



pointofview



Effective Communications Begins With The Brand

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Summary

We all remember great ads. But do we remember the company? This is the No. 1 aim for advertising, but, surprisingly, many marketers don't achieve it. The reason is the brand is not front-and-center. Marketers must start with the brand in the earliest conception stage, and weave it throughout the storyline architecture at opportune points. There are several tried and true techniques to ensure success. This Point of View paper addresses those approaches—crucial to effective advertising.

Key insight: People don't remember ads; they remember stories. By integrating the brand into the ad as a key point of the story, marketers ensure any memories and messages will be credited to only their brand.

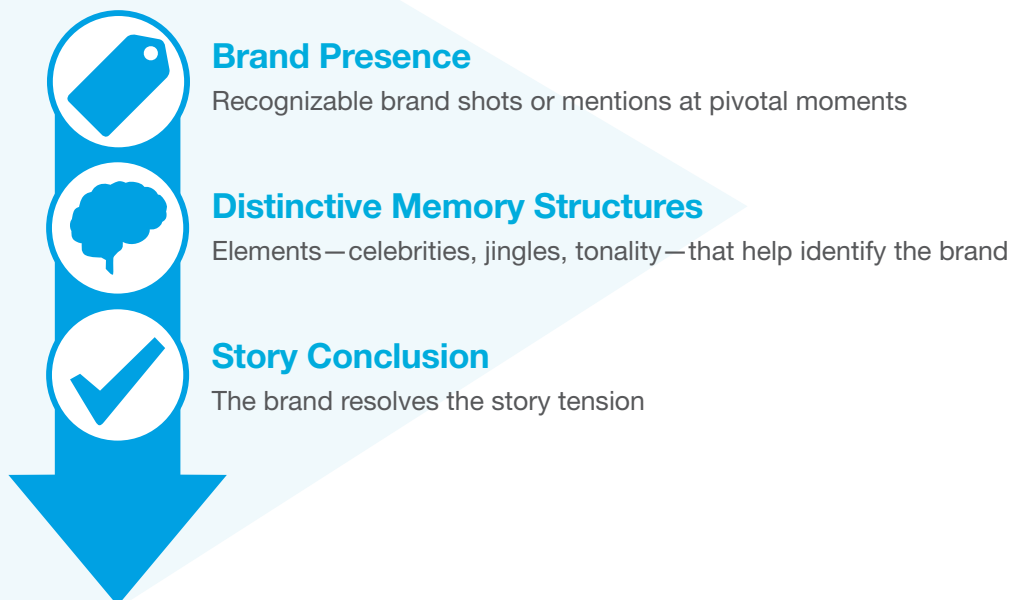
Introduction

“There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about,” Oscar Wilde famously once said. It’s the same in advertising.

Buzz builds brands and getting noticed has always been fundamental to advertising; especially in today’s multi-media world with more channels and ads than ever before competing for consumers’ increasingly overloaded attention. Just as important, however, is communicating what the brand is: “Clever ad, but what was that company again?” That’s not the response businesses are paying for. Without getting your brand noticed at best your advertising is entertaining audiences for free. At worst, it’s helping a competitor to step in and take credit for your memorable/funny/disturbing/moving message.

The struggle has always been how to accomplish this without sacrificing the creativity needed to produce great advertising. We’ve learned that there are many ways to achieve this from Ipsos Connect’s research across tens of thousands of ads and hundreds of categories. All, however, are anchored in the same principle: the brand must have a clear and meaningful role in the story. From this research, we’ve identified three broad techniques for achieving brand integration that have successfully been leveraged over time.

How To Integrate The Brand





The first of these examples is subtle. The brand is simply present at the most engaging moments in the ad. This works because we know it's these moments that consumers will remember most. Just as we don't remember every moment in our own lives, consumers certainly don't remember every second of an ad. We remember our happiest, most carefree and scariest life events. Similarly, we remember those parts of an ad that resonate with, or interest us, most. By integrating the brand into these moments, we're ensuring that as people recall them later, they remember them with the brand.

