

## **Attention Getters in the Marketing World & Examples from Proven Companies**

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In order for a consumer to begin justifying a purchase in their brain, they must first *hear* about items for sale. Without knowing which products are available, a person cannot begin to fulfill their desire to buy things. In other words, people can't buy what they don't know about. And often times, consumers can't research something if they don't know what to type in the Google search bar. So, one the core goals of any marketing process is to educate targeted groups of potential customers about products, services, brands, and promotions. But, much to the chagrin of advertisers, humans have become very skilled at tuning-out messages from corporations.

### **Fighting for Attention**

Starting with previous generations "television breaks would be the time to make snacks or go to the toilet." (Rotfeld, 2006) But now, especially with millennials, there are two main types of ad avoidance: zipping and zapping. Zipping refers to fast-forwarding through an ad (especially when the program is prerecorded). Zapping includes switching to a different browser tab, changing the channel, or closing a link in order to bypass an unwanted ad. This avoidance of advertising often nullifies the impact of messages on the consumer. One main cause for this type of consumer behavior is advertising **clutter**. Each consumer comes in contact with 5,000 ads per day. No wonder people often think there is just too much advertising! "The increasing advertising to editorial ratio is causing audience inattention and consumer complaints." (Rotfeld,

2006) Not only is an overabundance of advertising annoying, but it hinders the consumers from remembering information.

How can marketers capture the attention of these selective-hearing generations? Is the information-overload reversible? The answer is not to squeeze more advertising into TV programs, radio, and social media. Sadly, this approach has been very popular. YouTube hasn't always been a place where companies could advertise — and when they made the transition to selling media space, it was in small amounts. *Now*, viewers can sometimes expect an ad before, during, and after watching a YouTube video. If this practice were to continue, all media outlets would soon be flooded with ads — encouraging consumers to escape to an uncrowded app, website, or channel. In the long run, bombarding people with a message does not make it more effective. So...what is the solution?

**Optimizing the content of a message** is the most ethical, durable, and economical way to increase the return on investment. “The best strategy to deal with zipping would be to place very attention-getting material in the first few seconds of a commercial, to encourage viewers to watch the rest of the commercial.” (Cronin. 1992) This has been amplified in the days of social media where the majority of ads can be skipped after a few seconds. In instances where skipping is not an option, rest assured that millennials will close out of the app, set their phone down, or mentally tune out. If the concept of an ad stinks — consumers won't care what it says.

Ford Motor Company, when re-styling its Focus model, strived to **include content that was entertaining** to millennials. Part of the campaign introduced a socially awkward yet flirtatious mascot named “Doug the Orange Puppet”. In the videos, Doug is tired of hearing about all the innovations and features regarding the Ford Focus — just like most consumers suffering from advertising fatigue. Such a mascot was designed to capture the attention of millennials through a mixture of relatable and off-the-wall humor.

While zippers and zappers are actively avoiding the messages from advertisers, others don’t even have to try. Some consumers never make an effort to get involved in marketing programs in the first place. So, how can these uninvolved groups be transitioned into loyal customers? Fortunately, there are some proven alternatives to spending money on writing and placing a TV commercial. After all, there is more to marketing than just advertising. One way is **Behavior-based Price Discrimination** (BBPD). “BBPD is a very simple form of price discrimination that consists of offering different prices to different customers according to their past purchase history.” (Caillaud, 2014) Many restaurants have a rewards point-system that allows customers to earn free menu items or collect credit towards their next meal. By implementing such a system, marketers are **encouraging brand loyalty**. Brand loyalty programs inspire customers to “buy-in” to new products from their favorite companies.

Ford Motor Company launched the Fiesta model by using a “brand ambassador” model. Influential millennials were awarded the car and 6 months of gas and insurance in exchange for online posts about their experience. These freebies (car, gas, insurance) act as a positive reinforcer to word-of-mouth behavior. Information, about the vehicle’s details and features, means more when it comes from a trusted third party. There are many benefits to sparking word-of-mouth marketing. Companies should “encourage spoken feedback, since oral communication can **strengthen the self-brand connection and also yield beneficial downstream consequences.**” (Shen, 2018) This brand ambassador program also demonstrated that Ford was invested in the interests of millennials.

