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UNIT 12

PLANNING THE ATTACK

A. Understanding a printed text (1)

The following text discusses how to plan an advertising policy. Look at its structure, including the headings, illustration and caption. Then read through the passage quickly and find the answers to the following questions. Remember that you do not have to understand every word in order to do so.

1. What is the broad difference between marketing objectives and marketing strategies?
2. What does Figure 7.1 illustrate?

How ads are born

Advertisements do not usually spring fully formed into the mind of an agency's resident creative genius. Most advertisements, if they are any good, are the outcome of a process of careful, detailed and imaginative analysis, which leads to the formulation of an advertising strategy for the brand concerned. This strategy should be agreed in advance between agency and client, before any advertising ideas are put forward. If you are the client, you are, obviously, impatient to see some ideas. It is very tempting to go for the ideas and ignore the reasons for them. This is a mistake. If the strategy is not soundly based, there is every risk that what seems on the surface a good idea is, in fact, misdirected and misconceived. It is, therefore, essential to develop an appropriate strategy for the advertising before starting to produce ideas.

Objectives and strategies

2. At this stage, it is important to distinguish between a variety of different types of 'objectives', or 'strategy', or 'intention', or 'role' for advertising. People in marketing have a tendency to use confusing language and, in consequence, to set up requirements which, logically, cannot be met.

Marketing

Marketing objectives are specific targets set in terms of sales, brand share, distribution, consumer penetration, re-purchase, etc.

Marketing strategy is the statement of the means by which the objectives can be achieved. These means may (or may not) include advertising, as a major or minor element within the total marketing mix.

Advertising

The role of advertising within the marketing mix is the part it has to play in the marketing strategy. Because advertising is not the only element in the overall marketing mix... ... advertising's role is almost certainly going to be to meet part only of the marketing strategy. This may be anything from increasing brand awareness to improving specific aspects of the brand image.

Advertising objectives are more or less specific statements of what is to be achieved by advertising, in terms of (for example) increased awareness, or improved scores on certain attitude scales.

Advertising strategy is a statement of how the objectives are to be achieved, in terms of creative content and media deployment.

For the creative department of the agency, then, there are specific creative objectives, to be achieved through the fulfilment of creative strategy.
3 The ultimate aim of the advertising planner is to develop an advertising strategy which provides the answers to two superficially straightforward questions:

- Who do we want to talk to?
- What do we want them to get out of our advertising?

In order to arrive at the answer, he needs to go through a more or less logical process of analysis, based on market research—whether published, or commissioned by the client, or (occasionally) commissioned by the agency—and on his knowledge and experience.

What he needs to know can be set out in the form of a cycle of information and analysis—a cycle, because marketing and advertising are a continuous process, and knowledge gained from one advertising campaign can be used to develop its continuation. The cycle can look like that shown in Fig. 7.1.

![Diagram](#)

4 Different agencies use rather different versions of this, but they all look broadly similar.

The terms used in this version cover the following general areas:

(a) **The marketplace**

The market in which our brand competes: trends in sales, consumption, distribution; the state of product development; the level of competitive advertising and promotional activity; patterns of consumption—are there heavy or light users of the products and who are they?

(b) **The present**

This sets out to describe the client's position within the marketplace: brand shares and trends in brand share; product advantages and disadvantages over competition—both in physical terms (laboratory test and blind consumer test) and in terms of consumer opinions and attitudes; planned and possible product improvements; recent marketing activity, in relation to that of competitors.

