

CHAPTER 9

Creative execution

In the last chapter, we looked at how marketing communication is processed. Now we will be looking at the creative tactics that should be used in order to optimize the likelihood that a message will be processed. First, we shall discuss some general principles and creative tactics that reflect our understanding of how certain aspects of a message execution can significantly affect how well it will be processed. We shall be addressing the ways in which the words and pictures used in an execution can maximize attention and learning. Research in psycholinguistics and visual imagery have yielded a great deal of knowledge about how the way in which something is said, or the characteristics and the images used in visual communication, can affect the likelihood someone will pay attention and learn something from the message. We will be reviewing a number of these findings that have a direct bearing on marketing communication.

Following this, we will be looking more specifically, at the creative tactics needed to address brand awareness and brand attitude objectives, and how consistency across different integrated marketing communication (IMC) executions will enhance the overall power of a brand's marketing communication.

■ Gaining attention

How much attention someone is likely to pay to marketing communication is generally a function of the way in which words and visual images (pictures and illustrations) are used in an execution. Additionally, for print, the size of the execution and its focal point will influence the degree of attention paid; and for broadcast (both television and radio), the length of the commercial. But attracting attention is only the first step. Executions must also *hold* attention so the message can be processed. In this section we will be discussing some of the creative tactics that can help both attract and hold attention (summarized in Figure 9.1).

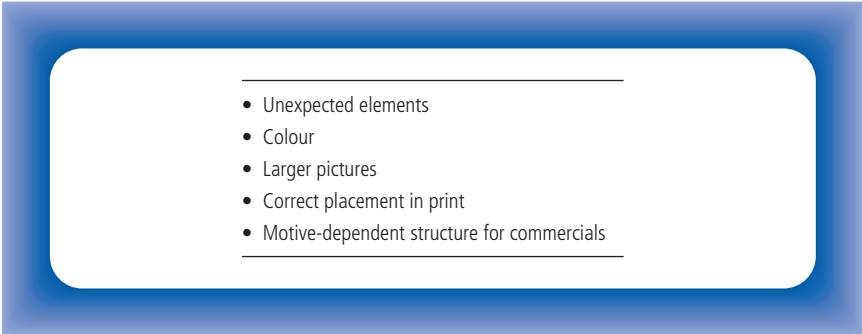
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- Unexpected elements
 - Colour
 - Larger pictures
 - Correct placement in print
 - Motive-dependent structure for commercials

Figure 9.1
Creative tactics for gaining attention

Unexpected elements

According to Myers (1994), one of the easiest ways to attract attention in print is to use letters in unexpected ways or by altering the spelling of

words. A very good example of this is the provocative logo for the French Connection UK (FCUK). In broadcast, the repetition of particular sounds can help draw attention to a brand name or slogan, and reinforced it in memory.

The reason unexpected things attract attention is that people are accustomed to experiencing things in certain ways, and when there is a departure from the norm, interest is aroused. People tend to notice changes in things that are out of the ordinary. If you were to hear someone say 'you placed the *emphasis* on the wrong *syllable*,' stressing the second syllable rather than the first in emphasis and syllable, your attention would be immediately drawn to what was said. In marketing communication this can easily be done in the voice track by simply placing more emphasis on a particular word where it would not be expected.

Colour

For all print media, four-colour (i.e. full colour) attracts more attention than two-colour, which attracts more attention than black and white. This is true for both consumer as well as business and trade marketing communication. One sometimes hears arguments from marketing practitioners that black and white adverts will attract attention because they 'stand out' from clutter. However, there is nothing to support this idea. In fact, attention to black and white adverts in consumer magazines is about 30% less than full color adverts; and the advantage is even greater in newspaper. With business-to-business advertising, color adverts draw about 50% more attention than black and white (Rossiter and Bellman, 2005).

Size of picture or illustration

In print advertising the picture or illustration will draw most of the attention of a reader. For example, about 70% of the time looking at print adverts is spent looking at the picture (Rossiter, 1988). Research has consistently found that the larger the picture size in an advert, the more it will be processed (cf. Franke et al., 2004). There is an old rule-of-thumb in advertising that attention to print adverts will increase at a rate of about the square root of its size. This would mean that an advert with a picture or illustration four times larger than that in another advert should receive twice the attention (the square root of four being two).

Picture size is especially important for low-involvement transformational advertising where traditionally the picture is the most important element of the execution. But a key point to bear in mind is that when talking about picture size we are referring to a picture or illustration with a single dominant focal point (Franke et al., 2004). In other words, a single picture, not several, making up the size and the visual content; and in that single picture, only one central image.

Print placement

While not strictly a creative tactic, where adverts are placed within a magazine can have a significant effect on how much attention will be paid to it. Back cover placement will gain the highest attention, followed by the inside covers; and cover position in business-to-business publications will have very high-attention value (Rossiter and Bellman, 2005). Paradoxically, having another advert on a facing page will actually *increase* attention slightly, while editorial content will significantly hurt attention to a nearby advert.

Format

With print advertising, the trend to smaller newspaper page size does not appear to have any effect on attention to adverts within, nor does the page size of magazines impact the attention paid to its adverts. Interestingly, the size of a banner advert on the Internet does not affect attention (Ahn and Edwards, 2002).

