UNIT 10: WRITING FOR ADVERTISING COPY

UNIT STRUCTURE

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10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be be able to -

- explain the basic style of writing used for the media - both print and electronic
- describe the various copy elements of an advertisement for the print media
- explain the message, characteristics and tools of radio and television advertising
- discuss the major elements of radio and television advertisements.

10.2 INTRODUCTION : WHAT IS ADVERTISING?



Dictionaries define advertisement as a notice for sale, services offered, room to let, job position to be filled etc. published in newspapers and periodicals, displayed on hoardings and broadcast over the radio, television or net. Here is an advertisement

notifying a product of a company.

You will note that the advertisement is something more than a sales message of a particular commodity.

It is a complex form of communication with certain specific objectives and strategies to reach out to different consumers. The objectives are to –

- persuade or influence the consumers to see the merit of the commodity
- inform consumers and to make them aware of the product or the company.
- reach a wide spectrum of possible consumers with information about an item advertised.

Thus, we can define an advertisement as follows :

> An advertisement is a form of communication that operates with objectives and strategies leading to various types of impact on the consumer's thoughts, feelings and actions.

Let us closely look at the key words in the definition given in the box.

1. Form of communication : It implies that an advertisement contains a message for the prospective consumer.
2. Objectives : The objectives of advertisement are to persuade or influence the consumer to take steps to procure the items advertised.
3. Strategy : The strategy followed is to reach out to a large clientele by placing the advertisement either in a print or electronic media or in both.
4. Impact : The advertisement shall succeed in persuading a person to give some thought about the items/commodity.

Indeed, good ads are the result of powerful planning in order to make the biggest possible impact on the targeted consumers. The advertiser must know who the targeted consumer is and must develop strategies to communicate to the consumers to persuade, to ponder and to decide upon at times.

10.3 BASIC CONCEPTS OF ADVERTISING

There are four basic concepts of advertising, namely

- strategy
- creative idea
- creative execution and
- creative media use

Each of these concepts has been briefly elaborated below :

(a) Advertising strategy : The concept refers to the logic and planning behind the advertisement that gives its direction and focus. Every effective advertisement is the outcome of a sound strategy. An advertisement is developed to meet the specific objectives, and carefully directed to meet a certain audience; it creates its message to reach out to the audiences for whom the advertisement is intended and run in the print or electronic media that will reach out to the audience more effectively.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Here is an advertisement.



Read the advertisement carefully and give brief answers to the following questions.

Q.1. Give one objective of this advertisement?

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……

……

Q.2. For what kind of readers/audience is this advertisement designed?

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Q.3. What message does the advertisement create?

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(b) Creative idea : The creative concept is the advertisement's central idea that arrests your attention. The word 'creative' describes a critical aspect of advertising. The research effort needs to be creative. The Chyawanprash ad in the TV is an interesting example of the creative idea of ads. The ad zooms on an aged Amitabh Bachchan (AB) reflecting on some of his exciting moments in a few of his films.

* AB bashes a stout looking villain
* AB exhausted after a fight hangs on to a temple bell
* AB in one of his memorable stunts.

At the end of it all the aged AB reflects on how those activities had squeezed the vitality out of him and how Chyavanprash had kept him going even at that age.

(c) Creative execution : The concept implies that an ad in order to be effective requires to be well executed. One has to consider the details, the photography, the text material, the setting, the printing, the way the produce is depicted all of which contribute towards creating an impact on the clients for whom the ad is intended. Think of a visual for a shirt. There is a well-taken photograph of a young man supposed to have spent a hard day at his work place but he doesn't look tired , nor does his shirt show any crease. Below the photograph there appears the following text :



Note the personal tone of the language of the text. It is important for the text to be able to reach out to the clients in a client-friendly way.

(d) Creative media use : Every ad contains a message. Most advertisers use the popular publications, radio and the TV to reach out to a wider section of the people. Besides hoardings in busy city areas, highways, important bus stations, railway stations and airports also attempt to reach out to the targeted clients. It is worth mentioning that often in airports commodities are showcased in strategic points to impress clients. Electronic items, dress and leather goods often find place in such showcased ads.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Read the following advertisement :



This Bihu, get a fashionable travel bag worth Rs. 595 FREE when your bill crosses Rs. 2000! Choose from a wide range of Turtle shirts, trousers, t-shirts and accessories. Rush now.