(c) **The future**

This reflects, primarily, the client's objectives for the brand—what are his targets, in terms of sales, market share, consumer purchasing and usage? But to these targets needs to be added an analysis of what must be achieved in order to obtain them, in terms of both the behaviour and attitude of consumers: and of more functional matters such as (for example) greatly improved distribution—to put it in what is, from the agency's point of view, the most defensive way possible, it is too easy to blame the advertising when the sales force has failed to achieve the necessary levels of retail distribution to support the required sales.
Advertising objectives and strategy

In practice, one should here consider all the different forms of communication of the product to the consumer, and allocate to each, and to sales activity, product development, market research, etc., their specific roles in meeting the objectives. For example, although most retail grocery advertising in the UK seems to consist of lists of prices, and consumers tend to expect it to do so, it seems unrealistic to expect advertising to do the major job of communicating large numbers of prices, especially promotional prices, when this can be done far better by window bills and in-store display: there are few shoppers who analyse every available grocery ad before deciding where to shop. Surely the role of advertising for a grocery chain is to give customers good reasons other than price for shopping there.

Thus, it is possible to define the role of advertising for a product or brand as being (for example):

- to maintain the loyalty of existing buyers, and to encourage them to use more;
- to encourage non-users to sample the product;
- to inform consumers, especially lapsed users, that the product has been improved or reformulated;
- to develop the belief among both users and, ideally, non-users that the brand is technically superior to competitors for reasons A, B or C;
- to increase awareness of the brand and its characteristics.

On the basis of this analysis, it is possible to develop specific objectives and creative and media strategies for the advertising. I will come back to this in a moment.

Presumably, the advertising will have some effect on the market. It is an essential element in the planning cycle to measure the effects of the advertising, as far as possible, together with those of other types of marketing activity, in order to take account of what has happened in the next phase of planning.

B. Check your understanding

Read through the passage carefully, looking up anything you do not understand. Then answer the following questions.

1. Does an advertising agency immediately produce a fully formed advertisement?
2. What process usually precedes the formulation of an advertising strategy?
3. What comes first, ideas or strategy?
4. What risk is involved in adopting the wrong strategy?
5. Is advertising necessarily a part of a marketing strategy?
6. Why is Figure 7.1 called a cycle?
C. Increase your vocabulary

Explain in your own words the meaning of the following as used in the text:

- paragraph 1, line 2: resident creative genius
  10: misdirected
  lines 10–11: misconceived

- paragraph 2, line 6: consumer penetration
  9: major or minor element
  18: attitude scales

- paragraph 3, line 8: commissioned

- paragraph 4(a), line 4: heavy or light users
  (d), line 15: maintain the loyalty of existing users
  18: lapsed users

D. Check your grammar

Find the following words in the text and say what they refer to

- paragraph 2, line 10: it
  14: this

- paragraph 3, line 5: them
  6: he
  9: his
  13: its

- paragraph 4 (a), line 4: they
  (b) 6: that
  (c) 2: his

E. Understanding a lecture

Play through the lecture on creativity on your tape, to find out what it is all about. Then look at the questions below and play the tape again, section by section, making notes for your answers. You can then expand these into full sentences and make a summary of the argument.

1. Is it possible to tell someone how to create an advertisement?
2. Does the name of the product have to appear in it?
3. What is the basic element in a good ad?
4. Is an imaginative idea all that is needed?
5. What sort of idea is worth its weight in gold?
6. What is needed as well as a creative idea?
7. What can the best creators do?
8. Can most members of advertising agencies do this?
9. What do 'flashy' and 'trendy' mean?
10. How long does the effect of such ads last?

F. Understanding a printed text (2)

1. There are, though, three or four fundamental criteria for judging advertisements which can be applied more or less universally. These are:

- Does the ad make me stop and look at it?
- Is there an original or unusual idea in it?
- Does it work as a piece of design?
- Is it relevant to the product?
- Is it easy to understand?

These are all questions which can be asked—and answered—without knowledge of the purpose behind the advertisement. However, the critical questions are specific to the particular ad, and they are the ones that really matter. They are:

- Does this advertisement fit the strategy?
- Will it work?

It is only the answers to these questions that can really enable you to judge an ad, although it will certainly be good supporting evidence if the answers to the earlier questions are favourable. Basically, you can assess ads at two stages: before or after they have been run in the media—('pre-testing' and 'post-testing').