The length of commercials, for both radio and television, is directly related to attention. The longer the commercial, the greater the attention (Ritson, 2003). The number of cuts in a commercial does not seem to affect the attention, even though as the number of cuts rise above the average of 13 per 30 commercial, the level of *arousal* does increase. While this does not seem to affect attention, it does impact learning.

The key to *holding* attention with television commercials is a function of the pattern or structure of the execution. Communication for informationally driven commercials should use a *two-peaked pattern* where the category need is presented first, the brand identified in between, and the benefit provided in the second peak. In this way the target audience recognizes the need, associates the brand with that need, then 'stay tuned' to learn how the brand can satisfy that need. With transformationally driven commercials, the execution should reflect a *raising pattern*, beginning with brand identification and followed by a building of positive emotion, ending with a definite 'kick' (Rossiter and Percy, 1997).

■ Facilitating learning

It is, of course, not enough to simply pay attention to marketing communication, one must also 'learn' what it is trying to say. Critically, this means learning the brand and its primary benefit. There are a number of ways to facilitate learning based on the way words and pictures or illustrations are used within the creative execution. In this section we shall review a number of ways in which attention to how words and pictures are used in an execution can increase the likelihood that someone will continue to process the message (after attending to it) and learn the brand and its benefit (summarized in Figure 9.2).

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- Keep it simple
 - avoid negatives
 - avoid passive constructions
 - avoid puns
 - Headlines less than 6–7 words
 - Use picture–word sequence
 - Visual cuts in commercials consistent with brand attitude strategy
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Figure 9.2
Creative tactics for
facilitating learning

Keep it simple

There is a large body of research that has found that using familiar words in familiar ways will facilitate learning (Paivio, 1971). The more complex or difficult a sentence, the greater the likelihood there will be difficulties in processing, and hence learning. This means avoiding passive sentences and long or complicated sentence structures. One should avoid the use of puns (verbal or visual) unless you are certain they will be *readily* understood by the target audience. The English are very fond of using puns in advertising, but to be effective the point must be understood immediately.

The headline for a BMW advert reads: 'Bigger boots. Move Welly.' What is the benefit here? In the UK 'welly' would be understood as short for wellingtons, which is the generic for rubber boots. What associations are being activated from memory by the words 'boots' and 'welly'? How does this relate to 'bigger boots'? Does this reinforce the benefit of '1,385 litre of boots space' in the 3,300, where 'this large, uncluttered space provides a variety of flexible storage options' (as detailed well into the copy)? One must be very careful with puns. If used they must quickly be seen as conveying the 'real' meaning.

It is also a good idea to avoid using negatives. A great deal of research has been done that says it is more difficult to process negatives used in phrases or sentences. The problem is that to correctly understand a sentence using a negative requires two-step processing. One must first process the negative word, then 'reverse' the meaning. This is certainly not to say one should never use negatives, but it does mean that one must be careful the meaning is quickly and easily understood. In addition to the potential problem associated with two-step processing, when negatives such as 'not' are embedded in a sentence, it is very easy for the eye to simply miss it unless one is carefully paying attention.

Use short headlines

Using short headlines is important because of the way people read. They do not read each word one at a time, but rather process *groups* of words.

Those groups are made up of fewer than six or seven words, depending upon their length (Wearing, 1973). Look at the following headline:

Shoes Designed to Move You

The moment you glanced at the headline, you processed it at once. It was not necessary to 'read' the words, it was understood as a unit. On the other hand, with larger headlines the eye will initially only register a group of words, with perhaps taking meaning from a few scattered words near the edge of the group. Look at the following headline:

Everything Your Skin Needs Most to Face Winter

To understand what it says requires one to be motivated to spend time processing it.

The implications of this for advertising are obvious. If someone is flipping through a magazine, each page will attract at least momentary attention in order to see if there is anything there worth holding their attention. But if there is a short headline, less than six or seven words, even with brief exposure if the eye falls on the headline its content will be processed and communicated. Copy on posters and outdoor, as well as on packages, should also be short in order to ensure processing at a glance.

Picture–word sequence

The order in which the eye attends to the pictures or illustrations and words in marketing communication will affect learning. In a study reported by Brainerd et al. (1987), it was found that when people confront a picture–word sequence rather than a word–picture sequence, learning increases. Contributing to this phenomenon could be the fact that pictures are known to have superiority over words in learning (Eyesenk, 1977; Bryce and Yalch, 1993). People tend to automatically engage with pictures, and they seem to elicit more elaboration from memory than words. Myers (1994) has made this point with a very good example. If you were to read about a new soap that would make you beautiful, you would no doubt be a bit sceptical. But if you saw a picture of a beautiful woman holding a bar of that new soap, the image of the beautiful woman would help reinforce the claim, and you would be more inclined to believe it.

But one must be careful not to take this idea of a picture–word sequence literally, at least for print, and this includes the Internet. It does *not* mean, for example, that a picture or illustration must be at the top of the page, with the headline and copy at the bottom. What it means is that the eye should be drawn to the picture or illustration first, then the headline. This is in generally not a problem because the eye is more likely to be initially drawn to the visual. However, this can always be checked with eye-tracking.

