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NICK KOLENDA

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1

AD STRATEGY



MATCH THEIR TOP-DOWN ATTENTION

Insert cues that viewers are actively monitoring.

You have *top-down attention*.

Your brain is actively searching for cues in the environment that match your current goals. Therefore, insert cues into your ads that viewers are actively monitoring.

One day, while waiting for *The Office* to return, I was fiddling with my phone, listening for a cue from the show to know when it returned. When I heard the character Darryl speaking, I looked at the TV. But I realized...it wasn't Darryl...it was the actor, Craig Robinson, in an unrelated commercial.

This advertiser took a cue from *The Office* — the voice of Craig Robinson — and inserted this cue into their

commercial. This commercial pierced my attention because my brain was actively searching for this cue.

HOW TO APPLY

→ **Hire Actors From the Content Platform.** During episodes of WWE, unrelated commercials will often craft stories with wrestlers because viewers are monitoring for these cues.

→ **Include Car Sounds in Radio Ads.** Honks or beeps are more likely to grab attention.

→ **Mimic Visuals of Popular Channels.** YouTubers often design thumbnails with similar flair as popular channels because users are searching for these cues.



ADVERTISE IN CONGRUENT MODALITIES

Find people who are performing behaviors similar to your desired behavior.

Customers decide their behavior through simulations.

If a behavior is harder to imagine, it feels harder to do.

For example, you'll struggle to imagine exercising if you're wearing pajamas. But if you change into running clothes, your simulation of exercising will seem easier (and thus more enjoyable).

Same with ads. Find viewers in a bodily state that is conducive to imagining your product.

HOW TO APPLY

→ **Advertise in Similar Topic Domains.** An ad for ketchup converted better when it appeared after an ad for mayonnaise because the idea of condiments was already activated in their brain (Lee & Labroo, 2004). Selling a course on cooking? Advertise your course in cooking domains because the idea of "cooking" will already be activated. Viewers can more easily imagine watching your course because of this existing activation.

→ **Advertise in Similar Mediums.** Selling an online course? Advertise via YouTube or other video platforms. Viewers are already watching video content, so they can more easily imagine watching your course because of this congruent modality. Selling a book? Advertise via written mediums (e.g., magazines, blog posts).

→ **Target Viewers With Congruent Emotions.** I noticed that Tums has sponsored Hot Ones, a YouTube show where celebrities eat spicy wings. That's clever. Humans have mirror neurons — if you watch somebody perform a behavior, like eating spicy food, you simulate this experience. In other words, viewers of Hot Ones are experiencing a body state that can help them simulate the value of antacids.

(see fig 1)

→ **Advertise During Congruent Times.** Alternatively, Tums could advertise around dinnertime (when viewers are more likely to be experiencing heartburn).

Lee, A. Y., & Labroo, A. A. (2004). The effect of conceptual and perceptual fluency on brand evaluation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 41(2), 151-165.

1





END ADS BY ILLUSTRATING THE NEXT STEP

Rather than ask viewers to perform a call-to-action, show a visible example of this action.

Don't tell people what to do.

Show them.

Behaviors seem easier to do if they can be visualized (see my book *Imagine Reading This Book*).

Insert a visual illustration at the end of your ad, depicting the next step. Want customers to:

- **Sign up?** Show a cursor clicking a sign-up button.
- **Leave a review?** Show a review being posted to Yelp.
- **Share on social media?** Show a message on Facebook.
- **Visit your website?** Show your URL being typed into a browser.



RUN EMOTIONAL ADS IN TRADITIONAL MARKETS

Brands need to do something unique to stand out in traditional markets.

Customers ignore familiar ads.

That's why emotional appeals can be more effective:

In older markets, consumers may have gained knowledge, reducing their motivation to engage in extensive ad processing. As such, factors that increase their personal involvement in the ad – like the use of emotion-focused appeals and positively framed messages – may be particularly likely to create a behavioral response (Chandy et al., 2001, p. 411)

trigger immediate behaviors like impulse buys (Shiv et al., 1997).

(see fig 1)

→ **Use Positive Ads to Be Remembered.** Emphasize positive aspects about your brand when you want the message to stick. A negative political ad should perform better if the candidate is struggling to get attention, but a positive ad should perform better if the candidate already has sufficient attention (Bolls et al., 2001).

(see fig 2)

HOW TO APPLY

→ **Use Negative Ads to Grab Attention.** Humans are built to avoid pain, so they notice negative stimuli more easily. Negative ads pull more eye fixations and

Bolls, P. D., Lang, A., & Potter, R. F. (2001). The effects of message valence and listener arousal on attention, memory, and facial muscular responses to radio advertisements. *Communication research*, 28(5), 627-651.

