiveness.

6. Consider how advertising messages might be best presented.

Attention to message balance, structure and the form of the appeal is important if a message is to be successful and help achieve a campaign's goals.

7. Examine the use of emotions and feelings in advertising messages.

Increasing numbers of advertisers are using messages that seek to appeal to a target audience's emotions and feelings. This is necessary when products become similar and as consumers become more aware of what is available in the category. Of the many techniques available, the main ones used are fear, humour, animation, sex, music and fantasy and surrealism.

8. Indicate how informational and transformational motives can be used as tactical tools in an advertising plan.

It is claimed that there are two broad types of motive that drive attitudes towards purchase behaviour. These are informational and transformational motives. Individuals have a need for information to counter negative concerns about a purchase decision. These informational motives are said to be negatively charged feelings. They can become positively charged, or the level of concern can be reduced considerably, by the acquisition of relevant information.

Promises to enhance or to improve a brand are referred to as transformational motives. These are related to the user's feelings and are capable of transforming a user's emotional state, hence they are positively charged.

Review questions

1. Describe each of the four elements needed to create promotional messages.
2. Explain the concept of source credibility.
3. Discuss what is meant by the term 'balance' when applied to an advertising message.
4. How might an understanding of conclusion drawing assist the development of an advertising message?
5. Select five print advertisements and comment on the nature and extent to which the order of presentation features in each of them.
6. Why do advertisers use spokespersons in their advertising? Find examples of each type of spokesperson.
7. Why is the use of user-generated-content increasing?
8. What are the main types of appeal that are used by advertisers?
9. Find examples of advertising messages for each of the main appeals identified.
10. Explain the difference between informational and transformational motivations.

MiniCase

The Apache motorcycle advertising campaign in India

Poonam V. Kumar: TNS – Asia Pacific & Middle East

Prasad Narasimhan: TVS Motor Company India

Adapted by

Clive Nancarrow: University of the West of England

This minicase is the second of two. It is advised that the first case is read before this one. Please see the case at the end of Chapter 6, p. 191.

Liberation – Life, Here I come!!!

With increasing competition, the dialogue between the consumer and marketer grows in sophistication and the balance of power shifts to the consumer. Marketing then has to shift from push to pull. From selling and product-focused marketing, the market moves to a need for brands that connect with consumer emotion. The Indian two-wheeler market was waiting for brands like Apache that understood this and met not only the need for great mileage and reliability, but also emotional needs.

NeedScope, through the use of a needs-based model, identified the discriminating needs. The underlying motivations were validated and quantified in terms of the commercial opportunity offered. Brands were mapped and measured on the same frame of reference and market gaps identified. TNS, a leading global marketing research agency, partnered the client in bringing the segments to life and in the development of concepts and guidance to the advertising and design team.

On the basis of the customer research described more fully earlier in this text (see p. 191) an opportunity for marketing a motorbike was identified – that of fulfilling a desire for freedom – the need for ‘Liberation’.

The next step was to understand all the nuances and layers of Liberation. Based on their research, the following analysis was completed to guide the creative development.

- Emotively, Liberation represents the wonder years in a man’s life. The first taste of freedom, the first coming into adulthood. A time of freedom, fun, exploration of the world and experiences before responsibility and the realities of life take over. The bike in this need state symbolises a rite of passage – the boy becomes a man – and is the ideal partner with which to explore spaces, both physically and emotively. In the physical sense it is about mobility.

Emotionally it is about reaching places you have never been.

- Liberation evokes the heady kick and excitement of youth, the exciting discovery of adulthood and the bike is integral as a source of pleasure.
- There was a definite younger demographic skew, but the need also extended to the ‘Young at Heart’. For the young man, the motorbike is a symbol used to flaunt his adult status. With older men it is about recapturing moments gone by, the wish for eternal youth.
- The social values of the need state are younger men in the golden period between boys and adult men. The need has a strong peer context, typical to that life stage. The need for affiliation, togetherness is also reflected in the relationship with the bike – a buddy to share the fun with.
- With every brand boasting of an international collaboration, this was not a differentiating nor for that matter a motivating proposition. International technology is obviously desirable, but there is also an emerging pride and comfort, especially among the youth about being Indian and Indianness.
- Functional delivery needs to live up to the vibrant need for a trendy, cool experience – a combination of speed, power, pick-up and trendy looks – advanced technology to reflect the fast-paced lifestyles of the emerging Indian youth.

Two concepts were developed and tested on the same frame of reference.

And so the Apache was born!

It’s now or never!!!