This same idea also applies with television. When important points are to be made by people in a commercial, by voice-over or printed boards on screen, they should be immediately *preceded* by an appropriate visual element that elicits reinforcing memories that will help

facilitate the processing of the verbal claims (Young and Robinson, 1989, 1992; Rossiter and Percy, 1997).

Pacing of commercials

In our discussion of format and attention earlier, we talked about the optimum patterns in commercials for gaining attention. Another aspect of this concerns the pacing, or the number of visual cuts in the execution. While the increase in arousal associated with more than the average of 13 cuts per 30 commercial may be good for transformational advertising where the emotional 'feeling' is so critical, it definitely is *not* for informational executions. With higher numbers of cuts, only peripheral, executional content is likely to be learned. This is fine for transformational strategies where the benefit is in the emotional response to the execution itself. But with informational strategies, it is necessary to process and learn the content of the message, and this cannot happen when the number of visual cuts is much more than the average.

Interestingly, it is often argued that viewers today, and especially younger viewers of the so-called 'MTV-generation', are conditioned to fast-cut visuals. That may be true, but that does not mean they are processing much beyond sensual stimulation. In fact, at an MTV-rate of 20 or more cuts per 30 commercial, loss of attention among 18–34 year olds is actually *greater* than among older adults (MacLachlan and Logan, 1993).

■ Consistency in IMC executions

One of the most important, and often most difficult, tasks for IMC is ensuring consistency in executions within and across the different types of marketing communication a brand is using, as well as over time. *Everything* connected with an IMC campaign should have a similar 'look and feel'. That means everything from adverts to direct mail to collateral to packaging to posters to the sides of delivery trucks to business cards and letterheads – everything.

The target audience should be able to immediately identify any execution within a campaign, and over time, as belonging to the brand. This is an important part of a brand's identity, and the more consistent the executions, the more readily brand awareness and communicating the brand benefit will be achieved. In fact, in time the inclusion of the brand name would not even be necessary. People will associate in memory the 'look' of the brand's marketing communication with the brand. Yet it is surprising how many marketers do not seem to understand this. Too often a brand's advertising changes completely within a campaign; and it is not at all unusual for a brand's promotions to have nothing visually in common with its advertising (or in terms of the benefit).

A consistency in execution does *not* mean everything must look exactly the same. It is a 'feeling' that ties everything together, and this evolves

where the target audience would know it was the brand advertising even if the brand name was not used.

The key to consistency is the *visual* feel. This is because the visual memory for the imagery associated with the brand actually elicits faster brand identification than the brand name itself. This is because visual memory is superior to that of memory for words. When the visual imagery is also associated in memory with the benefit, or if the associations reinforce the nature of the benefit, the consistency over time will ensure communication of the brand and its benefit with even a brief glance.

Visual look must be unique

The very reasons for a consistent look among all the parts of an IMC campaign argue for its uniqueness. If there is any chance that the target audience may confuse the brand's marketing communication with a competitor's, the problem is obvious. Yet there is an incredible amount of similarity between competitive brands' advertising. Pick up any magazine and one will see how similar is the look and feel of advertising for competing brands is. This is especially true of retail, bank, automotive, fashion, and cosmetic advertising.

What is needed are *unique* executions that have the same look and feel, and over time become firmly associated in memory with the brand. If competitors copy a brand's 'look' after it is firmly associated with that brand, misattribution is likely to occur, and the competitor's similar looking advertising will merely reinforce the brand that 'owns' the look. Because of the nature of memory, once a brand is associated with a particular look or feel, any time that imagery is encountered it will stimulate associations with the brand. Good IMC planning can help ensure a unique and consistent look and feel for all of a brand's marketing communication.

■ Specific creative tactics for brand awareness and brand attitude

In Chapter 4 we introduced brand awareness and brand attitude strategies. Now we are going to explore the creative tactics that should be used in developing executions in order to optimize the likelihood that they will be correctly processed to effectively implement the appropriate strategy. While we shall be generally talking in terms of traditional advertising, it should be remembered that the same creative tactics apply to promotion-like messages (in terms of awareness and brand attitude); and also that it does not matter if it is a typical advert, brochure, in-store display, or package. These are the creative tactics necessary to ensure that brand awareness and brand attitude communication objectives are reached.

Brand awareness creative tactics

You will recall from our earlier discussion of brand awareness strategies that the correct brand awareness objective depends upon the role awareness plays at the time the purchase decision is made. The brand will either be recognized at the point-of-purchase, reminding the consumer of the need, or a need will come up and the brand must be recalled from memory: recognition brand awareness versus recall brand awareness. The creative tactics involved will be different, depending upon the specific brand awareness objective (Figure 9.4).

Brand recognition	Package must be shown as it will appear at the point-of-purchase
Brand recall	Need must be linked to brand, in that order, and repeated

Figure 9.4
Brand awareness
creative tactics

Brand recognition

With recognition brand awareness, the package (or a symbol or logo for the brand if that is how it is recognized at the point-of-purchase) must be *clearly* presented in the execution in order to ensure visual iconic learning (Kosslyn and Thompson, 2003). It is not enough to only show the product, unless the product is sold *without* a package. This can become a difficult creative problem when dealing with transformational products, where the package can easily get in the way of emotional presentation of the benefit. Nevertheless, it is critical because that visual image of how the product will be recognized at the point-of-purchase must be stored in memory and linked to the appropriate need so that when it is seen in the store it will trigger that need.

