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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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Abstract - The author describes a project using a classic communication and attitude-change model and explains how instructors teaching a course in promotional strategy, advertising, or integrated marketing communications can use it to help students better understand the critical elements of an effective advertisement. The author provides an overview of the research on the classic model and describes how the model is still useful today. One benefit for the instructor who adopts this project in their respective course is that students are required to synthesize knowledge of the model with information provided in the current advertising literature and then use this information to analyze components of an advertisement. Another benefit is the project provides instructors with an assignment to help students learn about how communication and attitude-change models can be both relevant and applicable regarding decisions on the usage of promotional strategy and tactics.

Keywords- Advertising, promotional strategy, integrated marketing communications, marketing pedagogy

Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and/or Practitioners – This paper is relevant to marketing educators interested in the adoption of a course-based project that helps their students understand the benefits associated with learning how to synthesize research from different disciplines when analyzing an advertisement. The paper is also relevant to researchers and/or practitioners who would like to investigate the commonalities between communication and advertising research

Introduction

The project described in this paper is applicable to 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 choose to adopt the project in their course should teach students about the model and its respective components, and when so doing, relate the model to current advertising literature. Once students have studied the model, they can then apply it to content they have learned in their advertising or promotional strategy course to analyze the critical elements of an advertisement. The author uses the project in an introduction promotional strategy course to assess 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.

Literature Review

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 course 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 who adopt this project in their courses may use the 5W model as a teaching tool to help students learn how to 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 include or delete items under any of the five 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 under 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

I.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, and 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 (i.e. smell – scratch and sniff advertisements), kinesics (body movement), object language (i.e. 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 receiver involvement, segmentation types such as geographic, demographic, psychographics, benefit, and usage segmentation, and business-to-business vs. consumer/end-user target markets (Table 3).

Table 3: Example Items for WHOM

3.WHOM (Target Market)		
	Check All that Apply	Comments
Target Market Characteristics		
Level of Involvement		
High		
Medium		
Low		
Segmentation Type		
<i>Demographic</i>		
Age		
Income		
Gender		
Education		
<i>Psychographic</i>		
Benefit		
Prizm		
<i>Geographic</i>		
Niche		
Combination		
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 respective 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		
AM		
FM		
Satellite		
Television		
Network		
Local		
Cable TV		
Internet		
Social Media		
Digital		
Email		
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>		
<i>Communication</i>		
<i>Marketing</i>		
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, advertising, and/or integrated marketing communication 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 that instructors educate their students about the 5W model using outside readings or in-class lectures. In-class lectures devoted to the explanation of the 5W model

and its relationship to course content are also necessary because these sessions will assist students in writing 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. To assist students in their selection this author has students bring to class five advertisements that they believe are appropriate for the project. The instructor should then review and rank-order the five advertisements and provide feedback to their students. The author has found that this practice is beneficial because the feedback guides the students and helps them to avoid choosing an inappropriate advertisement. The author recommends that the final selection of the advertisement should be the student's decision and not that of the instructor. The role of the instructor during the advertisement selection process should be to provide constructive feedback to assist students in their understanding of the 5W model and to help their students choose an advertisement that has sufficient coverage of all five components of the model.

The last step of the assignment is for student to write a paper identifying the items within the 5W model using the advertisement that they have selected. The paper assignment enables students to synthesize information they have learned about the 5W model with course-related information (i.e. information in their course textbook) when analyzing their advertisement. Students are encouraged to use the five templates above to identify specific components of the advertisement that they would like to discuss in their paper.

Students may likely make errors when trying to identify the correct categorization of the components of the advertisement and there may be cases when one component of an advertisement influences one of the other components. For example, the intelligence level of a target audience is generally an item under the WHOM dimension however it may also influence whether a one or two-sided message (WHAT dimension) is used. To view examples of the 5W templates using a sample advertisement please refer to the appendix.

Conclusion

The purpose for this paper was to describe a hands-on course-based project used by this author for several years in an introduction 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 course to help their students become more knowledgeable about the key components involved in the creation of an advertising message.

Appendix

Sample Advertisement: Magazine Ad for Got Milk, Curly Howard, The Three Stooges, 1999, National Fluid Milk Processor Promotion Board.



5W Templates For Sample Advertisement

1.WHO (Source Factors)		
	Check All that Apply	Comments
Source Credibility		
Dynamism	✓	Curly Howard from the Three Stooges
Likeability	✓	
Familiarity	✓	
Celebrity Rating		
Q-Score Type		
<i>Dead Q</i>	✓	

2.WHAT (Message Factors)		
	Check All that Apply	Comments
Message Factors		
Informational/Rational	✓	AD Body Copy
Emotional/Affective		
<i>Happy</i>	✓	
<i>Surprise</i>	✓	
Humor	✓	
Attention Getting	✓	
Understandable		
Transformational		
Creative Appeal	✓	Nostalgic
Message Structure		
Color	✓	Black & White
Headline	✓	GOT MILK
Subheads	✓	
Body Copy	✓	
Message Execution		
Imagery	✓	
Humor	✓	

Slice of Life		
Personality Symbol		
Nonverbal Message Factors		
Object language	✓	Style of Dress
Facial Expression	✓	
Chronemics		
Kinesics		
Other Nonverbal factors	Use of Object Adaptor – Hand Holding Bent Pipe	

3.WHOM (Target Market)		
	Check All that Apply	Comments
Target Market Characteristics		
<i>Segmentation Type</i>		
<i>Demographic</i>		
Age	✓	Baby Boomers
<i>Psychographic</i>		
Lifestyle	✓	Comedic Interest

4.WHAT CHANNEL (Communication Medium)		
	Check All that Apply	Comments
Advertising		
Primary Demand Advertising	✓	Purpose is to stimulate demand for the product class
Print		
Magazines		
Magazines	✓	
Internet		

Digital	✓	Website listed in top right corner
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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>	✓	
Communication Objective	✓	Increase Awareness
Marketing Objective (Sales of Milk)	✓	
Increase Category Development Index	✓	Increase Milk Consumption
Additional Objectives or Goals		
Visit Website	✓	Website included in top right corner of advertisement

Author Information

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