The Apache operates at all levels, fulfilling emotional needs through relevant symbolic and social values and meeting functional needs:

Symbolic values – Living life in the moment. Targeting that part of every man that brings back the wonder years – of Freedom, of Irresponsibility, of LIVING!! A sense of release, exploration and the anticipation that the world is waiting for you! For the newly initiated, the



Exhibit 17.5

Apache advertising uses emotion to position the brand, rather than the traditional promises of functional endurance

Courtesy of TVS Motor Company Ltd.

promise of discovering a new world, for the young at heart, the recapturing of a time gone by, a retreat to Ladland!! About living life to the fullest and making most of the moment.

Social values – Unattached, young, popular men with lots of friends and popular with the girls.

Functional promise – Easy maintenance and great accessories (coupled with stylish looks), power and pick-up, lightness to reflect the mood.

How is this delivered in communications?

It is driven by those whom young people identify with and resemble (not celebrities). The brand has to be the rage of the moment – something that everyone is talking about. This was brought about by innovative co-sponsorship and partnership of events and promotions – on Channel V and MotoGP.

The tone of advertising is irreverent, but inoffensively so. It is fun, easygoing, defying conventions and conservatism without becoming rebellious or edgy.

The television commercial is set to a rap tune, but the words are in an Indian language – in tune with the current youth's desire for a blend of the international with the Indian – a distinct flavour of modern India.

The strongly evocative emotional proposition was also translated into trendy style and irresistible features. Notably, the much-used propositions of reliability and mileage promises were absent (see Exhibit 17.5).

The seeming purposelessness about the functional promises reinforced the indulgent, wonderful irresponsibility of the carefree, fun emotive positioning.

All activities and touch points were aligned with the symbolic positioning – partnership promotion with a trendy retail outlet, sponsorship on MotoGP sports (see Exhibit 17.6).

In all, Apache is a brand where all layers of needs and all marketing touch points were in perfect harmony and therefore the rewards, recognition and success inevitably had to follow.

The taste of success

Apache has been voted as the bike of the year by almost all stakeholder groups. The brand struck a deep chord with the auto experts, the auto media and most importantly with the consumers.

A final word

This case is not just about bold decision-making and creating the right concept. The execution and implementation remained true to the archetypal positioning and delivered the perfect tonality. The advertising created was completely different from both anything TVS had done before and a complete break from the corporate image. To ensure that the planners remained true to the archetype and did not give in to the temptation of resorting to a comfortable direction that had worked before, a principle of NOTness was used to develop the advertising and marketing communication.

Apache is . . .

- *Not* doing stuff by himself, but with a group – to be different from Potency and to avoid the temptation

**Exhibit 17.6**

Carefree emotional advertising was used with co-sponsorship activities to stimulate word of mouth communication
Courtesy of TVS Motor Company Ltd.

**Exhibit 17.7**

Apache advertising was used to create associations with liberation and freedom
Courtesy of TVS Motor Company Ltd.

of showing an all-man, rugged terrain bike that conquers elements and space.

- Not with a girlfriend – to keep away from the hackneyed boy–girl story that all youth brands tell. Instead, the bike was about having NO commitments.
- Not aspirationally upwardly mobile, or about success at work – again a temptation of all new launches to ride the optimism of the ‘Shining India’ mood. The bike was not about status or success – instead the optimism was captured by a carefree attitude that enables living of life without worrying about tomorrow.
- Not about family and the responsibilities that come with family – to avoid temptation to capture not just the youth, but family people as well.
- Not overtly premium – although modernity and premiumness were conveyed through features and styling rather than by exclusivity. The bike SPOKE the archetype.

And finally, there was realisation that to target Liberation, the planners and brand managers had to feel and live the archetype. They had to break out of their Brahmin engineering, rooted in rationality mindset. The team therefore had fun spending several Friday afternoons observing young people and testing the waters at the several pubs and cafes of Bangalore.

Note: This minicase is based on a paper given at ESOMAR Annual Congress, Berlin, September 2007 by Poonam Kumar, Motivational Research, APAC Region, TNS Asia, India & Prasad Narsimhan TVS Motor Company, India (ESOMAR Copyright).

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MiniCase questions

1. Would word-of-mouth (WoM) be important in this case and how might you stimulate this?
2. What research would you carry out to determine if the advertising was working, which executions work particularly well and with whom? What would be the key questions the research should address?
3. Being cool is often important in youth markets. Does Apache have the ingredients to be ‘cool’ and is the concept of consumer tribe relevant?
4. Can you think of any cool brands?

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