In Volkswagen's "The Force" Super Bowl spot from a few years ago, we see a little boy dressed as "Star Wars" bad guy Darth Vader trying, but failing, to use "the force" to control various things around the house with his mind. When his dad pulls up in his VW, the kid runs out excitedly and tries to use the force one last time on the car. Much to his, and our, surprise, the car turns on! This scene, when the force finally seems to work, comes at a point when we are most engaged in the story and heightens our interest further—all while Volkswagen is center stage.





Distinctive Memory Structures

Have you ever caught whiff of a scent—say, fresh-mown grass—that transported you mentally (and vividly) back to your childhood? These are powerful memory cues that tap into our subconscious mind. The second brand integration techniques works the same way; it's about leveraging existing and distinctive memory structures, or brand cues, already so strongly associated with a brand that they act as surrogates for it. MasterCard's "Priceless" and Priceline.com's "Negotiator" campaign with William Shatner of "Star Trek" fame are two iconic examples of this, though for different reasons.

MasterCard developed a campaign around a unique story architecture reinforced in every ad for more than a decade: examples of the monetary price of various things (chips, soup, a backpack) followed by the intangible, priceless thing (real conversation) made possible by these purchases.



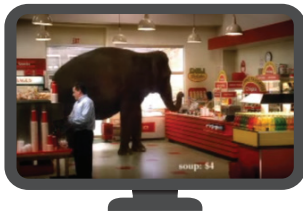
CHIPS:

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BACKPACK:

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SOUP:

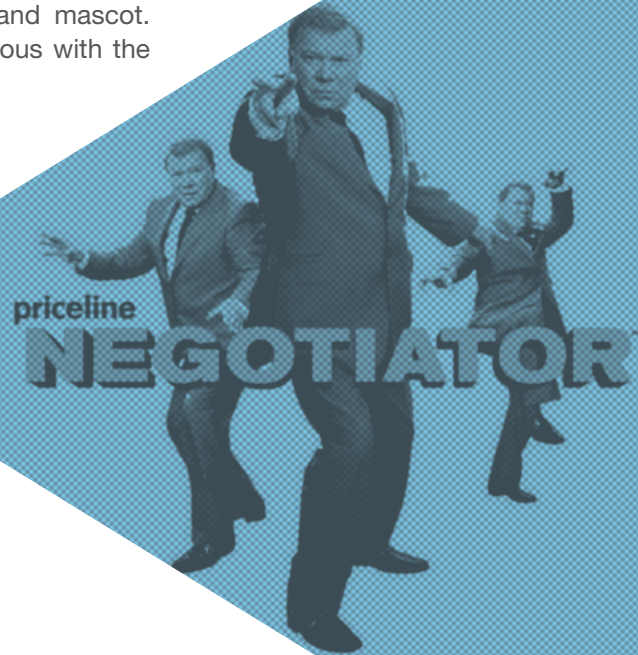
\$4



REAL CONVERSATION:

PRICELESS

In a different way, Priceline.com created a just-as-strong brand cue for its ads using Mr. Shatner as the celebrity spokesperson and mascot. He appears in their ads repeatedly until becoming synonymous with the brand—and a personification of it.



In both these cases, the companies used a brand cue which allowed for less integration of the brand itself because consumers can make the connection without it.

Keep in mind, however, that this is only possible after repeatedly using the brand cue to establish it. In order to do this, initial ads must have strong brand integration. This is essential.

Story Conclusion

Everyone loves a good tale. Stories by definition present a crisis the protagonist has to address; a beginning, a middle, and an end (though not always in that order). The last brand integration technique is about ensuring the brand is key to the conclusion of the ad. We can approach this in many ways, but what's important is that the brand somehow resolves the tension of the story. Examples include “reveal ads” that lead up to the brand introduction; ads where the brand stars as the hero stepping in to fill a need; and ads where the brand presents a solution to a problem.

