

MODUL PERKULIAHAN ELEARNING

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***WRITING COMMERCIALS AND MULTIMEDIA PRESENTATIONS***

Dosen

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**INTRODUCTION**

Today, more commercials are competing for our attention than ever before. The challenge is to make your commercial stand out from the rest and attract the consumer’s attention. But advertisers are unsure as to how to do this.

One school believes the “creative” approach is the solution to TV’s clutter. Dramatic stories, fast-paced action, surreal fantasy landscapes, animation, computer graphics, the “New wave” look, and other techniques are used to give commercials distinct graphic appeal—often, in my opinion, at the expense of the sales pitch. These commercials stand out, but they don’t sell, because they tend to ignore the product and its appeal to the consumer.

A second school embraces old-fashioned values. They believe that simple commercials, with honest and straightforward presentations of the product and its benefits, are what convince consumers to write checks and open wallets. One example is the early MCI commercials using Burt Lancaster and Joan Rivers to deliver the pitch. No fancy computer graphics, no blue jeans turning into rocket ships—just good old-fashioned selling that works.

Many advertising experts are rising to defend the straightforward approach to TV commercials. Faith Popcorn, president of BrainReserve Advertising in New York, predicts that we’re moving into an age of product intelligence, in which consumers will demand real information, “real sell.”

Today’s commercials don’t fill this need. According to one study, 85 percent of those surveyed said commercials are funny or clever. But 68 percent of these people said commercials don’t give them any facts but just create an image.

Not everyone in advertising believes commercials should be informative. Once, on the old Phil Donahue show, advertising executive Anne Tolstoi Wallach was asked why advertisers didn’t make commercials that are plain, blunt, and honest, with no frills.

Wallach replied that information alone is not remembered. She pointed out that teenagers have been exposed to a continuous stream of antidrug information, yet drug use is on the rise. “We don’t take things in through information,” said Wallach. “We take things in emotionally and in many other ways even we are not sure [of].” (Later in the broadcast, Donahue remarked, “Style and form get more attention than substance.”)

As an example, Wallach pointed to the Calvin Klein jeans commercials featuring Brooke Shields. She said the commercials were successful because of “one gorgeous girl and the world’s greatest photographer.”

It’s true that certain ads and commercials achieve dramatic results by breaking the rules. But these successes are unpredictable. Only by knowing and using what works do copywriters achieve consistently high sales results.

And I disagree with the statement that people don’t take things in through information. Browse the shelves of your local bookstore; you’ll find that “how-to” and straight informational-type books dominate the publishing industry. What’s more, the authors of these books don’t resort to trickery, grandstanding, or gimmicks—they tell their story through a straightforward presentation of the facts. They know that the real customer for their book is someone who wants and needs the information it contains.

And so it is with products. The serious prospect is an information seeker; she wants to be well informed before she spends her hard-earned dollars. Too many commercials waste their effort pitching to the non-prospect, someone who is unlikely to turn into a paying customer.

Advertisers emulate the showmanship and production values of Hollywood feature films in their efforts to get these non-prospects to watch their commercials. They forget that the goal is not to get people to watch, but to get people to buy or to prefer one brand to another. Long ago, David Ogilvy and other advertising pioneers proved there is no correlation between a person liking a commercial and being sold by it.

There are numerous examples of factual commercials out-selling entertaining ones. Malcolm D. MacDougall, who produced commercials for

 Ronald Reagan’s 1980 presidential campaign, tells how the campaign was built entirely on direct, factual, tough commercials that worked.

According to MacDougall, research showed that hard-hitting, informative commercials were far more effective in selling Reagan for president than a soft-sell image commercial they had run early in the campaign.

“I have wondered often if ‘creativity’ doesn’t sometimes get in the way of believability,” Advertising Age columnist Sid Bernstein wrote in a column on TV commercials. “I have a feeling that what we really need is more simplicity. More simple, honest selling. More dignity, more clarity.

Less confusion . . . less emphasis on sensational entertainment and more emphasis on making a sensible buy.”

