Psychology and Advertising

The Scientific Appeal to Human Nature

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PSYCHOLOGY is the science of human nature. Commercial advertising is the art of influencing human nature to buy certain wares. Advertisers are discovering that they need to know the facts which psychology can give about what attracts attention, what sticks in memory, what gives a pleasant impression, what persuades and what leads to a given act, here the act of purchase. Psychologists are learning that the responses of men and women to the illustrations and "copy" of "ads" are material for the scientific student's pure curiosity about the workings of the mind as well as for the economist or expert in business. So a new specialization of applied psychology is fairly started, its birthday being perhaps that of the publication of Prof. Scott's "Psychology of Advertising" in 1902.

No matter which of the many problems that confront advertising practice you choose, you are soon led straight into psychology—often psychology of a very technical sort—if you try to think the problem through to the end. To make known a breakfast food or soap, to connect its name or appearance or both with the fact that it is a breakfast food or soap may seem an easy problem for common sense. Rufton's Soap in big enough type, on enough pages, fences, and cards—the method of our childhood—is indeed straightforward and easily done. But common sense does not inform one whether so emblazoning *Rufton's Soap* on an eighth of a page eight times or on a whole page once, on a page alone or on a page with a picture, more surely captures attention and holds memory prisoner. It does not even distinguish between getting the human mind to think of "soap" when it happens to think of "Rufton's" and to think of "Rufton's" when it happens to think of "soap." Yet this difference may mean thousands of dollars.

ALCO

Fig. 1.—A strong claim on attention at small cost.

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Putting Facts Before the Mind.

Common sense has indeed often made great blunders, neglecting clearness, pleasurable and habit as causes of attention and over-emphasizing size and repetition, the costliest ways of catching the eye and mind. Even to-day the elementary laws of attention taught to beginners in psychology are not always followed. For example, no psychologist among my readers will doubt that Fig. 1 burns in its message, the

KISSEL CAR

Fig. 2.—A weak appeal. Too elaborate, vague, and confused.

name of an automobile, better than Fig. 2, and in a fraction of the space.

But the problem of putting a fact, or, more commonly, two facts in connection, into a mind, leads soon to far more subtle and technical matters. I choose only one for illustration—the laws of the action of the eye, which is the first enemy for an advertisement to win over. The eye, in getting its impression of a page, a wall, or a billboard, acts roughly as would a small camera, in getting a series of pictures which, pasted together, would make a picture of the total page, wall or billboard. That is, the eye does not see clearly much at one time, nor move in a continuous

Barrett Specification Roofs

Fig. 3.—Too big type is a common error. An unnecessarily hard task for the eye.

Fig. 4.—A misapprehension of what the possible buyer of a piano wants. No connection forming here.

sweep to cover the object. It turns, stops for one to three tenths of a second, takes in an "eyeful," turns ahead or back, stops as before, takes in another "eyeful," and so on.

Getting an Eyeful of Advertising.

Means have been found to photograph the movements of the eyes in reading a page, examining a picture and the like, and measurements have been made of just how much the eye and understanding do take in during one stop—one exposure of the camera. The reader who is conscious only of looking at an advertising page in a magazine for two seconds and getting a view of it as a whole, really takes a dozen or so different "looks." The eye itself can not see the whole page at all clearly in one look or fixation. The eye sends up a piece-meal report which has to be put together. The task of the eye in glancing over a page is a complex task which may be done well or ill, easily or with a feeling of strain.

The advertiser should, of course, other things being equal, (1) make the labor of the eye as slight as possible, (2) furnish any material that the eye is to take in at one glance or fixation in the shape of a convenient "eyeful," and (3) arrange the "eyefuls" that are to catch the eye in its series of exposures in such a way that the piecemeal report they give will be most sure to be put together into the impression he desires to leave.

To meet these requirements even the expert advertiser needs special knowledge of the psychology of visual perception. Common errors are to make type too large, as in Fig. 3, so that a single fixation fails to give any whole phrase or word, or to so crowd and muddle printed matter that the eye moves about the page at random. Less commonly the eye is actually tempted away from the essential facts in the display.

To get attention to an advertisement is only a first step in a long pursuit of the mind, which must be at last forced by the laws of its own nature to write for and read a catalogue, to examine an article, or, most commonly of all, to buy it.

Intuitive Knowledge Supplemented by Psychology.

Experienced advertisers who have studied the results of many advertising campaigns get an intuitive appreciation of how men and women will be influenced by this, that and the other quality in an advertisement. Can such

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Fig. 5A.

The psychologist expects Fig. 5B to outlive Fig. 5A.

intuitions be usefully supplemented by the psychologist's knowledge of the laws of attention, perception, memory, suggestion, habit, inference and the like?