Snickers' famously funny “You're Not You When You're Hungry” campaign is a perfect example of the latter: the candy bar solves the crisis (hungry people not acting like themselves) as a behavior-taming snack for the famished. The consistent theme across these different narratives is that the advertiser embeds the brand in the story, making the brand drive the twist, joke or resolution.



These techniques are not mutually exclusive and marketers need not feel they have to choose between them. Even the advertisements we've discussed combine one or more of these. The Volkswagen commercial, for instance, sets up the brand as a “reward” to conclude the story. But it also does so in the ad's most memorable scene. In addition, while these are the most common techniques for advertising brand integration, they are by no means the only way to do it. The key is that each of these techniques highlights the role of the brand and integrates it seamlessly into the ad's story.

Leveraging Insights

Marketers can adopt all three of these techniques for effective brand integration and use them during ad production. Although it's better to introduce them earlier to ensure the ad's script is written with them in mind versus retrofitting it afterwards. That said, the strongest and best brand integration begins much earlier during the communications development process; at the very beginning, in fact, when marketers are discovering the insight that will drive the ad.

Great insights lead to great ads. We derive them from the overlap of three learnings: the consumer truth, brand truth and cultural tension.

The consumer truth is very simply who the consumer is or what he wants. Once marketers understand whom they're talking to—what motivates them, what moves them, what frustrates or delights them—then the story begins to unfold. Using Johnnie Walker's iconic "Keep Walking" campaign as an example, the consumer truth is that people see themselves as adventurous, ambitious and self-assured. They value unique experiences over possessions (fancier car, bigger house, etc.).

The brand truth is what the brand is or can offer. For Johnnie Walker, the brand is a premium whiskey, ideal for marking life achievements with friends and family.

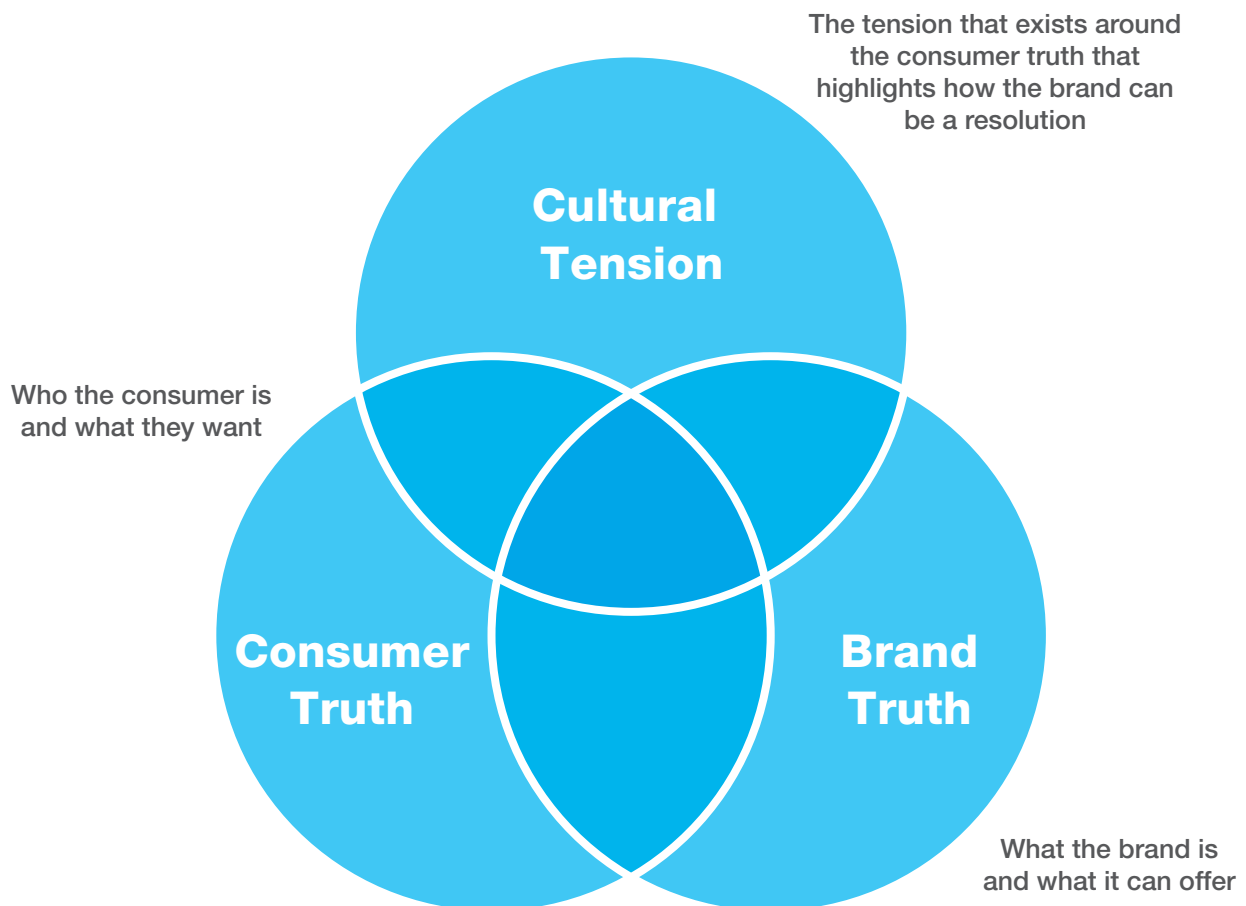
The cultural tension is the tension around the consumer truth highlighting the brand as resolution. With "Keep Walking," the tension is a perception change around failure: from a negative (we should avoid it at all costs) to a possibility (risk is something we should foster).