Some advertisers hope to make their campaigns stand out by spending large sums of money to produce lavish, dazzling commercials. But a big budget is no guarantee of success, nor does a small budget doom you to failure. TV’s longest-running commercial, the one offering the record set of “150 Music Masterpieces” by mail, was made in 1968 for $5,000. To date, it has sold $25 million worth of albums.

**TIPS ON WRITING TV SPOTS**

Here are some tips on writing TV commercials that are arresting, memorable, and persuasive:

1. TV is primarily a medium of pictures, not words. Be sure your pictures deliver a selling message. If you can’t figure out what is being sold when the sound is turned off, the commercial is a flop.
2. However, sight and sound must work together. Words should explain what the pictures are showing.
3. Viewers can take in a limited amount of sight and sound in 30 or 60 seconds. So, if your sales pitch requires a barrage of words, keep the pictures simple. On the other hand, if you use complex graphics, keep the words to a minimum. Viewers can’t handle a dazzling visual display and fast-talking announcer at the same time.
4. Think about your customer—the guy or gal in front of the television. Is your commercial interesting and important enough to stop your customer from getting up and going to the refrigerator or the bathroom?
5. Think and plan your commercial within existing budgetary limitations. Special effects, jingles, actors, animation, computer graphics, and shooting on location make the cost of commercials skyrocket. Only the stand-up presenter and straightforward, in-the-studio product demonstration are relatively inexpensive to produce.
6. Make sure the lead of your commercial is a real grabber. The first 4 seconds of a commercial are like the headline of a print ad; they decide whether the viewer will sit through your presentation or fix a snack. Open with something irresistible: snappy music, an arresting visual, a dramatic situation, a real-life problem.
7. If you are selling a product that can be purchased off the supermarket shelf, show the label. Use close-ups to draw attention to the package. People will buy the product later if they remember the package from your commercial.
8. Use motion. Film, unlike slide shows, is a medium of motion. Show cars driving, maple syrup pouring, airplanes flying, popcorn popping, club soda fizzing. Avoid stagnant commercials. Keep it moving.
9. Also, don’t forget that television offers sound as well as pictures. Let the viewer hear the car engine roaring, the pancakes frying, the airplane whooshing, the popcorn popping, the club soda fizzing, the ice cubes plopping into a cold, tall drink. Many people find the sound of sizzling bacon more appetizing than the look. (Smell may be even more appetizing, but television with smell is not yet a reality. Nor do I know of any manufacturers who are developing such a device.)
10. Use “supers.” These are titles, in white type, superimposed over the picture. The super reinforces a sales point made in the commercial or makes an additional point not covered in the spoken narration. If you are selling vitamins by mail, put up a super that says, “NOT AVAILABLE IN STORES.” People will not buy from a mail-order commercial if they think they can get the product in a store.
11. Repeat the product name and the main selling point at least twice. There are two reasons why you should do this. **First**, repetition aids the viewer in remembering the product. **Second**, many viewers may not have been paying attention during the beginning of your commercial, so you want to make sure they know who you are and what you are selling.
12. Avoid hackneyed situations that bore viewers. Make your commercial fresh, memorable, a little bit different. Burger King’s commercials with Emmanuel Lewis were essentially stand-up presenter spots. But they were made memorable by the use of Lewis, then a cute, short, twelve-year old boy who could pass for five.
13. Don’t neglect the product. Show people eating it, wearing it, riding it, using it, enjoying it. Demonstrate the product. Have people talk about how good the product is. Apply proven techniques of print advertising to television, and you will be delighted with the results.
14. If you want viewers to call or write in to order a product or request more information, announce this at the beginning of the commercial (“Get paper and pencil ready to take advantage of this special TV offer . . .”). Few people keep a notepad handy while they watch TV.
15. If you use a celebrity (either on camera or voice-over), identify the celebrity with a voice-over introduction or superimposed title (“Bill Cosby for Jell-O Pudding”). A large number of people will not recognize celebrities unless you identify them. And they will not be impressed or swayed by the celebrity unless they know who he is.
16. In local retail commercials, give the address and clear directions to the store. If you have many locations, urge viewers to consult their phone books for the location nearest to them.
17. **The four basic commercial lengths** are 10, 30, 60, and 120 seconds. Ten-second commercials are usually “ID” or identification spots. ID spots just drive home a product name and support the campaign’s 30- or 60-second spots. However, some advertisers, such as C&C Cola, save money by delivering their entire pitch in 10-second spots. Commercials that build preference for a brand-name product are either 30 or 60 seconds long. Mail-order advertisers use 120-second campaigns because they need to deliver more complete information to convince people to respond.
18. Ninety words is about the most you can cram into a 60-second commercial. Many contain much less.
19. Because time is limited, a commercial should stick to one main thought or sales point: flame-broiling beats frying; Midas installs more mufflers than anyone else; Sprint costs less than AT&T; Apple makes nice, friendly, easy-to-use computers. Only in brochures, print ads, and direct mail do you have the space you need to cover all the facts. TV is more limiting.

