



Marketing Appeals and Techniques

Implications for Traffic Safety



Introduction

Traffic safety professionals are constantly sending out to the public, messages designed to change driving behavior. Countless media campaigns trying to get people to drive slower, wear their seat belts, and stop driving impaired are distributed through television, radio, print media, billboards, and educational materials.

The purpose of this report is to provide highway safety offices in the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Region 8 with information about the various types of marketing techniques, and wherever possible, explain how the different techniques appeal to the general public. The report attempts to include information on how effective these types of advertising appeals are in reaching readers, listeners, and viewers.

An extensive literature search was conducted. Marketing education instructors provided assistance, and an extensive literature search was conducted through college library resources and the internet. It was discovered that there were many limitations in gathering information about how different populations and sub-populations are affected by different advertising appeals. While there are numerous educational materials related to media techniques in general, only a limited amount of research has been conducted on the effects of marketing techniques and advertising appeals on the public. The information in this report was obtained through scholarly journals, books, and websites. What follows is a result of the literature search. Where possible, examples of each type of marketing technique are provided.



Humor as an Advertising Appeal

Humor is the tendency of particular cognitive experiences to provoke laughter and provide amusement. Humor has been found to be one of the best advertising techniques for cutting through clutter. Clutter is the most common form of noise affecting marketing communications. Examples of marketing clutter include:

- ◆ Eight minutes of commercials per half hour of television programs and radio programs
- ◆ A Sunday newspaper jammed with advertising supplements
- ◆ The inside of a bus or subway car plastered with ads
- ◆ Web sites and servers loaded with commercials, banner advertisements, and pop-ups

It is estimated that humor is used in about twenty-four percent of prime time television advertisements and about thirty-five percent of radio advertisements. Humor is used because it causes consumers to:

- 1) *Watch*
- 2) *Laugh*, and most importantly
- 3) *Remember*

In recall tests, consumers most often remember humorous advertisements.

In advertising there are three main classes of humor:

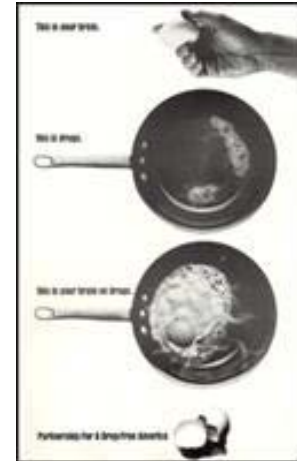
- 1) Hostile or aggressive humor
- 2) Sexual humor
- 3) Nonsensical humor

Recent studies researching the reaction to these types of humor suggest that men find hostile and sexual humor funnier than do women. Women on the other hand, generally find humor arising out of



Fear as an Advertising Appeal

Fear appeals are categorized as persuasive messages that are used to threaten or arouse fear in an audience in order to stimulate attitude change (Severin and Tankard). Fear appeals are mainly used in public service announcements (PSAs) to modify unsafe or unhealthy behaviors such as drinking and driving, using a seat belt, drug use, and unsafe sex practices. A good example of a fear appeal is one from the 90's called the "Brain on Drugs" campaign. In this campaign a fried egg represented the damaging effects of drugs on teenagers' brains.



According to King and Reid, anti-drug and smoking campaigns are the most recognizable of fear appeals. Kind and Reid also said that most safety and health-related campaigns, and anti drinking and driving messages, have attempted to modify peoples' tendencies by predominately focusing on the negative consequences of their actions. In an article written by Christopher E. Beaudoin, "youth ads using fear are more recognizable when they use short term and



social consequences." An article written by Lynn Kennedy says that "Pratkanis and Aronson (1991) claim that fear appeals are most effective when:

1. It scares the heck¹ out of people
2. It offers a specific recommendation for overcoming the fear-aroused threat
3. The recommended action is perceived as effective for reducing the threat and,
4. The message recipient believes that he or she can perform the recommended action."

Another study noted that males and females have been found to both be tolerant of fear appeals in advertising.

¹ Replaced another word due to explicit content