Let us ask, as a sample case, whether advertisers have anything to learn from one of the simplest of all psychological laws, a law of habit or connection formation, which states that a human being will, other things being equal, make to any situation that response which has gone with that situation most frequently, and with the most resulting satisfaction. Man thinks or feels or does what he has thought or felt or acted in like case with success. Will it profit an advertiser to think of the possible buyer as a mechanism that, whatever else it does, tends unreasonably to keep together ideas that have come together?

This law leads to five obvious principles for controlling a person's mental connections.

1. Know what his situation is.
2. Know what response you wish to get from him.
3. Know what satisfies or annoys him.
4. Make the connection; do not expect the response to come as a miracle.
5. Other things being equal, make no connections which you will later have to unmake.

That these principles, which should be the A, B, C of any art of influencing human nature, are not thoroughly known to advertisers, is clear from the

Fig. 6.—Perhaps the chicken may some day weary the public.

following facts: Advertisements almost exclusively to arrest the attention of a casual observer (e. g., advertisements consisting of an interesting but largely irrelevant picture with a mere note of the article and firm name) are used for articles like seeds, doorknobs, nursery stock, or coffins. This is wasteful since possible buyers of such wares would in a great majority of cases make a deliberate examination of advertisements of them, the situation including much interest on their part and a definite intention of comparing merits. Advertisers who use expensive attention-arresting display for such articles do not consider what the possible buyer's situation is. Looking cas-

Fig. 5B.

ually over a magazine, looking to find where to buy a given article, and looking to find out which is the best article, are three radically different situations that obviously demand different treatment.

Getting the Right Kind of a Response.

Some advertisements are fitted to produce the response "readiness or desire to buy a motorboat, a piano, a greenhouse" as much as or more than the response "readiness or desire to buy the Jones motorboat, the Smith piano or the Brown greenhouse." The

The Easy-Made Dessert.

From the homely materials pictured here are produced desserts so beautiful and delicious that they appear to be the work of the fairies. All that is required to make a Jell-O dessert is a package of

JELL-O

and a pint of boiling water. Dissolve the contents of the package in the boiling water. As soon as it is cold your dessert is made.

Just now, when the supply of canned fruit has given out, and it is too early for fresh fruit, the delicious fruit flavors of Jell-O fill their places and afford desserts that are especially seasonable and delightful.

The flavors are: Strawberry, Raspberry, Lemon, Orange, Cherry, Peach, Chocolate.

At all grocers, 10 cents a package.

The Jell-O price never goes up.

Beautiful Recipe Book, "DESSERTS OF THE WORLD," Free.

THE GENESEE PURE FOOD CO.,
Le Roy, N. Y., and Bridgeburg, Can.

Fig. 7. -- Samples from a series of advertisements that are in the main in accordance with psychological principles.

response which any competitor equally desires is confused with the response which the advertiser himself should seek. Certain features of many advertisements of automobiles, Portland cement, bathroom fittings and office furniture make this error. In some such cases a real profit-sharing of supposed competitors may be the reason, but even in such a case it is wasteful to encourage a response as beneficial to future competitors in the same trade as to the advertiser.

Neglect of the third rule, "Know what satisfies or annoys the prospective buyer in the case in question," is very common. Does not Fig. 4, for example, show a misapprehension of what the possible buyer of a piano wants? The pictures of the factories and office building seem psychologically fitted to appeal to a man to place a mortgage or perhaps invest in the company's stock, but not to appeal to the desires and aversions of a music-lover in respect to a piano. Are the pictures of the man and the hall-mat borders likely to connect the idea of a pure, rich tone and of beautiful music with that particular piano? Would not the general make-up—the arrangement of cuts and type—positively irritate anyone of an artistic temperament?

The fourth rule—to make connections, not expect them to come of themselves—seems at first thought childish. But did the "Sunny Jim" "ads" connect a given breakfast food inevitably with ideas of delectability, health and vigor, suffuse the very name of that food with a charm for appetite, and bind to the sight of its package a strong impulsion toward purchase?

On the contrary, I venture to predict that many of my readers who remember Sunny Jim do not even remember what breakfast food was supposed to have made him sunny; and that many others have, as a result of the "ads," the hardly more valuable connection of thinking of the food in question as the subject of a vigorous advertising campaign in connection with pictures and jingles about a rather ridiculous looking little old gentleman.

Making the Connection.

As a matter of fact, the greatest amount of psychological ingenuity is demanded to "make the connection," simple though it sounds. To connect the article and the name, to connect each desirable quality with the name, to connect that name with the ideas of purchase and possession—each may be a most intricate task, involving, like a problem in chess, the interrelations of dozens of factors. Disturb one adjective, leave one preparatory advertisement ineffective, overdo one element in the picture and the whole attack may fail.

