

A Course Project Designed to Aid Students’ Understanding of the Structure of Advertisements: An Application of the Who Says What to Whom over What Channel with What Effect Model

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Introduction

The project described in this paper is most appropriate for instructors teaching a course in promotional strategy, advertising, or integrated marketing communications. The author presents research on a classic communication model and shows how instructors can use it to help their students learn about and understand the structuring of an advertisement. Instructors that select to adopt the project in their course should teach students about the model and its respective components, and in so doing, relate the model to current advertising literature. Once students have studied the model, they can then apply what they have learned to analyze the critical elements of an advertisement. The author uses the project in a promotional strategy course to assess a course-level objective on students’ ability to apply course-based knowledge. The course is offered to predominately sophomore and junior-level students in both the fall and spring semesters at a small private university.

Review of the Literature

Arguably, one of the most significant models in the field of communication and attitude-change is the “Who Says What to Whom in What Channel with What Effect?” model (Lasswell 1948). Components of the Who says What to Whom in What Channel with What Effect model (5W model) were originally studied in the communication literature primarily in the areas of persuasion and attitude-change (Schramm 1955). Lasswell’s classic model is still both relevant and useful today even when considering the vast changes in technology and media (Sapienza, Iyer, and Veenstra 2015). Milestone research studies on Lasswell’s model were published by Hovland and Weiss (1951), Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1963), McGuire (1969), Petty, Cacioppo, Sternthal, Dholakia, and Leavitt (1978), Schumann (1983), and MacInnis and Jaworski (1989). Research on Lasswell’s model has also been published in the marketing and advertising literature (see Atkin and Block 1983; Harmon and Coney

1982; Joseph 1982; Kamins 1990; Ohanian 1990, 1991; Wilson and Sherrell 1993; Miciak and Shanklin 1994; Till and Shimp 1998; Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell 2000; Stanley, Clow, and James 2011; Morimoto 2012). Much of Lasswell's original work is applicable to persuasion and promotional planning. For example, according to McGuire (1969, 1985) the communication and persuasion matrix includes independent or input variables in the communication process. Lasswell (1948) originally identified these input variables (source, message, channel, receiver, and target) in his 5W model. McGuire's communication and persuasion matrix is included in modern advertising textbooks (see Belch and Belch 2015), and additionally has been proven useful in the development of a marketing campaign (Mbilinyi, Zegree, and Roffman, et al. 2008). References to items in the 5W model are still under investigation today. For example, Jin and Phua (2014) reported on several components of the 5W model, such as consumers' perception (Whom), source credibility (Who), and their influence of dissemination of brand information using Tweets (What Channel). Similarly, Yoon and Kim (2015, 2016) recently reported on three components of the 5W model, the use of spokesperson characteristics (Who), Brand-Message Congruity (What), and Consumer Responses (What Effect). What is unique about the project presented in this paper is that although the components of Lasswell's model have been extensively studied in the marketing and advertising literature, to date no pedagogical framework exists for instructors to use the 5W model to teach their students how the components, either individually or collectively, are useful evaluative criteria for an advertisement.

Instructors may use the 5W model as a teaching tool to help students critique advertisements. The author provides the reader with several examples of items that students can identify and critique when using the model to analyze an advertisement. What follows is a description of the 5W model and its relationship to terms and concepts in advertising. The examples of items included in Tables 1 - 5 are for illustrative purposes and may be a useful guide for the reader to help identify sample items under each of the five categories of the 5W model. Students may add or delete items under any of the categories depending on the specific advertisement selected.