If the package is not sufficiently exposed, there is every chance that one's marketing communication will not be associated with the brand; or even mistakenly linked to another brand. This is especially true for new product introductions, or when trying to reach new users. As a rule of thumb, the package should be attended to for two seconds if it is to be 'learned' and recognized later. This means being able to *hold* attention in print, and to be exposed for *at least* two seconds in a television spot or Internet advert (or any other new media). In addition to visual recognition, you will remember from Chapter 4 that occasionally auditory recognition may be needed. The tactics are the same, except that the name must be *heard* as it will be heard during the sales process; and *repeated* to ensure exposure time.

Regardless of whether it is visual or auditory brand recognition, one must be sure that the category need is obvious. With established product

categories, the appropriate need is usually understood. But with new products, or new brands in an established category, the need must be clearly evident. In either case, within the execution the *package* should trigger the need, not the other way around, because it will be the package that is recognized first at the point-of-purchase and 'remind' the consumer of the need for the product.

As a footnote to the discussion of the creative tactics needed for effective recognition brand awareness, a study by Henderson and Cote (1998) identified four visual elements that significantly increase the likelihood that something will be recognized. First, there should be some sense of curvature; second, generally, but not exactly, symmetrical; third, some degree of repetition in the design; and finally that it represents some recognizable object. In designing packages and brand symbols or logos these points should be kept in mind, especially if recognition brand awareness is involved.

Brand recall

With recall brand awareness, the need occurs first, and the brand must be recalled from memory. This means that the creative execution must establish in memory a link between the need and the brand such that when the need arises, the brand name will come to mind as satisfying that need. The key is that the association is learned in that direction: need first, followed by brand (Nelson et al., 2003). This is generally done in the headline and repeated in the body. Because this is a more difficult learning process than that involved with recognition learning, this *association* must be repeated to ensure learning.

A visual could be used to establish the category need, but this is not always easy to do because the need must be immediately apparent. The visual would need to be immediately and correctly 'labelled' in the target audience's mind when they see it in the advert because it is that verbal 'label' that is most likely to be used in working memory when the need actually occurs, not the image of the need. If you decide to go out to eat at a Chinese restaurant, you are likely to be thinking about Chinese food, not seeing visual images of Chinese food, although some images may follow. But the initial need is likely to be considered verbally. Advertising for a Chinese restaurant will want to associate the desire for Chinese food with the name of the restaurant: strategically, 'when you think about Chinese food, think about us'. This is the link that should be established (obviously much more creatively). And while it is certainly appropriate to use strong visual images of Chinese food in the advert, this will primarily operate on brand attitude. The *need* should be labelled.

One way to help boost brand recall awareness is by using a celebrity presenter in the execution. However, the important thing to understand is whether or not the target audience easily recognizes the person, and that person is held in high regard by them. If they are famous and positively regarded in their eye, then research has shown that the visibility of the celebrity can be transferred to the brand (Holman and Hecker, 1983). That, however, is the key. The celebrity's visibility *must* be linked to the brand.

Brand attitude creative tactics

In Chapter 4 we briefly introduced the Rossiter–Percy Grid and pointed out how it helps define brand attitude strategy for marketing communication by looking at the level of involvement in a purchase decision and the underlying motivation that is driving behaviour in the brand’s category. This results in four distinct quadrants defined in terms of low versus high involvement and negative (informational) versus positive (transformational) motives. The reason these considerations are so important is that each are directly related to the way in which a message will be processed. And as it happens, the creative tactics needed to facilitate the processing of the message are different for each quadrant (Figure 9.5).

Low-involvement informational	Use one simple benefit, presented in the extreme
Low-involvement transformational	Emotionally authentic presentation in the execution becomes the benefit
High-involvement informational	Benefit must be consistent with the target audience’s current attitude toward the brand and category, and without over-claiming
High-involvement transformational	Emotionally authentic presentation with which the target audience personally identifies

Figure 9.5
Brand attitude creative tactics

The specific creative tactics associated with each quadrant of the grid are designed to optimize the likelihood of a person successfully processing the message. This means being able to communicate the benefit around which a brand is positioned within its marketing communication, and ensuring that the optimal emotional associations are triggered to facilitate message processing in working memory. We will first take a look at the creative tactics appropriate for the brand attitude strategy quadrants, and then review how emotion is handled within an execution to encourage processing.

Low-involvement informational

This is the quadrant for low-involvement decisions involving negative motives. Because the decision is low involvement, one simple benefit in the message is enough. This benefit should be presented in the extreme because the target audience does not really need to believe the claim. All that is necessary is something Maloney (1962) has called ‘curious disbelief’. This is a perfect description of what one is trying to accomplish with low involving brand attitude strategies, and especially low

involving informational marketing communication. One is looking for the consumer to think: 'I wonder if it can really do that? It would be great if it did!' Because it is a low-involvement decision, there is no risk in trying. The Aqua Sphere advert shown in Figure 9.6 offers a perfect example of what we are talking about. Here is an execution that takes the simple benefit of clear vision while swimming and illustrates it in the extreme. Would things really be that clear? It doesn't matter, the point is made, and in a memorable way.