Till April 15

Now answer the following questions :

Q.4. For what kind of consumers is this advertisement designed. (Choose the correct alternative)

Ans. : The advertisement has been designed for :

(A) Fashionable travellers who are in need for a travel bag.

(B) School girls

(C) Adult males

Q. 5. How does the ad try to pursude the prospective consumer to by the commodity advertises?

Ans: The ad tries to persuade the prospective consumer by :

(A) selling the item at a discount

(B) providing a free gift.

(C) offering a wide choice of items.

10.4 COPYWRITING

1. Copywriting : Copywriting is a term used in the literature of advertisements (ad. hereafter) to refer to the activity of shaping words and expressions to create a maximum effect on the target consumer. The person who shapes and sculpts words in an advertisement is called a copywriter.

   Copy is the text of an ad or the words that are uttered by people in a commercial. Copywriters love words and they search for the clever twist, the pun, the powerful description, the punch, the nuance to make the ad as striking as possible.

b) Copywriting for print :

There are five basic copy elements commonly found in ads.

i) a headline

ii) subheads

iii) body copy

iv) captions or callouts

v) a tag line

A brief introduction of each of these elements is given below :

1. The headline :

The headline is the key element in print advertising. It conveys the main message of the ad. It is a phrase or a sentence that serves as an opening to the ad. It has to be catchy and must also convey an idea besides attracting the right target audience. Here are a few headlines–

a) Who says only the seaside can make you feel fresh.

This is the headline of bath fittings, claiming that the particular brand with its "world class bath fittings regenerates freshness in your life. Its innovative designs, unparalleled functionality and lasting performance... is sincerely dedicated to exceed your delights."

b) The connoisseur's Choice.

This is the headline in an ad on tea.

c) I always found it difficult to keep my television free from dust...

This is the headline in an ad on vacuum cleaner.

Each of these headlines aims to attract the prospective customers. They become effective only when they work in combination with the visual to stop and grasp the reader's attention and motivate someone to try the product.

The headline must also identify the product and the brand, and start the sale. If the product is less prominently displayed beside a more prominently displayed model from a TV serial background the ad may not prove effective.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 6. Read the following headlines and name the product that the headline professes to advertise.

a) Six weeks to a fairness like never before.

……

b) Who's that girl under the waterfall ?

……

c) Style that goes right to your head

……

2. The Subhead :

The subhead says, "Now that I've got your alteration, here's what I want to tell you about." It aims to elaborate or to extend the message of the headline and also give a hint of what the reader will find in the bodycopy. Here is a headline :

60 years after independence India will be held captive again.

The message is clear and arresting. It is puzzling too. It draws your attention leading you to look further on. Now your attention shifts to the subhead to see if a hint is there as to what the ad really proposes to say.

This time in the pages of
INDIA
TODAY

Not every advertisement has, or needs a subhead, but if the reader is interested in the headline, the subhead gives you a second opportunity to make a sale.

3. The body copy :

The body copy fulfills the promise of the headline by providing more detail about the item advertised. It is the text of the ad and its primary

role is to maintain the interest of the reader. It develops the sale message, states the argument, summarizes the proof and provides explanation. It is the persuasive heart of the message. You arrest the reader's attention with the headline, give some clarification in the subhead. But it is with the body copy that you will win over your reader.

A body-copy can adopt different styles–

a) Straightforward : Factual details - informative
b) Narrative : Tells a story in the first person or third person. The VIP luggage ads used such story-telling styles.
c) Dialogue : Lets the reader "listen in" as a conversation.
d) Explanation : Explains how something works
e) Translation : Technical information to be translated to understandable language.

Again, not every ad will have body copy. A hoarding may not have one.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 7. Here is an Indian Air Force advertisement that professess to convert raw talent to world class leadership material. The body copy is given below:

- Dream to fly high. Earn your wings through a professional and systematic training in 74 weeks
- Be an elite engineering force and work on state of the art planes, missiles, radar, communication system.
- Through Operational Support Group manage men & material, finance, education and controlling operations.

What function does the body copy serve?

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4. Captions or Call-outs :

The caption is a sentence or a phrase that explains what you are looking at in a photo or illustration. Captions are not used so much in advertisements because the visuals are assumed to be self explanatory. But when used, they do create an impression.