The first component of the 5W model is "WHO" or the source of the message. According to Lasswell (1948), the "WHO" dimension includes attributes of the source(s) in the advertisement that lead to the message being understood, and accepted. In an advertising context, a non-exhaustive list of factors typically found in the WHO category, include source credibility and the associated dimensions of expertise, trustworthiness, and dynamism (Table 1). Wilson and Sherrell (1993) found that source credibility had the largest impact of all source effects related to consumers' responsiveness to an advertisement. Other source effects such as source attractiveness have been found to influence the persuasiveness of the message (Till and Busler 2000; Chaiken 1979). Well documented in the marketing literature is that the characteristics of the source of an advertising message such as source power, celebrity/sport endorsers, source likeability, source meaningfulness, and familiarity,

all may influence acceptance of the message (Babin and Harris 2016). Advertisers often rely on celebrity ratings systems such as the Davie Brown Index (DBI), Q Scores, or E Scores to increase the likelihood that an advertisement will be successful (Moriarty, Mitchell, and Wells 2012). The Q Score developed by Marketing Evaluations, Inc. has several categories such as Cartoon Q, Performer Q, Sports Q, Hispanic Performer Q, or Dead Q ratings (Accessed May 20, 2016 from Marketing Evaluations, Inc. The Q Scores Company at (<http://www.qscores.com/Web/default.aspx>)).

Table 1: Example Items for WHO

1.WHO (Source Factors)		
	Check All that Apply	Comments
Source Credibility		
Expertise		
Trustworthiness		
Dynamism		
Source Attractiveness		
Likeability		
Familiarity		
Source Power		
Celebrity Rating		
Q-Score Type		
<i>Performer Q</i>		
<i>Sports Q</i>		
<i>Hispanic Performer Q</i>		
<i>Dead Q</i>		
DBI score		
E Score		
Additional Source Effects		
1.		
2.		

The second component of the 5W model is “WHAT” or source effects. Examples of source effects include but are not limited to; characteristics of the advertisement such as layout, use of color, size and length, message appeal (humor, fear, sex), message sidedness, order of presentation, and nonverbal characteristics of the message (Table 2). Examples of nonverbal cues in an advertising message may include items such as olfactory cues (smell), kinesics (body movement), object language (dress), and facial expression.

Table 2: Example Items for WHAT

2.WHAT (Message Factors)		
	Check All that Apply	Comments
Message Factors		
Informational/Rational		
Emotional/Affective		
<i>Happy</i>		
<i>Sad</i>		
<i>Fear</i>		
<i>Surprise</i>		
Humor		
Attention Getting		
Understandable		
Comparative		
Transformational		
Reminder		
Teaser		
Creative Appeal		
Message Structure		
Color		
Size		
Length		
Headline		
Subheads		
Body Copy		
Audio Component		
Voiceover		
Jingle		
Music		
Nostalgia		
Message Delivery		
One-sidedness		
Two-sidedness		

Order of Presentation		
Primacy		
Recency		
Message Execution		
Straight Sell/Factual		
Scientific/Technical Evidence		
Demonstration		
Comparison		
Testimonial		
Imagery		
Dramatization		
Humor		
Slice of Life		
Personality Symbol		
Animation		
Combination		
Nonverbal Message Factors		
Olfactory		
Object language		
Paralinguistics		
Facial Expression		
Chronemics		
Kinesics		
Haptics		
Other Nonverbal factors		
Augmented Reality		
Virtual Advertisement		
Additional Message Factors		
1.		
2.		

The third component of the 5W model is “WHOM” or the characteristics of the target market. Examples of items included in the “WHOM” category may be level of involvement, segmentation types such as geographic, demographic, psychographics, benefit, and usage segmentation, and business-to-business vs. consumer/end-user markets (Table 3).

Table 3: Example Items for WHOM

3.WHOM (Target Market)		
	Check All that Apply	Comments
Target Market Characteristics		
Level of Involvement		
<i>High</i>		
<i>Medium</i>		
<i>Low</i>		
Segmentation Type		
<i>Demographic</i>		
Age		
Income		
Gender		
Education		
<i>Psychographic</i>		
<i>Benefit</i>		
<i>Prizm</i>		
<i>Geographic</i>		
<i>Niche</i>		
<i>Combination</i>		
Additional Target Market Attributes		
1.		
2.		