In fact, with informational messages the target audience does not even need to like the execution. One of the classic examples of this is a long-running Charmin toilet tissue campaign in the US during the 1980s. In this series of commercials, women would attempt to squeeze packages of Charmin because it was 'squeezably soft', and every time they did, Mr. Whipple, a store clerk, would appear and say 'Ladies, please don't squeeze the Charmin!' Research showed later that this was considered by consumers as one of the all-time most obnoxious commercials, but it nevertheless moved the brand to number one in the category (Freeman, 1989). How can such a thoroughly disliked campaign still be effective for the brand? By using such an extreme presentation, it also sharply focused on the benefit. When shopping, consumers were much more likely to see Charmin and wonder if it really was that soft, rather than think about the obnoxious Mr. Whipple.

Benefit focus In all marketing communication, how one focuses upon the benefit must be consistent with the underlying motivation. Informational versus transformational brand attitude strategies require different ways of supporting or drawing attention to the key benefit claim. When dealing with low-involvement informational brand attitude strategies, the focus is *directly* upon the key benefit claim which is expressed in terms of the subjective characteristic of the brand: for example, 'fast acting', 'the latest technology', 'softer skin', etc.

Source characteristic When dealing with low-involvement informational brand attitude strategies, the perceived source of the message must be seen as credible, and as an '*expert*'. We put the word '*expert*' in inverted commas because we are using it in its broadest sense here, not just in terms of technical expertise. For example, a mother is an '*expert*' at getting children's clothes clean. When there are people in an advert, they will generally be seen as the source of the message, and in this quadrant should be perceived as an '*expert*' in the product category. When there are no people, the company or brand itself will be seen as the source.

Low-involvement transformational

In this quadrant we are dealing with low-involvement decisions, but the underlying motivation driving behaviour in the category is positive. The real key here is getting a positive emotional response to the



Aqua Sphere
Active Swim Equipment

Visionary Thinking..

KAIMAN GOGGLES

- Wraparound design redefines aquatic eyewear thinking
- Softeril® construction for total comfort
- Plexisol® lens for true 180° peripheral vision
- Low drag coefficient • 100% UVA/UVB protection • Choice of clear, mirrored and coloured lenses
- Easy-adjust buckle system • Scratch-resistant • Anti-fog coating
- "Fantastic performance... superb comfort..." - 220 Triathlon Magazine

FOR YOUR AQUA SPHERE BROCHURE OR TO FIND YOUR NEAREST STOCKIST CALL:
TEL: 01254 278873 OR VIEW WWW.AQUASPHEREUK.CO.UK

Aqua Sphere
Active Swim Equipment

Figure 9.6

A good example of low-involvement informational advertising, presenting a single benefit and in the extreme. *Courtesy: Aqua Sphere*

execution, because in a very real sense the brand benefit is in the execution itself. This requires a presentation of the benefit in an emotionally *authentic* way. If there are people in the advert, they must look real and natural, not posed. If they do not, the emotional response to them will not seem real.

The target audience must immediately connect emotionally with what they see, and the feeling they get in a very real sense becomes the benefit for the brand. At the point-of-purchase or when the brand decision is made, you want the consumer to re-experience that same positive feeling for the brand. Because it is a low-involvement decision, that should be enough to drive purchase. This is why only one benefit should be presented, because the benefit is tied so closely to the emotional response. It would be impossible to process two independent emotional responses at the same time.

The advert shown in Figure 9.7 for McCain Potato Gourmet is an excellent example of emotionally delivering the benefit of 'great taste' in authentic way. Looking at advert, one's reaction is: 'Wow does that look good!' It is a clear presentation of a single benefit. At the point-of-purchase, when the target audience sees the McCain package, the positive emotional experience from the advert will come to mind, and the desire to see if it really will taste as good as it looked should motivate purchase.

While all brands should seek a unique 'look and feel' to their marketing communication, it is *critical* for transformational brand attitude strategies. Unfortunately, too-often advertising for different brands of fashion products, cosmetics, and beverages (among others) effect the same image. One look through a women's fashion magazine is enough to illustrate the point. But no matter how well executed the emotional presentation is, if it is similar to another brand, in effect both brands are offering the *same benefit*. One can experience that same positive feeling with either brand.

Unlike low-involvement informational advertising, transformational advertising *must* be liked. Think about it. You may not need to believe that Hägan-Das ice cream will make you feel passionate or that a Wonder Bra will make you sexy to enjoy the feeling that it just might. But, you do have to have a positive response to the execution. Otherwise, how could you experience a positive emotional reaction? In effect, what is going on is the target audience takes a positive emotional feeling stimulated by the execution and associates it in memory with the brand. This requires a complete positive experience with the message.

Benefit focus When dealing with positive motives, the benefit is the relevant *emotion*. One can either use the subjective characteristic of the brand in support of the 'feeling' you will get using the brand (e.g. 'tastes so great you'll think you are in heaven') or a pure expression of the positive emotion, usually visual. In the low-involvement transformational case, either focus upon the emotional benefit is appropriate.