I have willfully chosen samples of inadequacy from the best modern advertising practice, in order to make

the point that violation of the psychological laws of closeness, relevance and concreteness are perilous to even the most expert writer of advertisements. For perfectly clear cases one may take those given by Prof. Scott of the picture of a breakfast food carton with vermin crawling over it, and of the underwear company which received many orders as a result of a second company's advertisement, the second company's "copy" having been so placed as to connect more readily with the first company's name and address than with its own!

The Birthday Party.

Nan is six years old. Mamma and Bobbie are giving her a party. And what a dinner Mamma has prepared! Just now she is serving a Jell-O course, and there is no mistaking the children's approval. They all like

JELL-O

because it is delicious and beautiful. It is so pure, wholesome and nutritious that it is better for them than any other kind of dessert.

A Jell-O dessert can be made in a minute. Simply add boiling water and let cool.

Seven delicious flavors: Strawberry, Lemon, Orange, Raspberry, Peach, Cherry and Chocolate.

All grocers sell Jell-O, 10 cents a package.

The beautiful new Jell-O Recipe Book, "DESSERTS OF THE WORLD," illustrated in ten colors and gold, will be sent free to all who ask for it.

THE GENESEE PURE FOOD CO.,
Le Roy, N. Y., and Bridgeburg, Can.

The last warning, against making connections only to have to break them later, should protect any advertiser from many risks. For example, the emblem, slogan or means of attracting attention to the "copy" should not risk boring or disgusting readers in the long run for the sake of an exciting appeal for the time being. A history of advertising would, I am sure, prove that the grotesque, the merely strange, and the fantastic have been thus dangerous.

A psychologist would prefer not to risk his fortunes on the habits formed by repeated impressions of
Come Packt furniture,
U-All-No after-dinner mint,
Slide Well collars,
Breathe-rite braces,
Corn Dodger shoes,
Holeproof hosiery,
Pre-Shrunk garments.

Yet these are all modern devices used to gain the trade of critical people.

The New Salesman Rebuked.

"Excuse him, Madam. He has not yet learned that our best class of customers all mean **PETER'S** when they ask for Eating Chocolates. They know from long experience that it deserves its great reputation for Purity, Wholesomeness, and Digestibility."

Fig. 8A.

A psychological analysis shows that Fig. 8A and Fig. 8B, though superficially alike, are almost complete opposites. One is good and the other not. Which is which?

The psychologist expects Fig. 5B to outlive Fig. 5A as a catch-sign, and predicts that even the charming chicken of Fig. 6, that "hasn't scratched yet," may in the long run bore the public and have to give up his place to the safer picture of the soap itself.

I have so far illustrated the value of knowledge of one sample law of human nature—a law of habit—by showing the bad effects of its neglect. On the positive side, I should claim that many of the excellencies of Fig. 7 could have been planned and can be accounted for by the psychological principles of association or connection-forming.

Finally, I have chosen two "ads," Fig. 8A and 8B, which superficially seem much alike, but one of which I regard as very good and the other as very bad on purely psychological grounds. Let the reader decide which is which, and why!

Yeast as a Food

THE breweries of Germany produce annually over 70,000 tons of yeast, which is for the most part wasted. For several months there have been going on systematic experiments under the direction of Prof. Delbrück, of the Berlin Institute for Fermentation Industries, for the purpose of finding some practical means for utilizing this product. Special attention has been directed to the problem of its possible availability as human food.

There are a number of commercial preparations on the market which consist essentially of dried yeast; these combine the qualities necessary to adapt them to use as food, having an agreeable taste and odor and a chemical composition comparing favorably with other high-protein foods. When properly prepared, dry yeast keeps indefinitely without danger of deterioration; and its high protein content would make it one of the cheapest foods. The slightly bitter taste characteristic of fresh yeast can be readily removed by treatment in the cold, before drying, with a solution of sodium carbonate.

Messrs. Voetz and Baudrexel, of the Institute, have determined its adaptability to the nutrition of man and other animals. The chemical composition of the dried yeast, as compared with average samples of beef, is given in the following table:

	Dry Yeast.	Beef.
Water	6.9%	72.5%
Protein	53.4%	21.0%
Calories per lb. (approximate) ..	2,000	607

From the above it is seen that the protein value of the yeast is about two and a half times that of meat; and that the fuel value of the former is over three times that of meat.

Experiments made in feeding dogs showed that 87.2 per cent of the nitrogen in the yeast is assimilated. Large quantities of this material were used on the dogs without producing any symptoms of inconvenience or disorder. Among the animals were some females suckling their young; these seemed to thrive very well under the conditions of the experiment.

A number of the employees of the Institute replaced a portion of the meat in their diets with dry yeast powder using 2/3 ounce with each breakfast for several weeks. No unfavorable results were produced.

Take a
KODAK
with you.

Beautifully illustrated booklet, "Mastering with a Kodak," free at the dealers or by mail.
EASTMAN KODAK CO., Rochester, N. Y., The Kodak City.

Fig. 8B.