

Analysing Television Advertisements

In order to analyse television advertisements you need to be aware of how they work. Read this information before analysing television advertisements so that you know what to look for.

Type of Shots

1. **Long shot** refers to all product stills at the end of each advert as well as any 'full body' shots.
2. **Mid shot** refers to the display of a product too close to be regarded as a long shot, or to a shot of an individual from the waist up.
3. **Close-up** refers to any shot of product detail, or an above shoulders view of an individual.
4. **Extreme close-up** refers to a shot that is unnaturally close to be a close-up. For example, the shot may consist of a nose, the lips or part of an object.

View of Shots

1. **Level shots** refers to the angle where someone is looking directly ahead at something.
2. **High-angle shot** is a shot which is viewed from above, thus looking down on something.
3. **Low-angle shot** is a shot which is viewed from below, thus looking up to something.

Speed of Shots

Speeds of shots vary from **slow motion** to **high speed**. When analysing an advert, consider which speed is used and why. For example, a high speed advert may create a sense of excitement and adventure for a young audience such as the play station adverts! You may find that a mixture of slow and high speed is used: the advert for the Oblivion ride at Alton Towers showed the man's face in slow motion to capture his terror before the drop and the high speed shots show the speed of the ride which is exciting yet terrifying! You must think about why a particular speed is used and what effect it has on the audience.

Transition from one shot to another shot

A cut is used to describe the clean break dividing one shot and another. The terms 'dissolves' and 'fades' refer to the way in which one frame fades out whilst the other is dissolved in, with no clear cut between the shots. A cut is regarded as a harsh transition from one shot to another. Fades and dissolves are a softer transitions. Think about how the transition is made in the television adverts you study and why.

Shot duration

The average shot is 1.38 seconds per shot. However, we are capable of seeing three shots per minute. You would be surprised at how many shots there are in a thirty seconds advert. Try to count them!

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Sound effects

There are many sound effects used in adverts: some are more obvious than others. The obvious sound effects are jingles: songs which incorporate lyrics explaining the virtues and features of a particular product. If you do not think that sound effects are used, listen carefully because it may be very faint. If sound effects are not used, consider why this is so. Advertisers do everything for a reason!

Voiceovers

Think about whether a voiceover is a man, woman or child. Interestingly, there are many more male voiceovers than female voiceovers even when advertising a product which is exclusive to women! Why?

Common advertising strategies

They are common advertising strategies that advertisers use to promote their product.

Ideal children

The children in adverts are often a little older and a little more perfect than the target audience for the advert. In other words, they are role models for what the advertiser wants children in the target audience to think they want to be like: they have the hottest hairstyles, they are wearing the latest fashions and they are playing with the best toys. Ideal families are all attractive and everyone seems to get along. Ideal children and families represent the types of people that children watching the advert would like themselves or their families to be like.

Amazing toys

Many toy adverts show their toys in life-like fashion, doing incredible things. Aeroplanes do loop-the-loops and cars do wheelies, dolls cry and spring-loaded missiles hit gorillas dead in the chest. This would be fine if the toys really did these things.

Heart strings

Adverts often create an emotional ambience that draws you into it and makes you feel good. The McDonald's advert featuring father and daughter eating out together or the McDonald's advert where the father and son are shovelling their driveway and the son treats his poor old dad to lunch at McDonald's when they are done, are good examples. We are naturally more attracted by products that make us feel good.

Sounds good

Music and other sound effects add to the excitement of adverts. They help set the mood advertisers want. Those little jingles that you cannot get out of your head are a popular type of music used to make you think of the product. Sometimes there is no sound but this is always done for a reason.

Selective editing

Selective editing is used in all adverts, but especially in adverts for athletic toys like frisbees and footballs. Adverts show only brilliant catches and perfect throws. Unfortunately, this is not the way most children experience these toys.

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Family fun

“This is something the whole family can do together!” or “This is something that Mom will be glad to buy for you” are typical slogans that show parents enjoying their children’s fun as if the product will bring more family togetherness. The old Iceland advert used to have the slogans “Iceland makes it easier for Mum” while children and the father would be enjoying the food in the background. This shows family togetherness but note the gender stereotype here. If the man cooks in these adverts, he is doing the barbecue and even then he may need some help! Do these stereotypes reflect society?

Excitement

Watch the expressions on the characters’ faces in the advert. There is never a dull moment. Excitement is also communicated in other ways such as high speed shots.

Star power

Sports heroes, film stars and teenage heart throbs tell people what they should eat, wear and do. For example, Little Chef adverts show ex-street stars saying that their food is ‘right up my street’. There are many examples of stars on television adverts. Can you think of any?

Other strategies that advertisers use are:

Bandwagon

Join the crowd! Don’t be left out! Everyone is buying the latest snack food: aren’t you?

Scale

Advertisers make a product look bigger or smaller than it really is. Look at the Burger King adverts and the incredible size of their Whopper! This is a very good example.

Facts and Figures

Statistics can often enhance the product’s credibility. E.g. 9/10 cats would buy Whiskers.

Repetition

Advertisers hope that if you see a product or hear its name over and over again, you will be more likely to buy it. Sometimes the same advert is repeated within a minute in the same series of adverts.