

Advertising Techniques

Word Magic

What we think of a product often depends on what it is called. In advertising, word magic works two ways. First, the product advertised is made to sound exciting. An automobile becomes “The Great Escape Car.” Ordinary prunes become “Black Diamonds.” Secondly, competing products are made to sound not nearly so good as the one being advertised. We have all heard of “old-fashioned powder cleaners,” “weak liquid detergents,” or “regular aspirin.” These words appeal to the sense and emotions making grand statements about one product and/or downgrading another.

Transfer

To transfer is to move from one place to another. When we look at an ad, we often transfer our feelings and ideas from one thing to another. For instance, a certain cigarette ad shows a young couple, trees, rocks, and a waterfall. The reader has good feelings about all of these things, and he can't help transferring his feelings about all of these things to the cigarette itself. Ads for a brand of soup show a steaming bowl set beside fine silverware and china on a fine table. People have good feelings for the silverware and china (which may cost hundreds of dollars) and transfer these feelings to the soup (which may cost a dollar). Most ads for cars invite us to transfer our feelings from the people and objects around the car to the car itself (If I have that car, I will be just like that person).

Testimonial

Sometimes a famous person is paid by an advertiser to say she/he uses and likes a certain product. This is called a testimonial. Some athletes, actors, or entertainers make millions from testimonials. Fans may eat the breakfast cereal of a ball player, drink the soft drink of a singer, and wear the underwear of an actor or actress. Organizations (such as the Yankees) may also be used as may ordinary people.

Plain Folks

Many advertisers say that their products are the choice of the ordinary people in America. They show pictures of their products being used and enjoyed by “plain folks” just like us. Sometimes they even print short letters of praise from unknown people living in small towns.

Snob Appeal

On the other hand, advertisers may tell us to buy their products because the common people do not use it. Only a special few have the money and good judgment to buy this product, and we should buy it if we want to be counted among the special few. In this way, we can prove to all that we are in some way better than the average person.

Bandwagon

To “climb on the bandwagon” means to do what everyone else is doing. In advertising, we are often told to buy a product because everyone else is buying it. This method is often used for new products and improvements in old products. We are told that a new move is “the motion picture all America is talking about.” An improvement may be said

to be “taking the country by storm.” We are made to feel that since everyone else is jumping on the bandwagon, we should, too. If we don’t we run the risk of being left out.

Direct Order

This is perhaps the oldest and simplest method of advertising, but it still works. The product is shown and the people are told to buy it. “Buy U.S. Savings Bonds,” says one ad. “Eat at Joe’s,” says another. Direct Order ads are often used at the end of other types of ads: “Go down to your neighborhood drug store and ask for”

Bargain Price

Most ads do not mention exact prices because people already see most prices as too high. When prices are included in ads, they are usually said to be “low.” This may or may not be true. Price is a motivating factor for most, so an ad that says an item is on sale will get the attention of most.

Jokes

People like to laugh and have a good time. These laughs can be associated with a product and they also get the attention of the viewer.

Fear

Fear definitely gets people’s attention, as people in the media know. Advertisers play on our fears of failure, of offending, or fear of missing out. Foot and body odor commercials often play on our sense of fear. Ads for alarm systems also use this technique.

Facts and Figures

Some advertising works on our minds as well as our feelings. Advertisers use facts and figures to show why their product is superior. Sometimes, however, the facts and figures can be manipulated to show the product in a better light than is deserved. We never know the exact circumstances of taste tests, for example.

Scientific Terms and Diagrams

Ever hear of “Certs with Retsin” or “Acid Reflux”? Some big, important words sound quite impressive and make us think the product works well and that doctors can confirm this.

Expert Testimonial

This is the same as the sports figure testimonial, only doctors and other experts are the ones pitching the product. Who knows how much expertise these doctors have or how much they were paid? We just know they are doctors.

Technology

Commercials cost a lot, so most companies are using big budgets to create phenomenal visual stimulation for the viewer. Pictures can be altered with computers to make them more visually appealing so that the viewer’s interest will be held.