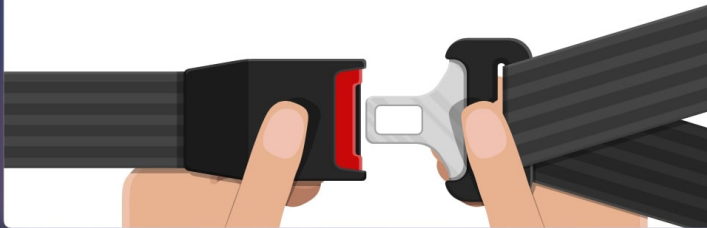
Chandy, R. K., Tellis, G. J., MacInnis, D. J., & Thaivanich, P. (2001). What to say when: Advertising appeals in evolving markets. *Journal of marketing Research*, 38(4), 399-414.

Wear a Seatbelt

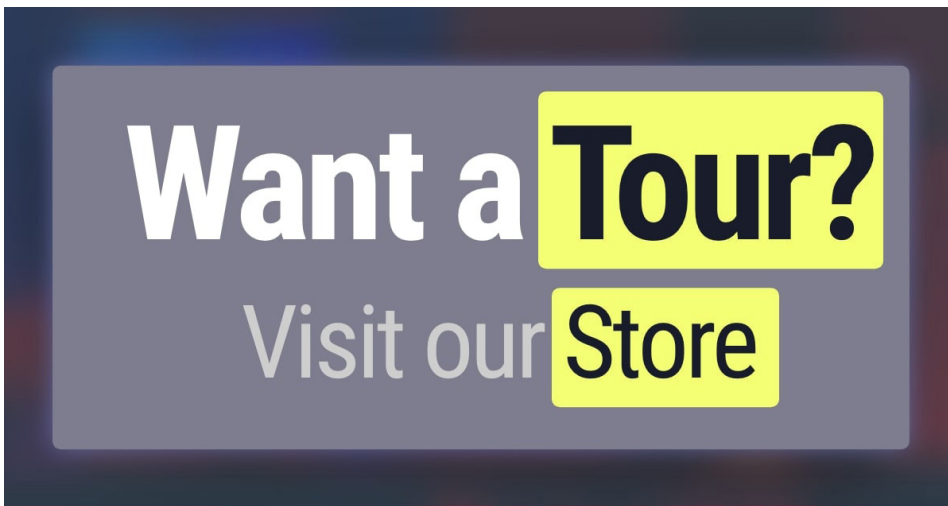


1

Wear a Seatbelt



2



RHyme YOUR SLOGAN OR CALL-TO-ACTION

Rhymes feel more accurate and truthful.

A simple rhyme dictated the O.J.

Simpson trial: *If the glove doesn't fit, you must acquit.*

Consider these ad frames:

- What sobriety conceals, alcohol unmasks.
- What sobriety conceals, alcohol reveals.

Both statements convey the same information, but the rhyming statement seemed more accurate and truthful (McGlone & Tofighbakhsh, 2000). Students

felt a pleasant sensation from the rhyme, and they misattributed this sensation to the information.

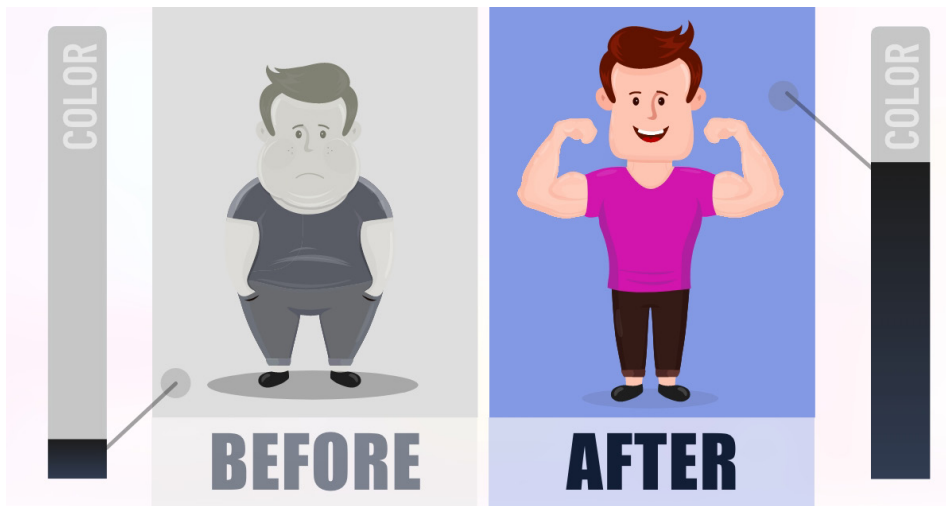
So find a rhyme:

- Be a dove, show some love.
- Whaddya say, donate today.
- Want a tour? Visit our store.

McGlone, M. S., & Tofighbakhsh, J. (2000). Birds of a feather flock conjointly (?): Rhyme as reason in aphorisms. *Psychological science*, 11(5), 424-428.

2

AD CREATIVE



DEPICT THE PROBLEM IN GRAYSCALE

A visual difference implies a semantic difference.

Infomercials are notorious for this technique.

You see footage of somebody needlessly struggling with an ordinary task. Then *bam*. You see another person solving this problem with a better product.