**TYPING THE SCRIPT**

The manuscript format for TV commercials is simple: Video (pictures) are typed on the left, audio (words and sound effects) are typed on the right. What’s important is writing a good commercial. Don’t worry about the technical terms. You’ll learn them when you need to, but they are not essential. All that counts is that your commercial is arresting, memorable, and persuasive.

Here are just a few of the basic terms to help get you started:

ANNCR — **Announcer**. The narrator of the commercial.

CU — **Close-up**. An extremely tight shot in which a single object, such as a package label, dominates the screen.

LS — **Long shot**. A shot of a distant subject.

MS — **Medium shot**. A shot of the subject in the foreground, showing a substantial amount of the scenery.

SFX — **Sound effects**. Background sound other than human voice or musical instruments.

TS — **Tight shot**. A shot leaving little or no space around the subject.

VO — **Voice-over**. The voice of an off-camera narrator.

The commercial below is typed in proper commercial manuscript format. It’s also a good example of straightforward copy packed with product benefits.

Writer : Amy Bly

Product : Galantine Chicken (30 seconds)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **VIDEO** | **AUDIO** |
| 1. MS to CU: Golden brown Galantine chicken onplatter.2. MS: Man slicing chicken. One-quarter to one third of meat is already sliced on platter.. .3. CU: Array of chicken dishes on buffet table.4. MS: Smiling family eating chicken. 5. CU: Fully sliced chicken on platter..6. CU: Packaged chicken, showing Galantine name and logo. | 1. ANNCR: (VO): You’re looking at a plump, juicy Galantine chicken. But this is noordinary chicken. Because we’ve taken out the bones.2. You can slice right through it .3. Prepare any number of delicious chicken dishes, from chicken scampi to chicken salad, quickly and easily, without having to cut around bones.4. A Galantine chicken costs more than an ordinary chicken.5. But then there’s no waste. You get one hundred percent meat6. So if you have a bone to pick with ordinary chicken, try Galantine instead. At your butcher’s and at fine grocers everywhere. |

There are a number of things about this commercial:

1. It’s simple—easy to take in—and inexpensive to produce.
2. The visuals show the product, a demonstration of the product (easy slicing of boneless chicken), people enjoying the product, and the package—all in 30 seconds.
3. The narration tells us the unique selling feature of the chicken (no bones), the benefits of this feature (slice right through it, no waste, quick and easy), and shows what you can do with the product (prepare any number of dishes).
4. The ending (“if you have a bone to pick with ordinary chicken”) is a clever play on words that leaves a smile on your face. And it tells you where you can buy the product.