The caption in a photo or illustration and can go beyond what appears in a photo. You can use it to make any related point you wish. For example, think of a picture of a housewife fast asleep. Below the picture is the caption :

No, Mrs Bose is not asleep. She is working. You later discover, she is washing clothes in her washing machine, washing in a machine is so easy - you can sleep your way and yet you are working. Call-outs are sentences that float around the visual, usually with a line or arrow pointing to some specific element in the visual that they name and explain FEMINA published a Pond's Institute ad which is an interesting example of a course-book ad. It displays a woman with her eyes shut as if dreaming. There are arrows and circles pointing to different parts of her face.

Faded lines --- ◯

Lifted under-eye --- ◯

Firmer cheeks --- ◯

At the end is the message : *The Complete face-lift* These arrows and the words are examples of call-outs in an ad.

5. The tag-line :

The tag-line or logo is a short phrase that serves as a motto for the campaign, brand or the company. In the advertisement illustrating call-outs at 4 above, the message at the end of the ad : 'The complete face-

lift' is the tag-line of the ad. The tag line sums up the whole idea underlying the ad. It usually appears at the end of the body copy and often refers back to the headline or opening in a commercial.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 8. A headline in an ad serves to catch the reader's attention. and a subhead makes the logic clear to the reader. Here is a statement

You must get rid of your old car because the all new Scorpio is here.

(a) Write a headline in the space below. You can write several possibilities.

……

……

……

(b) Write a subhead for the ad. Again, you may have several possibilities.

……

……

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(c) Write a tag-line for the ad.

……

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……

Writing Style :

An advertisement has to win its audience in a highly competitive market. For this reason, your ad must be as simple as possible. The style that you use for the text of the advertisement contributes a great deal towards the success of the ad. Note that every word counts because both space and time are expensive. It won't do to use ineffective words. You don't have to

make long statements about the quality - no one has the time to read that stuff. Make it as concise as possible. The more compact the copy, the easier it is to understand and greater is its impact. Here are a few suggestions. **:**

1. Be succinct : Succinct means clearly expressed in few words. Use short familiar words, short sentences and short paragraphs. Read the text below :

I. Is your skin darkening? Does it look like early ageing? In that case get your double defence against the sun. I suggest you use Garnier.

This piece of text won't be either a headline or a subhead. It is a poor body copy failing to attract the reader's instant attention. It is too wordy. Full of useless words. Now read this:

II. SKIN DARKENING? EARLY AGEING? GET YOUR DOUBLE DEFENCE AGAINST THE SUN. USE GARNIER.

It is brief. It uses only words that are informative and highly useful.

2. Be single-minded : 'Single-minded' means having or showing one clear purpose and effort to serve it. If we get back to the Garnier ad, we can see what single-mindedness in preparing a copy is all about. The ad focuses on one main point Sun control. The visual is that of a woman with a clear skin; she has enjoyed the benefit of advanced double protection that helps prevent skin darkening and ageing. The focus is sharp enough illustrating the single-minded objective of the advertisement.

3. Be specific : You are specific when you are detailed and exact, clear in meaning. You are careful in explanation and not vague. In order to be specific, you must not waste time in generalities. If you go back to box I in the point "Be succinct", you will note that the text in

the box is not at all specific compared to the text in box II. Note the headline in an ad.

Jealous Jeans

Just two words to support a visual of three persons wearing different types of jeans and we know what the ad is trying to say. It is specific to the fullest extent.

4. Get personal: Directly address your reader with 'you' and 'your' rather than with 'we' and 'they'. You can use an imperative form intended to reach out to you directly. Here is a headline of an ad :

WHY CHOOSE AN INVERTER TO RUN 3 ACs INSTEAD OF A GENSET?

It is a personal message directly addressed to the reader.

5. Keep a single focus : Your ad must deliver a single message. It should not focus on too many points. Focus on a single idea and support it. Think of an ad of woolen shawls with a pile of shawls on display and the Taj at the background. The headline is clear

Masterpieces
One created in marble
and another crafted in wool

The focus is sharp enough. The message is clear. The shawls on display are the best : Here is the text of the ad :

The Taj and the Pashmina. They have stood the test of time through all these centuries. In fact the 600 year shawl even pre-dates the Taj by a couple of centuries! And the shawl had evoked too, enriching itself with the art and craft from various periods and places. With so much of history and sheer human genius crafted into it, the shawl has been the preferred, adornments of the Sultans, Mughal Emperors, courts and Lords and of course the blue-blooded jet setters of today.

6. Be Conversational : Use the language of everyday conversation. The text of the copy should sound like an informal piece of language. As an example. read the following copy :

Open up a whole new world of imagination for your child. A world of warmth and love. Of caring and sharing. Of playing and learning. Of growing and developing. A world of fun, laughter and happiness.