### **Appealing to the Audience**

The TV commercials for the Ford Fiesta (a different model) really stand out. They almost don’t feel like advertisements. The video depicts a cheerful moment where the community comes together and shares some fun — it essentially portrays a fiesta. These advertisements **focus on emotional appeals**. The warm and upbeat background music provides the perfect auditory landscape for a happy-go-lucky story. The script, scenery, and music come together to illicit positive thoughts. It’s no wonder why “music is incorporated in more than 90% of television advertisements” (Kellaris et al, 1993) Companies take uplifting music and attach it to their brand in order to improve their reputation in a subconscious manner.

There is also a bit of a humorous aspect included. Only a couple of sentences of dialogue are verbalized within the minute-long spot. Yet, humor *still* plays a part. The driver of the bright-green Ford Fiesta smirks near the end of the ad and says “it’s a pretty big deal”. At the very least, it deserves a chuckle — he says that one simple sentence following 60 seconds of the most extravagant, spontaneous street parade imaginable. It is a funny scenario.

More subtle appeals to excitement and adventure are made throughout the duration of the video. The scene is filled with choreographed cyclers, fast-paced moving companies, and young people doing parkour. And in the middle of all the action...sits a brand new Ford Fiesta.

Having said all of that, the true brilliance of the advertisement lies in the structure of its message. The commercial is not overtly persuasive. It does not make an argument or attempt to convince the viewer that the Fiesta is better than other automobiles. Instead, the ad links a happy story with a new product. Frequently, car companies bore the audience with a list of features that go over the head of an average consumer. The video for the Fiesta presented the car’s details in a totally unique way. Instead of saying “Our car has push-start capabilities that allow you to erase the hassle of turning the key”, they simply showed the function within the camera shot. Rather than a narrator listing the key aspects of the vehicle, those words are pieced together

and scattered throughout the video. Talking was kept to a bare minimum; giving way to an impressive experience that Fiesta owners can enjoy.

### **How Well Do the Concepts Stick?**

When designing a message for a certain group, marketers strive to be memorable. Luckily, certain tactics are in place to make brands easy to recall.

#### **Importance**

Marketers can reinforce their message by emphasizing the importance of the material. Clear efforts towards this goal are absent from the two Ford campaigns, however there *is* a subtle regard for the 'importance' aspect. Obviously, buying a car is a high-involvement task. The Focus commercials did a nice job of displaying the process of high-involvement learning. The mascot visits a dealership, speaks to a saleswoman, and learns about the car's features.

#### **Message Involvement**

Motivating consumers to buy a product, or at least learn more about it, is at the heart of good advertising. Ford encourages consumers to be involved with the Fiesta ad's message through unfolding an eye-catching story...only to reveal that Ford is behind all of it.

#### **Mood**

Ford implemented two themes into these advertising campaigns: humor and happiness. In the case of the Focus model, the entire plot of the ads is an awkward,

comical situation. Alternatively, the Fiesta ads utilize pure joy to lighten the mood while the consumer learns.

### **Reinforcement**

In hindsight, it appears that Ford did not incorporate any reinforcers to the campaign. Of course, not every technique must be applied in all circumstances, and in general, Ford covered these bases well.

### **Repetition**

Sometimes consumers must hear the same message multiple times before they retain the information. Ford made sure that consumers heard about their new Ford Focus by creating several sequels of the original ad featuring Doug the Orange Puppet. Multiple renditions of these advertisements were created for a variety of specific Ford dealerships.

### **Dual Coding**

Another effective way to drive home a message is by saying the same thing through different mediums. Doug the Orange Puppet, and mascot for the Focus model, was featured also on Facebook banners that referenced his style of comedy. By doing this, Ford facilitates the possibility that millennials will watch the video ads and later read the banners.

### **What Do Millennials Gain from a New Ford?**

While some millennials view purchasing a brand new car as quite the accomplishment, and others have grown up believing that Ford products are functional



and reliable, their ads for the Fiesta and Focus have a different focus. Based on the company's commercials, the values, attitudes, and lifestyles of ideal customers fall closely in line with the *self-expression* segment. For instance, the Focus ads rely heavily on personal conduct (attitudes) within the purchasing process, and the Fiesta videos depict an adventure (lifestyle). There are other aspects of segmentation framework (innovation) conveyed through introducing new technology like the push start feature. However, the campaign is clearly driven towards experiencers and makers.