Figure 9.7

An excellent example of low-involvement transformational advertising, delivering here the benefit of 'great taste' in an emotionally authentic way. *Courtesy: McCain*

Source characteristic The key source characteristic for transformational brand attitude strategies is attractiveness, and for the low-involvement quadrant the *likeability* component of attractiveness. This should be obvious given what we had just discussed. If there is only a picture of the product, to elicit a positive emotional response you must instantly ‘like’ what you see; if it is a person, they should not only appear ‘real’, but also likable.

High-involvement informational

As we already know from the last chapter, when dealing with high-involvement purchase decisions it is necessary for the target audience to not only pay attention and learn something from the message, they must also *accept* it. Perhaps the single most important creative tactic for this quadrant is to make sure the message is consistent with the target audience’s current attitudes: both toward the product and the brand. Unlike with low-involvement decisions where the consumer is likely to suspend belief about the benefit claim until trying the product, with a high-involvement decision too much is at risk. The target audience must be convinced that the benefit claim (or claims) is true before risking purchase.

In order to ensure that the message does not over claim (which is not only acceptable but also desirable with low-involvement decisions) it is essential to understand what the consumer is or is not likely to believe. If the message over claims, or is inconsistent with the target audience’s beliefs and attitudes, they will counterargue the message and not accept it. Benefit claims should be made that fall within and what Sherif and Hovland (1961) call a person’s latitude of acceptance, as discussed in the last chapter. For all of us, there are things we readily believe; and then there are gray areas where we are not quite sure whether we do or not, but are open minded (what Sheriff and Hovland call the latitude of indifference). Beyond that, we reject the claim (our latitude of rejection). The job of high-involvement informational marketing communication is to ensure that the key benefit claim used in the message is at the *upper end* or the latitude of acceptance (do not inadvertently under claim), and that any other benefit claims used in support also fall at the upper end, or within the latitude of indifference.

In terms of execution, the key benefit claim should be immediately apparent, in both headline and visual. Regardless of where the key benefit claim is placed within the execution, it and any linked visual should be the first thing that confronts the target audience’s attention. It will attract their attention because it will be addressing something important to them. If they are in the market, it will be this key benefit, communicated through the headline and visual, that will encourage processing the entire message to see what it is all about. It must ‘hook’ the target audience immediately, while the additional benefit claims in the body copy will help convince them of the desirability of the brand.

Finding good examples of advertising for products in the high-involvement informational brand attitude quadrant is never easy. However, the advert for Amtico Floors shown in Figure 9.8 is an exception

Amtico

**feel
relaxed**

floors with water resistance.

An Amtico floor not only has outstanding water resistance, its unique Multiple Performance System (consisting of five distinct layers) provides superb slip, dent and stain resistance too. Add to all this the inherent beauty that you find in every one of our vast range of designs and you have the perfect floor for every room in your home. Call now to find out more on 0800 667766 or visit www.amtico.com

Amtico floors. So much to feel good about.

Figure 9.8

A really good example of the creative tactics needed for an effective high-involvement informational advert, with the key benefit in the headline and visual to draw the reader into the copy. *Courtesy: Amtico Floors*

providing a really good example of the creative tactics needed for an effective high-involvement informational advert. It targets the key important benefit in both the headline and the visual, floors with water resistance, which attracts attention and leads into the body copy. In the body copy additional benefits are presented: slip, dent, and stain resistance, wide range of design; and a source for more information. The advert presents a clear message designed to convince someone looking into new flooring to consider Amtico Floors.

Benefit focus The focus on the key benefit for high-involvement informational executions, as in the low-involvement case, will be to either draw attention directly to a subjective characteristic of the brand that is seen as important by the target audience, or by using the key benefit claim as the solution to a problem that is known to be important to the target audience. The focus on the other important benefits used in the copy should use specific attributes of the brand in support of the subjective characteristic: for example, 'with a 5.8-litre engine you have all the power you need' (the objective attribute, a 5.8-litre engine, supports the subjective characteristic of 'all the power you need').

Source characteristic Credibility is the key characteristic for the perceived source. As in the low-involvement informational case, the source must be seen as an *expert*, again as either a technical expert or as a 'user' expert. But because the message must be accepted, the additional credibility component of *objectivity* is also required.

High-involvement transformational

Just as with low-involvement transformational marketing communication, the execution here must be seen as emotionally authentic. But unlike high-involvement informational executions, even though the decision is high involvement the benefit claim should be expressed in the extreme. Here you want to over claim in the sense of communicating an intense and *personal* feeling. This is the key. When the target audience sees the execution they must think: 'yes, that is what I want'.

It must be 'real' to the individual, not necessarily in the sense of reality but in terms of their wishes, dreams, or desires. Most four-wheel-drive trucks, for example, are purchased by men who never drive them off-road. But they want to experience the 'feeling' of masculine adventure portrayed in the advertising for such vehicles. Women who see glamorous images portrayed in advertising for high-fashion perfume purchase it in order to experience the 'feeling' that is elicited by the imagery in the advert. In neither case is the image in the advertising likely to reflect their reality, but it is nevertheless 'real' for them. High-involvement transformational advertising must elicit such highly authentic emotional responses. Identifying personally with the image is in effect their acceptance of the key benefit claim.