That's the promise of Leo. Toys of a kind never before available in India. Toys that are designed to delight, amuse, yet educate your child... cater to his creative needs. Attractive, sturdy, yet safe to play with. In an ever growing range - pre-school, educational, action, puzzles and games.

Leo Toys. They could become your child's best friends. Today.

7. Be original : To keep your copy forceful and persuasive, avoid stock advertising phrases, strings of superlatives and brag-and-boast statements. Avoid cliches as much as you can. Instead of ensuing the common expressions :

- Do you have a backache?
- Are you suffering from a backache?

- the ad on a foam mattress uses the following headline :

Is your back crumbling under pressure?

It is followed by the following subhead

Give it all the support it needs

8. Use Variety : To add visual appeal to both print and TV ads, avoid long blocks of copy. Instead break the copy into shout paragraphs with subheads.

   In TV commercial, break up television monologue with visual changes, such as shots of the product, sound effects, and dialogues.

9. Use imaginative description : Use evocative or figurative language to build a picture in the consumer's mind. One of the most beautifully constructed piece of text is the one advertising a brand of motorcar. Take a close look at the language and see how suggestive the description is :

Resistance is futile

The Mercedes-Benz CLS- class is simply the most breathtakingly beautiful automobile to ever grace the asphalt. The radical L shapes headlamps and the Sirius bodylines are designed to make you go wear in the knees. Dare to take a glance inside and the luxurious elegance of the appointments within are an invite you simply can't turn down...



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.9 There are a variety of media in the print category.

The most common ones are

- newspapers
- magazines
- directories
- posters and outdoor advertising.

Take a close look at some of the ads published in the above four

categories of ads. They use the same copy elements, notably headlines and the body copy. List the elements that are found in these ads.

(i) .....

(ii) .....

(iii) .....

(iv) .....

(v) .....

10.5 RADIO COPY

Radio copy refers to the advertisements prepared for radio broadcasts. Such advertisements are usually 15 to 60 seconds in length. This short length means that the ads must be simple enough for consumers to grasp yet exciting enough to prevent listenless from switching off the radio set.

Mere simplicity is definitely not enough. Radio being a transitory medium, the ability to remember faces is difficult. Hence copywriters repeat the key points of brand names and identification information, such as a phone number or an e-mail address.

While the print copywriter has access to visuals, headlines, slogans and so on, the radio copywriter has to depend upon three factors notably the following:

- Voice : The radio speaker must have a well-modulated voice, the kind of voice characteristic of a radio commentator. This voice will monitor the programme. There may be other voices too. But in all cases the voice must be clear and distinct.
- Music : Music always helps to create mood and establish the setting. Any mood from that of a noisy village fair to a mother playing with her baby can very effectively be brought through music.
- Sound effects : The sound of automobile horns honking, the background laughter, the rhythm of dance etc. contribute towards creating a musical effect.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - 7

Q.10. List three differences between a print advertisement and a radio advertisement.

(a) .....

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(b) .....

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(c) .....

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10.6 TELEVISION COPY

While the radio advertisement depends upon the voice quality and music of the speakers, the television copy depends upon the moving images. You are watching a walking, talking and moving subject that gives the illusion of being three dimensional.

The most striking part of TV ads is their ability to demonstrate the effectiveness of a product. Here is a TV commercial copy.

Shot 1	The housewife is very upset. The detergent that she uses leaves her utensils greasy. No matter has much amount of the item she uses, the effect is terribly disappointing. The disappointment shows in her face.
Shot 2	A friendly neighbour enters the house. The neighbour enquires the reason for her disappointment. She explains the detergent problem.
Shot 3	The neighbour is aghast that the housewife doesn't have the slightest information of another brand.
Shot 4	Commentary from the background about the effectiveness of the brand followed by a close up of the use of the detergent.
Shot 5	A pile of utensils all sparkling clean is displayed.

This demonstrability makes TV ads the ideal medium for a message.

Most of the TV ads use narrative or a story telling technique for maximum effect. Recall the ad of Amitabh Bacchan, an old man, reflecting on his long acting career.

Shot 1	AB commenting an how acting had squeezed the vitality out of him over the decades. The pain in his face becomes obvious.
Shot 2	A clip from an early film - the young AB's encounter with Sher Khan
Shot 3	Another clip - AB smashes a hooch den stuns bad man the bald Shetty.
Short 4-8	More shots of AB's fight scenes from his superhits.
Shot 9	Fade out of the collage and AB passing on the secret - the Ayurvedic tonic that he uses to keep himself going with the same dash that he demonstrated thirty five years ago.