### **Stimulating the Senses**

For attention-getting ad campaigns — look no further than Xerox. So much of the advertising battle is about being noticed — and then being remembered. Placing an ad in a repetitive manner may help audiences remember the brand. However, memory is not automatically positive. Including stimulus factors, within a campaign, provides a greater chance of pleasant associations and memories. Here are some of the most effective stimulus factors along with the how Xerox, the copy machine company, used them to their advantage:

#### **Size**

The size of an advertisement will have an impact on how many people see it, how many people read it, and how many heads it will turn. Companies resort to giant billboards in order to draw attention. Xerox actually helped pioneer a *new* form of billboard advertising. In airports across America, they set up interactive billboards that

caught the eyes of frequent flyers. These interactive panels (on large walls) allowed consumers to visualize how Xerox products can: transform an ordinary place into a fine-tuned business, or elevate a brand into a household name. The starting point for such an idea has to be the **size**. This idea could garner attention even if it was displayed on a tablet or a small kiosk. But Xerox wanted bigger results — so these billboards took up a good portion of airport wall space.

### **Intensity**

The interactive nature of these ads helps bring in the factor of intensity. Comparing pictures from before and after (the arrival of Xerox products) helps viewers understand the message. The size stimulus works together with intensity. Since the billboard was bigger than the pedestrians in the airport, people who come up close feel immersed in the photos in front of them.

### **Position**

Often times advertising is like real estate, it all depends on location, location, location. The Xerox ad was cleverly placed. Airports are filled with people who are traveling for business, and Xerox would love for every company, represented in the airport, to buy their products. Another important aspect of this placement is the purchasing power. The average spending ability in an airport is likely higher than that of a bus or subway station. Besides those two positives of this setting for an ad, an airport is a place where someone could spend lots of time. Between delays, layovers,

and flight complications, a passenger could be waiting in the sitting area for hours — leaving them plenty of time to gaze at a billboard ad.

### **Attractive Visuals - Colors and Movement**

The overall branding for Xerox lends itself to great visuals. The company makes money by being business oriented, engineering dependable technology, and providing a user-friendly experience. The Xerox logo contrasts a red font on a white background; isolating such a dominant color (red) on a neutral background is a statement piece. That sleek white setting translates to the professional nature of the company's purpose. The red, and futuristically-formatted, font implies that Xerox is ahead of the game in terms of innovation.

### **Types of Ignored and Disregarded Ads**

Table A indicates that internet banners are the most avoided form of advertising. This sounds about right. However, targeted advertising that uses search history in the algorithm can be pretty eye-opening. In general, banner ads “are likely to be ignored by social network users through the so-called phenomenon of banner blindness.” (Barreto, 2013) On the other hand, newspaper, TV, and radio ads are hardly ever ignored by millennials. The issue here is not their tendency to ignore, but whether or not most millennials read the newspaper, listen to the radio, or watch TV. There is immense potential for good advertising on platforms like Pandora, Spotify, and Apple Music

which serve as alternate forms of radio in today's world. Clearly, TV ads have been a staple for a very long time. But, it is true that many viewers are multitasking while watching — paying little mind to the commercials. Fortunately, companies can get around this in several ways. Saying something funny / absurd, using top 40 pop music, or having a celebrity endorser state their name are sure fire ways to get your potential customer to look at the TV screen. Buick, another car company is putting that last method to use with Shaquille O'Neal. Millennials grew up watching Shaq dominate the NBA. In doing so, he was a lovable personality and a reliable ball player. Buick markets themselves as a premium car that consumers can fall in love with and depend on.

### **Final Thoughts**

In conclusion, marketers must do everything in their power to overcome the obstacles of advertising avoidance and clutter. Rather than overcrowding society with more and more ads, companies should focus on creating *better*, more entertaining, and more relevant commercials. Utilizing appeals to the consumer attitudes, emotions, and preferences can ingratiate a brand into certain market segments. Advertisers can look forward to a more successful campaign by stimulating the senses of their ideal consumers.

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