Because the decision is high involvement, for some transformationally driven purchase decisions some information may also be needed. This will not be the case for high-imagery products like fashion or jewellery, but could be for such things as (say) a holiday cruise. In an IMC sense, for such cases the strong imagery may be conveyed via television with the same imagery reflected in print, along with some functional support benefit to help facilitate message acceptance. Just as with high-involvement informational executions, the key benefit (here in terms of the strong emotionally arousing imagery) must be noticed first, attracting attention via a sense of: 'They are talking directly to me'. That will lead them into whatever *brief* copy might be needed. Ideally, this copy will direct them to a Web site, toll-free number, or retail location for more detailed information. And wherever they might be directed, the information there must be consistent with the emotional response aroused by the original message.

The advert for FCUK shown in Figure 9.9 offers a very good example of what we are talking about. The advert creates, especially through its provocative logo, a strong positive emotion, but only for those who want to be a part of that 'feeling'. This emotion becomes linked in memory with the brand for them, and is reinforced as they shop the retail stores and wear their fashions.



Figure 9.9

A very good example of high-involvement transformational advertising. *Courtesy: French Connection UK*

Benefit focus In high-involvement transformational executions, as with low-involvement transformational, the benefit focus will be either a subjective characteristic in support of the positive emotion, or simply the emotion. If some additional information is needed to help with the acceptance of the

message, present either a straight expression of a subjective characteristic, or use the specific attribute in support of a subjective characteristic.

Source characteristics As with low-involvement transformational strategies, the key source characteristic here is attractiveness, which means the source should be likable. But in this case it must also be seen as *similar* to the target audience in their perceived emotional state. This is what helps the target audience personally identify with the message. The perceived source either implies the way they wish to see themselves (e.g. someone who wears Channel perfume if only the package is shown), or the people in the execution reflect their perceived image of themselves using the brand. Again, their 'similarity' is unlikely to reflect reality, but rather the 'feeling' they wish to experience.

■ Eliciting the correct emotional response

In the last chapter we discussed the important role emotion plays in the processing of marketing communication. To help facilitate the correct emotional association with the key benefit, the emotional response to an execution must be consistent with the underlying motivation involved. Depending upon whether it is a positive or negative emotion that is driving behaviour, the nondeclarative emotional memory associated with the category need will differ. In fact, given the nature of how we experience life, the emotions associated with satisfying a behavioural motivation will follow a sequence or change in emotional response, and marketing communication should reflect this (Figure 9.10).

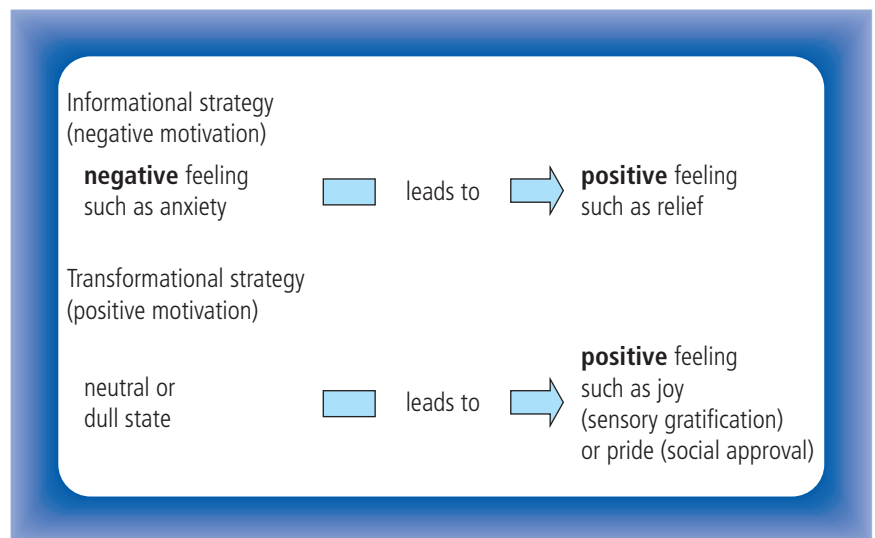


Figure 9.10
Emotional response
sequence

The idea of a sequence of emotions being involved in the processing of marketing communication was first introduced by Rossiter and Percy (1987), and is based on Hammond's (1970) re-conceptualization of Mower's theoretical work in the area. Mower (1960) looked at how unlearned emotional states relate to motivating behaviour in terms of a simple pleasure–pain dichotomy. Hammond then built on this idea, considering the relationship between emotion and motivation in terms of approach and avoidance behaviour. When people find themselves in a 'painful' situation, as it increases, fear is excited; as the situation decreases, it is inhibited, and one feels relief. On the other hand, when someone is experiencing 'pleasure', as it increases hope is excited; but if it decreases that hope is inhibited and they feel disappointment.

This distinction has a direct bearing on what creative tactics should be used in marketing communication because it implies different tactics will be necessary, depending upon whether positive or negative motivations are involved. The emotional portrayal of the motivation in an execution must not only be consistent with the motivation driving behaviour but it also should reflect the *sequence* of emotions involved in the elicitory behaviour driven by positive motivations as positive feelings are increased; and in the inhibitory behaviour resulting from negative motivations as negative feelings are decreased, leading to a positive feeling.