Here’s another effective 30-second spot from the same writer:

Writer : Amy Bly

Product : YOURS beer for women (30 seconds)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **VIDEO** | **AUDIO** |
| 1. MS: Well-dressed couple sitting in fancy restaurant. Manreaches for bottle of beer on table. Woman slaps his hand awayplayfully.2. MS: Man’s face. He looks over at her, puzzled, grinning. 3. TS: Woman’s finger pointing at label on bottle. 4. MS: Woman pouring beer. 5. MS: Woman finishes pouring beer and picks up glass.6. MS: Man reaching for glass of beer. 7. MS: Woman pulls glass away, smiling..8. TS: Bottle of YOURS against black background.  | 1. WOMAN: Hey, that’s YOURS!2. MAN: If it’s mine, why can’t I have it?3. WOMAN: Because YOURS is the beer that’s made for women only.4. SFX: Beer being poured into glass. ANNCR: YOURS is bubbly, light, and has fewer calories than ordinary beer.5. ANNCR: And, it comes in convenient ten-ounce bottles that pour one perfect glass of beer . . . enough to quench your thirst without filling you up.6. MAN: Why can’t I have YOURS?7. WOMAN: ’Cause it’s mine . .8. ANNCR: (VO): YOURS . . . the first beer for women only. |

This is basically a lifestyle commercial combined with a presentation of product benefits. YOURS is a beer for women who eat in fancy restaurants, dress well, and have attractive, personable dinner companions. You can picture Sarah Jessica Parker and Dylan McDermott playing the upscale duo.

Other things about the script:

1. It is fun, humorous, and playful. But all the playfulness is relevant to the product!
2. The product has a strong position: “The first beer for women only.”
3. The commercial highlights product features that would appeal to women: light, few calories, small servings per bottle.
4. The name is repeated five times and the label shown twice.

**NONBROADCAST AV**

Radio and TV commercials are the most visible part of the copywriter’s work, because we hear them every day. But each year, there are thousands of scripts written and produced that we never get to hear or see.

This area of copywriting is known as non-broadcast audiovisual (AV). These are audiovisual presentations created by a company and used to reach select, small audiences. Instead of being aired over radio or TV, these presentations are shown at meetings, trade shows, seminars, presentations, and in one-on-one sales pitches where the salesperson is sitting down with a customer. Many different media are available for non-broadcast AV. These include:

1. PowerPoint
2. CD-ROM
3. Single-projector slide show
4. Dual-projector slide show
5. Videotape
6. DVD
7. Multimedia (combination video and slides with multiple projectors)
8. Macromedia Flash
9. Videotext
10. Software

And these presentations are used in many different applications:

1. Employee communications
2. Trade show exhibits
3. Seminars and conferences
4. Recruitment
5. Community relations
6. Public relations
7. Sales support
8. Advertising inquiry fulfillment (tapes or films sent to select prospects who respond to your ads)
9. Presentations to top management
10. Training
11. Product introduction
12. Product demonstration
13. Case histories
14. Meetings
15. Sales aids for company salespeople and sales reps
16. Point-of-purchase display in retail locations
17. Executive summaries of annual reports, sales presentations, and other printed literature
18. To record historic events

The script format for slide shows and films is the same as for TV commercials: visuals on the left, audio on the right. But non-broadcast AV is not limited to 30 or 60 seconds. You can make it as long or as short as you like. **Eight to ten minutes** is the best length for a slide show or film. Twenty minutes is the maximum. Beyond that, your audience will begin to fade.

Non-broadcast AV is much less expensive to produce than TV commercials. A one-minute commercial could cost $40,000 or more. A ten-minute non-broadcast videotape can be produced for $5,000 or less.

John Baldoni, a freelance scriptwriter, offers these tips for writing non-broadcast AV:

1. Write words for the ear, not for the eye. A script is not simply words on a page, but words that are spoken aloud.
2. The spoken words should be precise, coherent, and full of vivid images.
3. Be crystal clear. The listener doesn’t have the luxury of referring back to the text. Your writing must be readily understood the first time it is heard.
4. Research. Find out all you can about the topic, the product, the purpose, the audience.
5. The script should repeat the key selling points several times.
6. The beginning is critical and must “hook” the audience, locking their attention.
7. Be lively, catching, precise. Use active verbs, colorful words and phrases.
8. Spoon-feed the audience. Don’t assault them with fact after fact. Be selective about the facts you choose. An AV presentation doesn’t tell the whole story but should leave the viewer hungry for more information.
9. Use words to paint pictures that complement the actual visuals on the screen.
10. Be as concise and direct as possible. Avoid complicated sentences.