The fourth component of the 5W model is “WHAT CHANNEL” or the manner by which the advertiser communicates the message to the target market. Channels include mediums and media vehicles. Examples of traditional channel types include newspaper, magazine, television, radio, and billboard. Examples of contemporary channels include internet, social media, tweets and blogs, internet/interactive sites, online commercials produced on video-sharing websites such YouTube, advertisements sent to consumers via email or mobile devices (push technologies), and electronic versions of newspaper and magazine advertisements (Table 4).

Table 4: Example Items for WHAT CHANNEL

4.WHAT CHANNEL (Communication Medium)		
	Check All that Apply	Comments
Print		
Newspapers		
<i>Daily</i>		
<i>Weekly</i>		
<i>Local</i>		
<i>National</i>		
Magazines		
Broadcast		
Radio		
<i>AM</i>		
<i>FM</i>		
<i>Satellite</i>		
Television		
<i>Network</i>		
<i>Local</i>		
<i>Cable TV</i>		
Internet		
<i>Social Media</i>		
<i>Digital</i>		
<i>Email</i>		
Other		
Mobile		
Transit		
Billboard		
Additional Channel		
1.		
2.		

The fifth and final component of the 5W model is “WHAT EFFECT” or the objective of the advertisement. Objectives may include communication, marketing, sales, or any of the many integrated marketing communication objectives (i.e. Advertising, sales Promotions, Public Relations, Direct Marketing, or Internet/Interactive objectives). Examples of more specific objectives of the advertisement may also include redemption of a franchise or non-franchise building sales promotion, image and corporate advertising, brand or category advertising,

dissemination of information or awareness, trial-use, diffusion of new product/information, and category or brand sales (Table 5).

Table 5: Example Items for WHAT EFFECT

5.WHAT EFFECT (Objective or Goal of the Advertisement)		
	Check All that Apply	Comments
Objectives/Goals of the Advertisement		
Integrated Marketing Communications		
<i>Advertising</i>		
<i>Sales Promotion</i>		
<i>Public Relations</i>		
<i>Cause-Related</i>		
<i>Direct Marketing</i>		
<i>Internet/Digital</i>		
<i>Sales</i>		
Communication		
Marketing		
Increase Category Development Index		
Increase Brand Development Index		
Awareness		
Trial Use		
Additional Objectives or Goals		
1.		
2.		

Project Description

A review of textbooks on promotion and advertising will provide instructors with ample topical coverage of each of the components of the 5W model (see Belch and Belch 2015; Arens 2002; Clow and Baack 2004; Shimp 2000). The author recommends the use of course lecture as well as assigned readings to help students learn about the components of the 5W model. Ample in-class lecture and review of the components of the 5W model will help prepare students for their final paper.

Once students have learned about the 5W model, the next step is for the instructor to have their students select an advertisement to analyze. The author sets a due date for students to bring to class a selection of five advertisements that the student feels are appropriate advertisement for the project. The instructor then reviews the five advertisements and provides feedback to the student. The author has

found that this practice is beneficial because it helps guide the student and helps them to avoid choosing an inappropriate advertisement. The final selection of one of the five advertisements should be the student's decision and not that of the instructor. The role of the instructor during the selection process is to provide constructive feedback to assist students in their decision.

The next step of the 5W Project is a student written paper. The instructor directs students to list, categorize, and then explain all of the elements of the advertisement they selected and analyze it using the 5W model and information learned in the course.

Conclusion

The purpose for this paper was to describe a hands-on course-based project used by this author for several years in a promotional strategy course. The project may be useful for the instructor in search of an assignment that would help students learn how to use a classic communication model to analyze a current advertisement. The author believes that the instructor teaching a course in integrated marketing communications, advertising, or promotional strategy will benefit by using this project in their respective course because it enables students to connect what they have learned in the course to a relatively simple to administer and applicable method to assess an advertisement. The model that the assignment is based upon is not new; however, what is novel is the way instructors may incorporate the model into their courses to help their students become more knowledgeable about the key components involved in the creation of an advertising message.

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Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners: This paper is useful in helping students learn how to use classic research in advertising and communication to analyze components of modern advertising.

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