All of this is actually a lot simpler than it may seem from this brief theoretical discussion. If we think about informational brand attitude strategies, the negative motivations involve solving or avoiding a problem of some kind: addressing a particular need. There will be negative emotions like fear or anxiety associated with the category need, and the brand as the solution will 'solve' the problem. In doing so, using the brand changes the negative feelings associated with the problem to a positive emotion like relief. For years, Michelin tyres has run television commercials that begin with a situation fraught with fear and anxiety, such as a woman with a baby in a car driving at night in a storm. Having built this fearful situation, it is then resolved by reminding that with Michelin tyres they will be safe (relief).

It is a sequence of emotions that parallel the emotional experience that should be reflected in marketing communication. The same thing applies to transformational brand attitude strategies. Moving from a neutral, or dull state, advertising for expensive chocolate should excite a feeling of joy or happiness at the prospect of eating some (sensory gratification); or with social approval, beginning from a feeling of perhaps shame or apprehension, being motivated to buy jewellery for a wife or girlfriend, or a sports car for yourself, in order to excite within yourself feelings of pride or being flattered.

In terms of creative execution, for informational brand attitude strategies the emotional response will follow *indirectly* from an evaluation of the benefit claim. The negative emotion associated with the category need should be initiated first in the sequence, underscoring the feelings associated with the problem to be solved or avoided. Then, move the target

audience to a positive emotional response linked to the brand's benefit as the solution.

With transformational brand attitude strategies, as we have seen, emotional response will follow *directly* from executional elements within the advertising. In print, the emotional association with the need are necessarily assumed in most cases, with a strong feeling elicited by the emotional authenticity of the imagery used providing a sense of the positive emotional consequences of using the brand. With television, especially when social approval is the underlying motive, it will be possible to establish the prior neutral or negative feelings that are resolved by the brand and replaced with positive emotions.

Summary

In this chapter we have explored a number of creative tactics that may be used in marketing communication in order to facilitate message processing. These tactics are based on work by psychologists in psycholinguistics and visual imaging that has revealed ways in which the written word and pictures should be used in communication in order to increase the likelihood of it being positively processed. Specific tactics to help attract and hold attention include using unexpected elements in print and visual, colour rather than black-and-white illustrations, larger pictures where possible, attention to placement in media, and format.

Perhaps the most important creative tactic for facilitating learning is to keep everything simple. This is at the heart of all learning. Use familiar words and simple sentences, avoiding compound sentences and inverted clauses, passive constructions, puns, and negatives. Headlines should be held to less than six to seven words so they may be fully processed at a glance without the need to 'read' them. In television commercials, the pacing is important, minimizing the number of visual cuts, especially for informationally driven strategies.

One of the most important creative considerations for IMC is the need for consistency across messages and over time. This consistency does not require a 'cookie-cutter' approach where everything looks exactly like everything else, but rather a look and feel that is clearly associated with the brand. The key to this consistent look is the visual feel, and this requires a unique visual look.

It was pointed out that different brand awareness and brand attitude strategies require different creative tactics. Recognition brand awareness requires a clear visual of the package as it will appear at the point-of-purchase. Recall brand awareness requires establishing a link between the need and the brand, in that order, and repeated within the execution. This is necessary so that when the need occurs, it will be linked in memory with the brand, and the brand will come to mind as satisfying that need.

Brand attitude creative tactics are dependent upon the brand attitude strategy as indicated by the Rossiter–Percy Grid. Each quadrant demands very particular creative tactics in order to accommodate the processing requirements associated with the involvement and motivation driving brand choice. With low-involvement informational messages, the key is to use one simple benefit, presented in the extreme. For low-involvement transformational messages, the critical creative consideration is the emotional authenticity of the execution,

because this in effect becomes the benefit. Because of the risk involved, high-involvement informational messages must be believed and accepted. This means the message must present an initial benefit claim in the headline and visual that is consistent with the target audience's existing beliefs about the brand in relation to the benefit, and presented at the upper level of acceptance, careful not to overclaim. High-involvement transformational messages, like low-involvement transformational, must also be seen as emotionally authentic, but additionally the target audience must personally identify with that feeling.

■ Review questions

- 1 What are the key creative tactics for gaining attention?
- 2 Find examples of advertising that is likely to hold attention and discuss why.
- 3 What is the key to facilitating learning in marketing communication?
- 4 Identify adverts that do a good job of facilitating learning and ones that do not, and discuss why.
- 5 Why is consistency in IMC executions so important?
- 6 What is the fundamental difference in the creative tactics needed for recognition versus recall brand awareness?
- 7 Find examples of adverts that you feel do a good job establishing the category need – brand awareness links needed for recall brand awareness.
- 8 What is the key difference in the way the benefit is presented in informational versus transformational executions?
- 9 Find good examples of adverts for each of the four quadrants of the Rossiter-Percy Grid and discuss why you feel they are good executions.
- 10 Why would it be inappropriate to use the head of a company as a spokesperson for a high-involvement product?
- 11 Discuss the importance of eliciting the correct emotional sequence in marketing communication.
- 12 Identify adverts that you feel do a good job in presenting the correct emotional sequence for the motivation involved and discuss why.

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