Another characteristic of a TV ad is its display of emotion. It has the ability to touch the feelings of the viewers. Real life situations with all their humour, anger, fear, pride, jealousy and love come alive on the screen. Humour, in particular, works well on television. Where else can a mother's pride and happiness at the sight of her child taking the first few tottering steps be displayed better than on a TV ad an Johnson's baby oil ? The list can go on. But we are convinced that TV ads have an advantage denied to all other media.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.11. List three characteristics of TV advertisements in one sentence each.

(a) .....

.....

(b) .....

.....

(c) .....

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Television copywriting is a complex process that require the copywriter to have a clear knowledge of the following points :

(a) Video : The copy should specify clearly the shots, its close ups, the long shots and so on, so that the producers have no problems in taking the shots. Some of the shots are outdoor shots. Think of an ad on a brand of bathing soap. The girl travels in an open gypsy through a wild life safari park, admiring the giraffes and a hard of deer but remains fresh as ever because she uses a particular brand of soap.

(b) Audio : Let us get back to the video point above. The sound of the vehicle splashing through thick foliage, the sound of wild animals at the background, the clear voice of the commentator on the value of the brand -- all this makes the brand sell. The copywriter needs a thorough knowledge of the three points :

- music
- voices
- sound-effects

These have to be connected to a visual image The copywriter may have an announcer speak directly to the viewer : that has to be indicated

If there is a dialogue - that has to be given with clear instructions on the details like appearance of the persons, costumes, gestures and so on .

(c) Technical knowledge of filming : A knowledge of selection of setting, lighting, casting, costume can always be helpful to the copywriter of a TV ad. Some of the shots have to be taken on location. For example, the safari park described at (b) above. The details need to be spelt cut in the copy of the ad.



10.7 FURTHER READINGS

1. Ahuja, B.N. Advertising, New Delhi : Surjeet Publications.
2. Jeffkins, Frank (2009) New Delhi : Person on Education.



10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1 : Persuade or influence the consumer to see the merit of the commodity.

Ans to Q. No. 2 : Calorie conscious people with high blood sugar.

Ans to Q. No. 3 : Complete herbal tonic for health and well being.

Ans to Q. No. 4 : C

Ans to Q. No. 5 : B

Ans to Q. No. 6 :

(a) a face lotion guaranteeing a fair skin.

(b) a brand of soap that guarantees an after bath natural freshness.

(c) a hair oil.

Ans to Q. No. 7 : It provides details about the career opportunities for a prospective airman in the Indian Air Force.

Ans to Q. No. 8 :

(a) Divorce your car

(b) The all new Scorpio is here

(c) Nothing else will do.

Ans to Q. No. 9 :

(a) Headlines

(b) Subheads

(c) The body copy

(d) Caption or call-out

(e) The tag line.

Ans to Q. No. 10 :

(a) Radio advertisements are shorter and simpler than print advertisements.

(b) Radio advertisements must be exciting enough to prevent listeners from switching off the radio set.

(c) Radio advertisement makes use of repetitions of key-points of brand names and identification information.

Ans to Q. No. 11 :

(a) The TV ad depends upon moving images

(b) The TV ad can demonstrate the effectiveness of a product.

(c) The TV ad can display emotion vividly.



10.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions

Q.1 : What are the five basic copy elements commonly found in advertisment?

Q.2 : What do you mean by copywriting?

B. Short questions (Answer each question in about 150 words):

Q. 1. Why headline is said to be key element in print advertising?

Q. 2. What are the different charecteristics of a television advertisement?

C. Long questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words):

Q. 1. Identify a product that you wish to advertise. Give a brief description of that product. Now do the following activities :

a) Write a headline for the product.
b) Write a sub-head for the product.
c) Briefly list, in order of importance why you want you consumer to go for that product
d) Write a tag-line for the ad.

Q. 2. Use the product identified in question 1 to write a copy for a radio advertisement by doing the following activities.

a) Write the statement that you would expect the radio ad commentator to say.
b) What kind of sound effect/music would you like to use to make the ad effective Elaborate.

Q. 3. Use the product identified for a TV advertisement -

a) Give a brief description of the visual that you would like to use for the product.
b) Write out the utterances/speeches that would be used in your TV ad.