But have you noticed that the “before” scenario is

usually black and white? Advertisers want these two scenarios to look visually different. I call it *contrast fluency*. Viewers confuse visual contrast for semantic contrast: *Hmm, something seems different. The product must make a big difference.*

Therefore, degrade the color or visual quality of the “problem” framing.



REDUCE COLOR IN TEXT-FILLED ADS

Text and movement can distract viewers from evaluating the ad message.

Do viewers need to evaluate your ad message?

aspects highly relevant to ad claims are more persuasive (Meyers-Levy & Peracchio, 1995, p. 121)

Don't use vibrant colors. Grayscale performs better:

When the substantial resources devoted to ad processing are inadequate for thorough ad scrutiny, black-and-white ads or those that color highlight

Meyers-Levy, J., & Peracchio, L. A. (1995). Understanding the effects of color: How the correspondence between available and required resources affects attitudes. *Journal of consumer research*, 22(2), 121-138.

Shani-Feinstein, Y., Kyung, E. J., & Goldenberg, J. (2022). Moving, fast or slow: How perceived speed influences mental representation and decision making. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 49(3), 520-542.



INSERT A BLOCKADE TOWARD THE RIGHT OF ADS

Eye gaze travels from left to right. Insert an element that blocks viewers' gaze from drifting away from the ad.

You can "trap" eye gaze with a blockade.

For example, which ad performed better?

(see fig 1)

Answer: Ad B (Park et al., 2018).

WHY IT WORKS

Researchers argued that people look more trustworthy if they face left, but I see a more plausible explanation.

You evaluate ads from left to right (assuming you read from left to right). Therefore:

→ **Ad A:** Eye gaze starts at this person, moving rightward away from the product.

→ **Ad B:** Eye gaze enters from the left, moving rightward until hitting that person. Then moving downward toward the product.

Park, J., Spence, C., Ishii, H., & Togawa, T. (2018). Does Face Orientation Affect the Perception of a Model and the Evaluation of Advertised Product?. ACR European Advances.





DEPICT BODY MOVEMENTS WITHOUT SLOW MOTION

If somebody is riding a bike in slow motion, your brain will struggle to simulate this action because this body movement is unnatural

Advertisers love slow motion.

Turn on the television, and you'll see a sentimental commercial with a collage of slow motion shots.

(see fig 1)

But does it really work? Not really.

Slow motion reduces the effectiveness of ads (e.g., clicks, likes, comments, persuasion). But only when it depicted human motion (Yin et al., 2021).

WHY IT DOESN'T WORK

Slow motion emphasizes the “intentionality” of decisions.

In another study, mock jurors watched surveillance footage of a shooting. They were more likely to convict the defendant with first-degree murder if they watched a version in slow motion because it seemed like this person had more time to contemplate the decision (Caruso et al., 2016).

In advertising, slow motion triggers skepticism because it orients viewers toward the intentionality of these people (i.e., to persuade).

However, I see another culprit.

Humans have *mirror neurons*. If you see somebody eating a cookie, your brain simulates this sensation — as if YOU are eating a cookie.

Slow motion can backfire because it impedes this effect. If somebody is eating a cookie in slow motion, your brain will struggle to simulate this action because your body doesn't move in slow motion. It's unnatural.

A similar effect happened in another study: Males preferred ads with quick and forceful motion, yet females preferred ads with smooth and gentle motion (Mailik & Sayin, 2021).

(see fig 2)

You prefer whichever motion — fast vs. slow — feels like *your* body.

HOW TO APPLY

→ **Use Slow Motion for Inanimate Objects.** Just not human motion. Humans don't move in slow motion. Neither should actors that portray your customers.

→ **Help Viewers Simulate Actions.** Did you notice that the previous images were right hands? Since most

people are right-handed, this orientation feels more familiar and immersive.

Caruso, E. M., Burns, Z. C., & Converse, B. A. (2016). Slow motion increases perceived intent. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(33), 9250-9255.

Malik, S., & Sayin, E. (2022). Hand movement speed in advertising elicits gender stereotypes and consumer responses. *Psychology & Marketing*, 39(2), 331-345.

Yin, Y., Jia, J. S., & Zheng, W. (2021). The effect of slow motion video on consumer inference. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 58(5), 1007-1024.



1



2



POSITION IMAGES ON THE LEFT

Your right hemisphere will process the left side of advertisements.

You evaluate stimuli differently on the left or right:

...a stimulus presented in the left visual field (LVF) is initially received and processed by the right hemisphere (RH), and a stimulus presented in the right visual field (RVF) is initially projected to and processed by the left hemisphere (LH; Bourne, 2006, p. 374)

Your right hemisphere will process the left side of advertisements. Therefore, place images in these locations:

Because the right hemisphere is better suited to process pictorial information and the left one is more logical and verbal, placing the image on the left hand side of the text enhances the processing of the whole message (Grobelny & Michalski, 2015, p. 87)

Bourne, V. J. (2006). The divided visual field paradigm: Methodological considerations. *Laterality*, 11(4), 373-393.

Grobelny, J., & Michalski, R. (2015). The role of background color, interletter spacing, and font size on preferences in the digital presentation of a product. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 43, 85-100.

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