The campaign's core insight is that we want to celebrate these moments of risk in a way that adds to our experience. Enter Johnnie Walker: not only the way to commemorate these times, but an aspirational analogy for personal success and continuous growth.

Fundamental insights like these connect what the brand stands for with why that is important to consumers. Successful marketers don't just use these to develop a single ad, however, these insights are part of the positioning that dictates the brand's entire reason for being.


Johnnie Walker is a premium brand, so the tension it resolves in any communication is about how it lends a sense of refined premiumness to any moment. This builds off of what makes the brand unique and continues to reinforce its position in the market. In connecting this brand positioning with the ad insight, we ensure the brand is so integrated into the story from the start, that it can't be mistaken for any other.

The "Keep Walking" campaign wouldn't work for competitor Jack Daniel's, for example, because that brand doesn't stand for the same aspirational premiumness that Johnnie Walker does. If it were to try its own version of the campaign, Jack Daniel's would come across as out of place—and easily substituted by a competitor already embodying this positioning. Similarly, a brand such as Hennessey doesn't represent the same celebration of risk, so it too, wouldn't be as strongly integrated.



If people don't recognize your brand, the ad has failed. That's the hard truth. Brand integration isn't a bonus that makes a so-so ad outstanding; it's a necessity for making the ad work—especially in today's hyper-competitive media environment.

How will the brand be integrated? This is one of the most important questions to ask when developing an ad. Is the story about that brand? Or does it just play a supporting role? Catchy is good. Funny is good. Emotional—also good. But the brand must be the star of the show. The strongest brand integration starts at the very outset of the communication development process; marrying the brand position with ad insights, allowing us to answer the key question



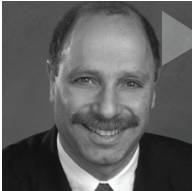
Why does
only my
brand work
in this ad?

Team



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About Ipsos Connect

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Our services include:

- **Brand and Campaign Performance:** Evaluation and optimization of in-market activities to drive communications effectiveness and brand growth.
- **Content and Communications Development:** Communications, content and creative development from early-stage idea development to quantitative pre-testing, alongside media and touchpoint planning.
- **Media Measurement:** Audience measurement and understanding.

Ipsos Connect is a team of specialists in people-based insight, employing qualitative and quantitative techniques, including surveys, neuro, observation, social media and other data sources. Our philosophy and framework center on building successful businesses through understanding brands, media, content and communications at the point of impact with people.

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