2. It has already been pointed out that one of the reasons for setting an advertising strategy is to assess the effectiveness of the advertisement. Advertising must be designed to communicate certain ideas to certain types of people. It does not matter if it communicates totally different ideas to different types of people. This is not relevant. So when the Chairman's wife says she does not like it, or that she cannot understand it—or that she never sees your advertising—and your advertising is designed to appeal (say) to factory foremen or teenage girls, you can treat her judgement with the appropriate degree of contempt.
What has to be done, then, to discover whether the advertisement is in line with the strategy, almost inevitably involves a form of cheating. The simplest way of getting an answer is to show the advertisement to a number of individuals selected from the target group, or to a group of them, and to get a discussion going about the ad. This needs to be done skillfully, and is usually done by trained researchers, who are adept at getting people to talk and at avoiding asking leading questions—because that is not merely cheating, it will lead to your deluding yourself: in this type of interview people are only too eager to tell you what you want to know.

3 From this kind of research, you can find out a great deal about your ad and your product. The sort of questions it can answer are, for example:

- Is the ad interesting?
- Is the ad intelligible?
- Is it liked or disliked? (It is not disastrous if it is disliked, but there need to be very strong compensating factors.)
- What does it tell them about the product? What will it taste or smell like? What will it cost? Is that good value?
- Do they believe this, or question it?
- Who do they think the product will appeal to? What sort of people will use it? In what circumstances?
- What sort of shops will sell the product?
- What kind of feelings do they get from the ad—cheerful, serious, sad, confident...?
- Might they try the product? Or try it again?

4 What this sort of research will not have told you is anything about the advertising's ability to stand out and attract attention when it appears in the chosen media. This is something that you may feel a need to be sure of, and it is quite possible to devise tests which will give at least a good indication of the likely impact of the ad in these terms.

There is, however, a theoretical problem. It is perfectly true that an ad is useless if no one notices it. But it is by no means true that an ad which everyone notices is necessarily good—it may be noticed for reasons which are totally irrelevant to the strategy. And, furthermore, the ways in which people take in messages from ads are often almost subconscious. (This is not to say that you can deliberately reach people by advertising 'subliminally', merely that it is quite possible to get a message out of an ad without really being aware of it.)

5 The obvious test for an advertisement is 'Does it sell?' (or 'Does it sell more?'). Unfortunately, it is very rarely that this question can be answered precisely. It is unusual, except in the case of direct response or direct mail, for the advertising to be the only influence affecting sales. And even when it appears to be so, the level of sales is in itself a quite complex measure. It is easy, for example, to say that an advertising campaign failed to increase sales. But it may have succeeded magnificently in preventing sales from falling.
G. Check your understanding

Read through the text carefully, looking up anything you do not understand. Then say if the following statements are correct or not:

- There are no universal criteria for judging advertisements.
- To judge the originality of an ad, you must first know its purpose.
- One of the critical questions about any ad is whether or not it fits the marketing strategy.
- One of the purposes of a strategy is to enable one to make a judgement of the effectiveness of an ad.
- It is a matter of great importance if an ad means different things to different people.
- People you interview about the effectiveness of ads always try to tell you what they think you would like to hear.
- It does not necessarily matter if people do not like an ad.
- It matters very much if no one notices an ad.
- Part of the influence of an advertisement is exerted on the customer’s subconscious.
- The best way to judge an ad is by its effect on sales, but this is in fact very difficult to do.

H. Understanding discourse

Look at the table below, listen to the tutor discussing it on your tape, and note down your answers to the questions he asks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPINIONS OF DIFFERENT MEDIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful in day-to-day life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful in deciding what to buy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful in deciding where to buy things?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media in which advertising is most interesting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media in which advertising is most useful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media in which one finds ads one can trust?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table taken from WHITE, Advertising: what it is and how to do it. McGraw-Hill, 1980

The passages in sections A and F of this unit were taken (edited) from WHITE, Advertising: what it is and how to do it. McGraw-Hill, 1980